

Deceased Management Advisory Group

Update 2nd December 2021

The members of DMAG held a video conference on 2nd December 2021, with representatives from the Scottish Government (SG), Northern Ireland Government (NI), and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) present for the 'Open' part of the meeting. The Association of Private Crematoria and Cemeteries (APCC) chaired the meeting. Apologies were received from the Welsh Government (SC), The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and the Cremation Society of Great Britain (CSGB).

DMAG Wider Consultation

1. Ministry of Justice Update

The representative was concerned that a limit on the number of attendees would put funeral, crematoria and cemetery employees at greater risk of receiving abuse from mourners thereby potentially damaging HR relationships within individual organisations. It was also noted that the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) had issued revised guidance for funerals on November 23rd.

2. SG Update

It was confirmed that deaths in Scotland were running at similar levels to those in England, namely approximately 16% above the 5 yearly average for this time of the year.

3. NI Update

The position as set out in the earlier Cabinet Contingency Secretariat (CCS) meeting was summarised, in that infections are rising with just under 2,000 recorded yesterday with 11,500 infections being recorded in the last 7 days. There are currently 332 Covid patients in hospital. 1.5m people out of a population of 1.85 m have had one vaccination and 1.3 m two doses. No Omicron cases had yet been identified in Northern Ireland but two had been reported in the Republic. Links had been established for Travel requirements and exemptions remain as before. LFD tests are required if contact is made with someone who has tested positive and before entering crowded indoor settings.



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DMAG Closed Meeting

1. Notes from previous meeting.

Notes from the meetings held on 4th and 25th November respectively and as amended were approved by those present.

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

The FFMA thought that CCS seemed to be constantly reinventing the wheel as one of the current difficulties was the continual staff changes which regularly take place and result in appointments of staff who have no background in, or apparent knowledge of the 'Death Care Sector' and who do not appear to have received a proper induction into their new posts. It was also noted that very few of our original contacts from when meetings began in March 2020 are still in post. It was agreed that APCC would draft a note to Peter Tallantire for members' approval expressing our collective concerns in this regard.

A discussion ensued on the 'compulsory' wearing of masks and while it was agreed that every effort would be made to ensure compliance, it would not be possible to absolutely insist on it, taking into account the strength of the protests - occasionally accompanied by violence - both in the UK and in Northern Europe as this would put staff at too much of a risk. It had been confirmed in the earlier meeting, that because they are categorised as 'retail' masks should be worn inside funeral directors' premises, although it was acknowledged that flexibility would need to be exercised when people became upset, for example when arranging the funeral or viewing the deceased. SAIF recalled that early editions of the guidance in relation to visits to funeral directors' premises included a concession in respect of wearing of masks in funeral homes and it was agreed that a reminder of this dispensation would be included in the proposed note to Peter Tallantire.

3. Any other Business

The NAFD reported that they had received complaints from members in relation to instances of crematoria issuing frequent revisions to their pricing structures which meant that funeral directors had to reprint the hard copy price lists that they issue to



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their clients. The FBCA stated that while some local authorities raised their fees based on the calendar year, the majority changed them in line with the fiscal year. The ICCM made the point that the one notable exception to this was the Crematoria and Memorial Group who tend to revise fees in September. The Funeral Associations will try to alert the Cremation and Burial Associations if further complaints are received.

SAIF confirmed that the CMA would be reviewing compliance with their regulations in the Spring of next year and reporting on their impact and effectiveness in the autumn following their first year of operation.

The NAFD re-emphasised their concerns in respect of any re-introduction of restrictions on the number of mourners who can attend a funeral and the accompanying difficulties of enforcing them, particularly now that the majority of attendees are now fully vaccinated but also seemingly growing increasingly tired of remaining and revised restrictions.

4. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 16th December at 12.15pm. SAIF will set up the meeting and circulate the invitation. The Cremation Society will chair the meeting.

