

# Deceased Management Advisory Group

## Update 25 January 2021

The members of DMAG held a video conference on the 25 January 2021, with representatives from the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), the Scottish Government (SG), the Welsh Government (SC) and the Northern Ireland Executive (NI) 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. ICCM highlighted that the public guidance on arranging and attending a funeral had been updated by DHSC and PHE, on 22 January 2021, without any consultation or notification. MOJ confirmed that they were also unaware of the update. The accompanying long form guidance has not been updated since the beginning of December, despite two updates to the public guidance.
- 1.2. MOJ were asked to follow up the query on the 'green certificate' raised at the last DMAG meeting. MOJ will report back.
- 1.3. NAFD raised the issue of last week's report of one of their members being issued with a £10,000 fine where a funeral was attended by an excessive number of mourners, in breach of social distancing regulations. NAFD confirmed they had had sight of the action taken by the funeral director in advance of the funeral which demonstrated that they had followed all guidance and taken all necessary steps but a fine had still been issued. This has resulted in a great deal of concern and uncertainty with funeral directors not knowing what else they must do to avoid a fine. NAFD will send copies to MOJ. SAIF asked whether a representative from the Home Office could be asked to attend the next DMAG meeting. It was agreed this would also be raised at the next Cabinet Office meeting.

#### 2. Welsh Government (SC) update

- 2.1. SC is working with NAFD and SAIF to gather information on their members.
- 2.2. APCC queried whether any progress was being made on the inclusion of cemetery and crematorium staff in the vaccination programme. SC confirmed this is being considered and in the meantime encouraged DMAG to provide regular updates on examples where there were issues with cemetery and crematorium staff and the provision of services due to infection or self-isolation.



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## 3. Scottish Government (SG) update

- 3.1. SG confirmed that following on from the interim letter issued concerning the vaccination programme, a final letter is due to be issued tomorrow.
- 3.2. SG asked DMAG members to encourage small, independent or rural funeral directors who had not already done so, to take part in their consultation on the draft code of practice. Online discussions would be held on 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> March.
- 3.3. SG were working with national and local resilience colleagues to improve messaging to prevent large attendance at funerals, particularly in the west of Scotland – any additional wording that could be provided by DMAG members would be welcomed.

## 4. Northern Ireland Executive (NI)

- 4.1. NI confirmed their lockdown had been extended to 5 March 2021.
- 4.2. Over 700 names have been registered as part of the vaccination programme and that continues to be rolled out.
- 4.3. SAIF asked NI to confirm current provisions for where a deceased is taken to a residential dwelling. NI confirmed that COVID positive cases are not to be taken to residential dwellings. For non-COVID cases, the rules are that one household plus one linked household can attend, up to a total maximum of 10. SG confirmed their guidance strongly recommends bodies are not taken to residential dwellings. SC will check their position and report back.

## 5. Vaccination update

- 5.1. It was noted that no definition of ‘frontline funeral operatives’ had yet been issued by Cabinet Office
- 5.2. NAFD confirmed after an initial low awareness amongst funeral directors, this now seems to have improved and both NAFD and SAIF were working with NHS England on providing details of their members.

### DMAG Closed Meeting

## 1. Notes from previous meeting.

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



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

It was agreed that the issues of vaccinations and the funeral director fine be raised at this week's meeting. NAFD have already written to Kit Malthouse as the Minister of State for Crime and Policing, as well as to all Chief Constables.

## 3. APPG

3.1. It was agreed that the policing issue would be raised at this week's APPG meeting, along with the ongoing vaccination issue.

3.2. There was general consensus that the costs of the proposed Parliamentary reception and presence at this year's political party conferences, would need to be considered carefully before any commitment was made, to ensure the resulting benefit would be worthwhile.

## 4. AOB Round Robin

There were no other matters raised.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 28 January 2021 with NAFD chairing the meeting.

