

Deceased Management

Advisory Group

Update 7th January 2021

The members of DMAG held a video conference on the 7th January, with representatives from the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), Welsh Government (SC), Scottish Government (SG) and Northern Ireland Government (NI). Apologies were received from the FBCA. FFMA chaired the meeting.

DMAG Wider Consultation

1. **MoJ** advised that a questionnaire will be forthcoming to assist the Cabinet Office to understand the health of the funeral sector and those within it. There is some differing information being shared, on which clarity is needed. Streamlined feedback is required to any duplication of questions. Interactions with Local Resilience Forums is also requested.

APCC asked for a co-ordinated approach to testing and vaccinations as there are none so far from prime sources. **This matter to be placed on Monday's agenda.**

NAFD spoke in favour of APCC's comments stating some members had been contacted by their local Clinical Commissioning Groups. Is the vaccination programme going to be a postcode lottery or should we encourage Funeral Directors to contact their local CCG? Should individual FDs contact their local GPs?

The MOJ representative referred to the Green Book in which the term Funeral Service Operative lacked definition. Who should the vaccination actually be for? FFMA raised the point that depending on the size and operation of a particular funeral business it could be any member of staff who would need protection. MOJ later circulated a suggested job description for a FSO but DMAG members issue caution on this for the reasons highlighted by the FFMA.

CSoGB asked that when considering the health of funeral sector workers, consideration should also be given to mental health and stress issues.

SAIF raised three points:

- a) Regarding an issue with the Gwent Coroner in relation to Out of England forms in respect of a deceased coming from Northern Ireland. This matter will be raised with the General Registrar's Office.
- b) A call from an NHS Track & Trace call handler suggested the closing of a funeral office. SAIF suggest the call handlers' scripts need scrutiny & amendment, where necessary, and the matter is now with the DHSC.
- c) An issue has arisen where one crematorium is asking for the green certificate before accepting a cremation booking. Why? ICCM commented this is most unusual and the regular practice would be for any paperwork to be submitted



Deceased Management

Advisory Group

only after a booking had been made. Also, this causes a delay for the funeral director in enabling collection of the deceased from a hospital situation?

APCC highlighted the situation of one APCC member who currently had 10 staff off work, 8 with COVID and 2 self-isolating. This information highlights the need for priority vaccinations.

2. **SC** advised they will updating their blog to reflect any changes in guidance. SAIF asked about the timing of vaccination in Scotland but these are not yet known.
3. **SG** are still awaiting an outcome on the question of vaccination for funeral directors in Wales.
A question was asked if there was a record of the number of funeral staff in Wales. It is understood there are approximately 107 funeral businesses. NAFD commented it is believed there are approximately 20,000 funeral staff across the UK but no breakdown is available of areas.
ICCM stated there are also a number of crematoria and cemeteries. SG advised they were aware and had some grasp on these.
4. **NI** are working to lesser numbers than elsewhere. They are working with vaccination colleges and are having similar issues to SG with collating information on funeral staff to calculate likely numbers. They are looking at distribution lists.



Deceased Management Advisory Group

DMAG Closed Meeting

1. Notes from previous meeting.

These were agreed, with amends, and will be placed on the DMAG website.

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

DMAG members were of the opinion we need to make Government aware of the strength of feeling within the funeral sector regarding vaccinations. Furthermore, there must be a review of the decision to allow COVID positive persons to attend funeral services.

It was agreed that a letter from DMAG will be sent to the Cabinet Office. CSoGB will draft and circulate for comment before sending.

3. APPG on Funerals and Bereavement

The most recent versions of the website & brochure had been circulated for sign off.

Consideration is being given to a FAQs page and the launch of a Twitter page.

JBP are holding internal discussions on the best way to distribute information to Parliamentarians and when would be a good time?

Actions from the previous APPG meeting had been taken and responses from Govt departments are awaited.

APCC raised the matter of mapping software, as previously discussed by DMAG, and further exploration of suitable software will be made. Votesource was mentioned as a possibility.

CSoGB asked about the timeline for signing off the website/brochure profiles as the matter has still to be approved by their Board. A maximum of 200 words for the brochure and 500 for the website was suggested.

NAFD suggested that views on the CMA report be shared. A pre-meeting for the next APPG, due on 26th January at 2pm, will be held on Monday 18th January at 5pm.

4. Application from Association of Independent Celebrants to join DMAG

It is felt that DMAG gives meaningful representation of the funeral sector and when discussing issues our views are encompassing of all involved in the provision of funerals. Also, AOIC are supplier members of both NAFD & SAIF, both of whom are members of DMAG and represent their members interests fully.



Deceased Management Advisory Group

5. AOB Round Robin.

There were no matters arising.

APCC to chair the next meeting – Monday 11th January 2021.



FBCA
Federation of Burial
& Cremation Authorities



ICCM
Institute of Cemetery and
Crematorium Management



The Cremation Society