

Deceased Management Advisory Group

Update 21st December 2020

The members of DMAG held a video conference on the 21st December, with representatives from the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), the Scottish Government (SG), the Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) and the Northern Ireland Department of Health (NIDOH) present for the 'Open' part of the meeting. The Cremation Society chaired the meeting.

DMAG Wider Consultation

1. Ministry of Justice (MOJ) update

- 1.1. CMA Report - MOJ confirmed that they would be in discussions with the devolved administrations after Christmas following the remedies published in the final CMA report following their funerals market investigation and in particular the question of regulation. The question of pricing is still being discussed within the CMA Board.
- 1.2. Tier 4 Announcement – the PHE guidance on funerals will be updated following the latest tier 4 announcements
- 1.3. Kent – MOJ would like any feedback on capacity issues within the Kent area, in order to ensure that there are sufficient plans in place across the area to cover any issues with loss of staff/failure of equipment
- 1.4. APCC queried what work is being carried out to determine the level of severity of the new variant of the COVID virus, in view of the fact that it is significantly more transmissible. MOJ will report back.
- 1.5. MOJ confirmed that Judith Bernstein is looking into the queries raised by SAIF at the last meeting.
- 1.6. SAIF queried whether funeral staff would be reconsidered to be placed higher on the list of eligibility for the COVID vaccine, in light of the fact that the new variant is reported to be 70% more transmissible. SAIF also asked whether there would be any change in the guidance for the care of deceased, in light of the new strain of the virus. MOJ and DHSC will report back but it may be that the position will be reviewed on 30 December 2020 when the next tier review would take place.
- 1.7. NAFD had corresponded with DHSC over the latest guidance for the care of deceased. DHSC recognised that GROs had been required to stop any face-to-face appointments, but that funeral homes were still allowed face-to-face meetings with bereaved.
- 1.8. FBCA queried whether there would be any flexibility with the one day relaxation of rules on Christmas Day in England for essential workers, as provision had been made for this in Wales. MOJ will report back. NIDOH



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reported that provision had been made that the one day relaxation rules could be applied on any day between 23rd and 27th December, for any essential worker who would be working on Christmas Day.

2. Department of Health & Social Care update

- 2.1. DHSC confirmed they are still committed to the implementation of the medical examiner system but that this year has proved challenging with COVID-19 and lack of Parliamentary time to implement the legislation required to put the system on a statutory basis. This has affected the target of April 2021 and instead it is anticipated that the non-statutory system would be fully implemented by April 2022. At present, 94% of medical examiner offices have been established.
- 2.2. APCC queried whether the detail on PPE requirements could be broken down in more detail in the guidance. MOJ confirmed they will liaise with DHSC.
- 2.3. SAIF asked whether DHSC had been able to look at the query raised concerning one of their members being refused a chest x-ray on the grounds that he was a funeral director and therefore high risk. DHSC will go back to NHS England and NHS Improvement and ask that they respond to SAIF directly.

3. Scottish Government (SG) update

- 3.1. SG confirmed that the rules for travelling to funerals were not affected by the latest travel restrictions imposed in Scotland.
- 3.2. SG would be appointing a new Minister for Public Health but no name had been announced at the time of the meeting

4. Northern Ireland Department of Health (NIDOH)

- 4.1. NIDOH confirmed that Northern Ireland would be entering a six week period of lockdown with effect from Boxing Day morning. Funeral attendance numbers would continue to be limited to 25 (subject to individual venue limits); funeral services are not permitted in private dwellings and a record of attendees must be kept. NIDOH confirmed revised guidance would be published. Funeral arrangements were still recommended to be made by telephone.
- 4.2. APCC queried whether there had been any change to the repatriation of bodies and NIDOH, SAIF and NAFD all confirmed that there had been no change and repatriations continue.



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DMAG Closed Meeting

1. Notes from previous meeting.

1.1. These were agreed and will be placed on the DMAG website.

1.2. It was agreed that SAIF would contact JCVI in the new year, in light of the new variant of the COVID-19 virus.

2. Items for future meetings with Cabinet Office/Devolved Governments

It was noted that a meeting had been arranged for Wednesday 23 December.

3. AOB Round Robin

3.1. SAIF had spoken with JBP concerning both the proposed June reception and whether data should be concentrated on numbers of funerals per constituency rather than employees. JBP will reflect and come back on these points.

3.2. APCC confirmed that they would be working with ICCM and FBCA on how best to collate the information requested by JBP

The next meeting will be held on Monday 4 January 2021 with SAIF chairing the meeting.

