

Deceased Management Advisory Group

Update 1st July 2021

The members of DMAG held a video conference on 1st July 2021, with representatives from the Welsh Government (SC), Scottish Government (SG), Northern Ireland Government (NI) and Ministry of Justice (MoJ) present for the 'Open' part of the meeting. The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management chaired the meeting.

DMAG Wider Consultation

1. Ministry of Justice Update

The MoJ representative gave a recap of the main issues discussed in the Cabinet Office meeting, which took place immediately before the DMAG meeting. Although infection rates are currently rising, particularly in certain parts of England, hospitalisations and deaths are not rising by the same proportion. It would appear that a peak in cases will arise at the same time that the Government are planning to introduce Step 4. It is currently not clear whether all restrictions will be lifted on the introduction of Step 4, or whether some will need to remain. Guidance will need to be updated once this is known.

The CO response to the DMAG paper on Category 2 status for those working in the funeral sector, including suppliers, was discussed. The CO had pointed out that with such a status there are certain obligations that would need to be met, such as collaborative working and data reporting. DMAG felt that the sector had proved it could meet any such obligations throughout the pandemic. Feedback on the proposals will be sought from allied organisations and companies.

2. SG Update

The situation in Scotland is currently similar to that in England and Wales. Cases are rising rapidly, but not hospitalisations and deaths. It would appear that the high rate of vaccination is having a positive impact on breaking the cycle of the virus. The SG are meeting today to discuss what lies beyond level zero. From 19th July all of Scotland will be moved to level zero, and from 9th August it is hoped that all areas can move beyond level zero. Feedback will be sought on what this might mean in terms of retaining some measures in specific sectors.

From 19th July physical distancing requirements will be removed for outdoor settings, and will change to 1m indoors. From 9th August, physical distancing will be removed altogether, as will the caps on limits of numbers who can meet.



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3. SC Update

The SC reported that a number of changes had recently been made, and that guidance is currently being updated to reflect those changes. One example is that choirs are now able to sing, but with a caveat that this will be suspended if the infection rate exceeds 50/100,000. Currently it is not clear whether this rate is a national rate, or if it would be applied locally. Funeral venues will need to start looking at how they can accommodate groups of up to 6 people, in line with general guidance on meeting people. Wakes are now allowed.

The SC took the names of those working in the funeral sector for priority vaccination purposes, but due to the success of the vaccine rollout, some people received their vaccination due to their age ahead of their work status. The SG would like more clarity on the mention of Wales in the Category 2 report.

4. NI update

NI have been observing the position in England, Scotland and Wales. The NI Government has not set any dates for easing of restrictions, but are aware of the clamour to get back to normal. They are witnessing an increase in infections; although numbers are still relatively low the infection rates have double in the last 7 days and are five times what they were a week ago. The current infections are almost exclusively in the younger age group. There are certain pockets of infection, which may relate to end of the school year celebrations.

There are still restrictions in place on hospitality venues and who can meet up in private dwellings. These are reviewed fortnightly. Currently funeral services cannot take place in a private dwelling, and infectious cases are not allowed to be taken to a private home.

From today, 15 people from 3 households are allowed to meet. From Monday, this will be changed to 15 people from any number of households. The advice regarding no funerals in home gardens will remain in place.

The draft regulations currently being produced will set a limit of 500 in a venue large enough. From Monday, the upper limit will be removed subject to a risk assessment. However, the regulations don't state that numbers should be limited subject to that risk assessment. Some venues will be required to maintain 2m social distancing, but not crematoria, cemeteries and funeral homes.



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The issue of football fans attending matches as part of the Euros was discussed. The group agreed that it would be hard to enforce any restrictions when large numbers are allowed to attend the various football stadia.

DMAG Closed Meeting

1. Notes from previous meeting.

The notes from the previous meeting were approved for publication.

There were no matters arising.

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

The Category 2 Vaccination would be re-presented to the CO once relevant feedback has been gained. DMAG discussed how precarious the position regarding coffin supply could become if one of the major suppliers lost staff to self-isolation or illness. The potential variables that could affect the situation going forward were discussed, eg the duration of protection from the vaccine, mutations of the virus, other viruses etc.

3. AOB

The APPG meeting held earlier this week was discussed. It was confirmed that a launch event would be held in London on 6th September. This would be the first day back after the recess, which JBP felt would be a good day for the launch as MPs would be fresh and keen. The NAFD will find out further details about the event and who can attend. DMAG agreed to invite JBP to the next meeting to give an update on their activities. DMAG will ask for an update on the communication plan relating to the reuse of graves.

The NAFD asked that the CMA Order is put on the agenda for the next meeting. DMAG discussed whether the CMA should be invited to a future meeting. The NAFD will make enquiries.

The NAFD will circulate activity reports from JBP to DMAG members.

4. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 14th July at 09.00. The change of date and time from the usual Monday meetings is to consider any issues that come out of the



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Cabinet Office meeting being held on Tuesday 13th July. SAIF will set up the meeting and circulate invitation. NAFD will chair the meeting.

