

Deceased Management Advisory Group

Update 8th March 2021

The members of DMAG held a video conference on Monday 8th March, with representatives from the Ministry of Justice (MOJ); Scottish Government (SG); Welsh Government (SC); and Northern Ireland Government (NI) present for the 'Open' part of the meeting. APCC chaired the meeting.

DMAG Wider Consultation

1. Ministry of Justice (MOJ)

The Representative stated that the MOJ was re-purposing the message in relation to 'Workplace' testing and that a statement together with the links to detailed information would be provided for members of DMAG to circulate to their members.

APCC asked, following on from the conclusion of the CMA's study of the Funerals and Cremations markets, about the current status of the forthcoming report on self-regulation and it was reported that this was currently with ministers for their consideration. The NAFD enquired about the matter of the compulsory registration of funeral businesses and this will apparently be very much in line with the Scottish model. The MOJ also noted that it would be necessary to consult with those funeral businesses which are not affiliated to any funeral association. In answer to a question from SAIF, it was confirmed that the CMA would be responsible for 'pricing orders'.

2. Welsh Government (SC)

The representative stated that the anticipated modelling data had yet to be published and therefore there was nothing further to add or comment on at this point.

3. Scottish Government (SG)

It was reported that Scotland will return to the previous level classifications at the end of April with Level 4 bearing the greatest restrictions and Level 0 the least. In an effort to achieve more consistent communications in the future, a letter had been sent to Scottish Resilience Partnerships and some responses were still awaited.

The Code of Practice for Funeral Directors had been signed off earlier in the day but there is now a need to consult with Scottish Island colleagues. It is hoped that everything will be finalised within the next few weeks.

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4. Northern Ireland Government (NI)

The representative stated that he had nothing to further to report at this point.

DMAG Closed Meeting

1. Notes from the Previous Meetings.

The notes, together with the amendments tabled, were agreed.

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

It was agreed that the list for the Cabinet Office Meeting should be kept as short as possible in order to allow more time for discussion on the options available in relation to the relaxation of Lockdown restrictions.

3. Relaxation of Lockdown

It was agreed that it is very important to ensure that the 'Deathcare Sector' was not perceived as hanging onto the most restrictive measures while potentially comparable activities such as parents being able to spectate at children's sporting events became permissible again.

It was decided that wherever possible, the Welsh model should be followed, initially by returning to the 'Risk Assessment' calculation of basing the number of permitted attendees on the safe capacity of the venue combined with invitations to attend being issued to mourners. SAIF thought that DMAG should develop policies for other matters, such as the number of mourners allowed at a graveside service, singing / performed music, touching the coffin etc. sooner rather than later so the sector was well prepared to move in line with changes in the restrictions.

The NAFD reported that they had done a considerable amount of work in this regard already and were close to completing advice for their members which would be forwarded to DMAG members and the Cabinet Office in readiness for Thursday's meeting. The ICCM said that it would be extremely important to try and avoid a build up of postponed funerals as mourners decided to wait for restrictions to ease before proceeding with the funeral ceremony.

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4. APPG - Use of the term 'Funeral industry '

APCC had noted that the term 'funeral industry' had crept back into the copy for the APPG brochure, albeit as the NAFD pointed out, just with a single reference but it was agreed that the use of the term should continue to be discouraged.

5. AOB Round Robin

As no further matters were raised, the Chairman closed the meeting at 5:03 p.m.

The next meeting will be held on Monday 15th March at 4 p.m. and will be chaired by the Cremation Society.