

Deceased Management Advisory Group

Video Conference Meeting Notes 21st October 2021

The members of DMAG held a video conference on 21st October 2021, with representatives from the Ministry of Justice (MOJ); Scottish Government (SG), Northern Ireland Government (NI) and UK Health and Security Agency (UKHSA) present for the 'Open' part of the meeting. The FFMA had sent their apologies. The ICCM chaired the meeting.

DMAG Wider Consultation

1. Introductions

The representative from the UKHSA was attending her first meeting, so introduced herself to DMAG. DMAG then introduced themselves to the representative.

2. Northern Ireland (NI)

The situation has been relatively stable over the last 7-8 weeks. Infection rates are approximately 1200 per day, but have not increased significantly. There are currently 355 people in hospital, with 33 in ICU. Hospitals are running at 107% occupancy, so there is no scope for an increase. Restrictions have not been lifted in the same way as other nations. It is still a legal requirement for masks in public places indoors; this will continue through the winter months. There is currently a higher incidence of excess deaths over the five year average, with 25-30% more for the time of year. There is capacity to deal with this increase. The number of covid deaths is currently reducing.

The NI representative will email a link to the annual report of the Registrar General in Northern Ireland to DMAG.

3. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ)

The MoJ had provided an update at the Cabinet Office meeting held immediately before the DMAG meeting and had nothing further to add to that regarding the coronavirus situation.



Deceased Management

Advisory Group

The MoJ reported that the issue with exhumation application processing was now resolved.

4. Scottish Government (SG)

The SG reported that there are currently 890 people in hospital, an increase of 68. They are seeing hospitalisation and ICU rates increase, and positive test rates of between 2200 and 2600 per day. The booster vaccination programme has been commenced.

5. Questions and discussion

SAIF asked the UKHSA representative about the survivability of the Covid virus on a cadaver. Previous guidance suggests 72 hours, but is there a more definitive answer? UKHSA promised to look into this and let DMAG know. In the meantime, the guidance is that if a body is cooled or frozen, precautions should still be taken as some bugs can survive low temperatures.

SAIF also asked if there is any modelling regarding winter deaths that can be shared with DMAG. UKHSA will also look into this.

The MoJ representative will ask the CO group to add the UKHSA representative to the meeting invites.

UKHSA informed DMAG that the guidance on funerals and commemorative events has been updated to reflect general guidance on self-isolation requirements. Going forward, any such changes to guidance will be communicated to DMAG as they occur.

DMAG Meeting

1. Notes from previous meeting.

The FBCA had previously circulated minutes and these were agreed.

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



FBCA
Federation of Burial
& Cremation Authorities



The Cremation Society

Deceased Management Advisory Group

FBCA raised the issue of recent media coverage of concerns such as fuel shortages and rising costs, possible energy shortages and usage restrictions. DMAG will ask the CO for their contingency plans for these non-Covid related concerns.

3. [REDACTED]

4. [REDACTED]

5. National Emergencies/Central Government

APCC raised concern that the CO were not confident that there could be management and control by central Government of future pandemics and national emergencies.

DMAG had submitted a response to consultation on national resilience that highlighted the need for central Government control.

DMAG agreed that the question of what the government are doing about this situation and what is their timeline should be asked at the next CO meeting.



Deceased Management Advisory Group

Following that DMAG may wish to invite the CO to a DMAG meeting to raise our concerns about this matter

6. Association Awards and DMAG event

APCC thanked NAFD for entering DMAG into the Associations award. DMAG were very pleased to win this award, especially as there had been some strong competition. Celebrations would be held next time DMAG are able to meet together in person.

7. AOB Round robin



FBCA asked if DMAG are aware of a shortage of gravediggers. No DMAG members are aware of this being an issue.

8. Dates of Next Meetings

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 26th October at 4pm, to discuss the APPG.

The next full DMAG meeting will be following the next Cabinet Office meeting, on 4th November.

SAIF will send invitations for both meetings.

