

Deceased Management Advisory Group

UPDATE 23 NOVEMBER 2020

The members of DMAG held a video conference on 23 November 2020, with representatives from Ministry of Justice (MoJ), Welsh Government and Scottish Government present for the open part of the meeting.

1. MoJ UPDATE

MoJ reported that there was still no news as to when the long version the Public Health England (PHE) guidance on managing a funeral would receive clearance for publication.

In relation to a query from FBCA and ICCM regarding the use by a coroner of Cremation Form 6 when no post-mortem had been carried out and the word 'inquest' had been changed to 'investigation', the MoJ advised that the form be accepted by the cremation authority, but that the word 'inquest' should not have been changed to 'investigation'. This was to be taken up by the MoJ with the coroner in question.

2. WELSH GOVERNMENT UPDATE

Welsh Government reported that revised guidance was still be drafted, but it was expected that this would be completed and published later in the week.

3. SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT UPDATE

Scottish Government reported that an update on the appointment of the Inspector of Funeral Directors would be able to be given shortly.

It was noted that Regional Resilience in Scotland had experienced difficulties in engaging with funeral directors, and hence an online meeting was being planned. It was agreed that NAFD and SAIF would encourage their members in Scotland to attend.

4. CREMATORIA AVAILABILITY REPORTING SYSTEMS – GOVERNMENT RESPONSE



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MoJ had forwarded the responses from the Cabinet Office and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) as to the information they would like to obtain from a Reporting System. Members expressed concerns that the information would be deliverable. However, the requirements would be passed to the suppliers for a response.

DMAG CLOSED MEETING

1. NOTES/MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The notes of the previous meeting were accepted for publication. There were no matters arising.

2. ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS WITH CABINET OFFICE / SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

It was agreed to raise with the Cabinet Office that priority be given to funeral workers when the roll-out of daily COVID-19 tests for those self-isolating under Test and Trace happened. This would enable workers receiving a negative test to come out of self-isolation, mitigating the risk of large numbers of funeral workers being unable to work due self-isolation.

3. MEDICAL EXAMINERS

ICCM raised concerns about the timeframe for the implementation of the Medical Examiners system. It was understood that there was a potential legal problem over Medical Examiners being able to access GP records, which would prolong the timetable for Medical Examiners covering deaths in the community.

It was agreed that the National Medical Examiner, Alan Fletcher, be invited to a meeting of DMAG for an update. MoJ would also be asked about the timeframe for the necessary changes being made to the Cremation Regulations to underpin the Medical Examiners system.

4. VACCINATION PRIORITY



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DMAG members agreed that a letter would be sent to the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) making the strong case for funeral workers to be on the priority list for vaccination.

It was agreed that the issue of daily testing also be raised in the letter.

The Cremation Society would circulate the draft letter to DMAG members. SAIF would enquire of DHSC as to who the letter should be addressed.

5. PROPOSED RELAXED RULES FOR THE CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR PERIOD

DMAG members noted the impact that the relaxation of rules over Christmas and New Year could have on the number of deaths early in the New Year. It was agreed that this concern should be registered with the Government.

6. CREMATION SOCIETY STATISTICS

The draft Cremation Statistic Questionnaire had been circulated to DMAG members prior to the meeting.

It was agreed that the APCC would circulate the additional questions to deal with the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) proposed need to receive information on total annual fees and the number of cremations.

It was noted that all questions would need to be agreed by the Cremation Society Board.

The merits of being able to complete the questionnaire online were discussed, although it was unsure as to whether this could be achieved for the 2020 questionnaire.

It was agreed that this item be discussed further at DMAG's meeting of 26 November 2020.

7. AOB ROUND ROBIN

There was no other business.

