

Deceased Management Advisory Group

UPDATE 26 NOVEMBER 2020

The members of DMAG held a video conference on 26 November 2020, with representatives from Ministry of Justice (MoJ), Welsh Government (SC) and Scottish Government (SG) present for the open part of the meeting.

1. MoJ UPDATE

The long-form 'Guidance on Managing a Funeral' has still not gone through clearance and it was noted that this would now be out of date, following the end of the national lockdown and reintroduction of the revised tier system. MoJ were asked to confirm the numbers of bereaved permitted to visit a funeral home, under the new tier restrictions.

The concern surrounding the risk of possible prosecution of funeral directors, in instances where large gatherings arrive at funerals, was discussed and MoJ will seek further clarification from PHE and DHSC on this.

2. Senedd Cymru

SC sought feedback from DMAG on the issue of child funerals following the Memorandum of Understanding that had been signed by Local Authorities. FBCA confirmed that the system appeared to be working and no problems had been reported. SC confirmed that whilst the Memorandum of Understanding covers the cremation and burial fee (including the exclusive right of burial fee), it does not cover additional costs (such as the cost of a coffin) and that was under review. SC queried whether the cost of the coffins were being subsidised by funeral directors. FFMA reported that in the past, funeral directors had covered the cost of a simple coffin but now that more personalised coffins are often required (at a higher cost), the cost is often covered by crowdfunding or other similar funding methods.

APCC confirmed that the Children's Fund for England covers the cost of a coffin, shroud or casket up to the value of £300 and that most of its members do not charge the cremation fee for under 18s.



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SC confirmed that the funeral guidance is still going through clearance but was expected in the near future.

3. Scottish Government

SG are in the process of planning for the Christmas and New Year period with the closure of crematoria and burial grounds, and registrars on leave. Robert Swanson, Inspector of Cremation, will be contacting crematoria to ask for details of their planned closures and will share that information with the Regional Resilience Partners. FBCA pointed out that during the first wave the information filtered through to the crematoria too slowly and it was agreed that information needed to be given much earlier, to allow staff to plan working patterns.

SG are working on national messaging in connection with the issues surrounding large funeral gatherings. SG are working with the RRs to deliver targeted messaging locally. It was acknowledged that crematoria and funeral directors were receiving resistance to the rules surrounding funeral attendance so the messaging was important.

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

SAIF queried whether there would be any change to the funeral attendance restrictions during the five-day Christmas period when lockdown rules were being eased.



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It was agreed that more time needed to be given to the Cabinet Office meetings as often it was not possible to discuss all the items on the agenda. This would be raised with Cabinet Office.

3. CARS BRIEF

The revised brief was agreed and ICCM will circulate to IT suppliers for their consideration.

4. COFFIN SUPPLIES

FFMA reported that some coffin manufacturers had experienced significant price increases for chipboard and that there were also some concerns over a possible future shortage of chipboard as this was being directed to new-builds and similar projects. FFMA has reported this to Cabinet Office.

5. VACCINE LETTER

The letter was agreed in principle. APCC suggested that more emphasis could be made to highlight the ultimate impact on any loss of capacity due to the virus spreading throughout the sector. SAIF are to produce a final version which will be circulated for comment prior to being sent to Professor Pollard of the JCVI.

6. CREMATION SOCIETY SURVEY

APCC asked that an additional column of information be included for direct cremations to show +/- % which would help to follow trends and geographical differences across the country.

APCC will be carrying out a short survey of its own members, incorporating cremation fee and direct cremation data, and will circulate that to DMAG for information.



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CSGB confirmed that the 2020 survey would be pre-populated with as much information as possible, to assist crematoria. CSGB are exploring options for online completion for future surveys.

7. AOB ROUND ROBIN

SAIF reported that legislation has been introduced to Parliament with respect to pre-paid funeral plans; the legislation is expected to come into force in 2022.

