

# Deceased Management Advisory Group

**Update 16 December 2021**

The members of DMAG held a video conference on 16 December 2021, with representatives from the Ministry of Justice (MOJ); Scottish Government (SG), Welsh Government (SC), Northern Ireland Government (NI) and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) present for the 'Open' part of the meeting. The Cremation Society chaired the meeting.

## **DMAG Wider Consultation**

### **1. The Ministry of Justice (MOJ)**

There is no update beyond that provided at the Cabinet Office meeting. SAIF raised a query that the Coronavirus Act provisions are due to expire at the end of March 2022 and whether there were any plans in place to retain any of the provisions relating to funerals, and in particular telephone death registrations. The MoJ representative confirmed that they understood that some Local Authorities had indicated that they would move away from telephone registrations but that more information would be sought from Austin Hayes of the General Register Office and reported back.

The Cremation Society queried that the guidance on face coverings included an exemption when singing, for example 'during a service', despite singing having been identified as a higher risk activity (due to the higher risk of transmission of the virus) in other guidance. The UKHSA representative suggested that it would be prudent for funeral staff to provide soft guidance on singing at a funeral service and encourage mourners to perhaps listen to music as an alternative.

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

SC confirmed their 3-weekly review was due the following day and the First Minister would announce any new measures. If any new measures affected funerals, the SC representative would email DMAG members.

### **3. Scottish Government (SG)**

SG confirmed revised guidance on safe COVID working practices had recently been published. NAFD queried whether funeral workers were considered 'critical workers'. SG confirmed that for Local Authorities, critical worker status was decided by the Chief Executive of the LA but



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this did not automatically apply to private sector crematoria. SG confirmed that they had received a number of queries from Local Authorities following the recent changes with respect to restrictions to numbers of households and how this may affect funerals. SG confirmed they would contact DMAG with any specific changes to funeral guidance.

## 4. Northern Ireland (NI)

The situation had not changed in the past few days. There was no particular appetite to introduce new restrictions on numbers but if any changes were made to the funeral guidance, DMAG members would be contacted.

## 5. UK Health Security Agency

The funeral guidance had been updated to reflect revised guidance on face coverings, LFD testing requirements and exemption from the COVID vaccine pass requirements. The guidance on the care of the deceased had also been similarly updated. UKHSA had recently revised research on the presence of the COVID virus on the deceased. The evidence had concluded that there was not a sufficiently increased risk for the current guidance to be revised.

## 6. Revision of Process Guidance Notes 5/2 (12)

APCC explained the current position with the Process Guidance notes review process and offered to share information with anyone not involved with the Environment Agency's Technical Working Group. An in-person event is due to be held in January but that is likely to be moved on-line.

### DMAG Closed Meeting

#### 1. Notes from previous meeting.

The notes of the previous meeting were agreed.

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

FBCA asked if NAFD/SAIF would be able to share their first responder information shared with CO. NAFD/SAIF agreed that this information would be shared.



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## 3. Correspondence with Peter Tallantire

Given the Omicron variant was prompting a number of uncertainties, it was agreed that it would be appropriate for PT to be invited to a DMAG meeting in the new year.

## 4. DMAG event at National Funeral Exhibition

DMAG members discussed the possibility of having some sort of open meeting at the NFE in 2022. NAFD confirmed that they had reserved a room (£650) which would hold up to 100 people. It was agreed in principle and DMAG members would explore this further in the new year.

## 5. AOB

SAIF queried if the joint seminar on 2 February 2022 would still be going ahead, in light of the Omicron predictions. FBCA confirmed that there had been no decision to postpone the event yet but that it could well be postponed. This would be decided in the new year.

FBCA queried whether DMAG should issue a joint guidance statement on safe COVID working practices in light of the risk of staff shortages with the high transmissibility of the Omicron variant. FBCA agreed to prepare a statement and circulate to DMAG for approval.

The next meeting will be held on 23 December 2021 at 12:15pm with FBCA chairing the meeting.

