

Clergy Newsletter

Hello and welcome to the second edition of the Clergy newsletter.

We have been really pleased with the positive response that our first newsletter received. However following in the theme of "process improvement", we have made some slight changes to (hopefully) make this one even better!

This issue will cover the following topics:

- Civil Partnerships in Religious Buildings.
- New forms for correcting a marriage entry.
- Marriage returns Keying update
- Re-ordering marriage certificates.
- Foreign Divorces.
- Quick find guide.

Marriage Corrections

Following a recent review, the Casework team at GRO have introduced a marriage correction application form. This form is to be completed by the couple when an error in their marriage entry has been found and then sent to GRO for authorisation.

The application form and guidance leaflets are currently available from either your local register office or directly from GRO. However there are plans for the forms to be placed onto the "Directgov" website in the near future.

More guidance on marriage corrections and an example of the form and leaflet can be found in Appendix F of the Clergy guidebook.

Civil Partnerships in Religious buildings

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a power to amend the Civil Partnership Act 2004 to allow for civil partnership registrations to take place in religious buildings. Earlier this year the Government published a consultation document which sought views from interested parties, including faith groups, on how to implement this provision. The consultation ran until 23 June and the results are now available on the GEO website. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/equalities/lgbt/>

The government intends to have the resulting legislative changes in place by the end of this year. As the power in the Equality Act 2010 is permissive, any religious organisations who do not wish to host civil partnerships will not be required to do so. However, those that do, will, subject to obtaining the necessary consents from the governing body of their denomination, be able to apply to their local registration authority for their building to be approved for the registration of civil partnerships. The detailed processes, including the requirements for consent will be published in due course. The application procedure is intended to be broadly similar to the application process that hotels or stately homes currently follow to have their premises approved for civil marriage and civil partnerships. If you have any queries about the application process please contact your local authority.

It is possible for Ministers and Authorised Persons to be able to be designated as civil partnership registrars, however this is a matter for individual local authorities. The civil partnership registration will remain a secular event. This change is intended to allow that secular event to take place in a religious setting.

Marriage Return Keying update

Following the first newsletter you will be aware that all your marriage returns are now captured electronically at GRO. The total number of marriage returns keyed to date is 15,604

Since the first newsletter was issued there has been a significant reduction, from 50% to 40%, in the number of marriage registrations that the keying team at GRO have had to make contact with the clergy to check the details.

The team would like to say a big **“Thank You”** for all your hard work, but wish to remind you that ensuring that the entry is clearly written and entering the signature details in pencil in the margin will really help the keying process.

Re-ordering Marriage Certificates

As part of our commitment to maintaining the security and integrity of documentation, Registration Supplies Unit (RSU) at GRO have made further improvements to the procedures relating to the processing and despatch of secure marriage certificates.

Whilst the preferred method of receiving and authenticating an order is by completion of the re-order card within each certificate book, RSU will also accept requests for certificates by either telephone or email. However to confirm their validity, customers will be required to provide the following:

- The prefix and serial numbers of the last book of certificates issued to their place of worship
- Name of the church
- Addressee and full postal address: as stock is sent by secure courier there will need to be someone at the address to receive and sign for it
- Contact telephone number
- Denomination of the congregation
- Marriage number
- Parish or district of church
- Local registration district
- Approximate number of certificates issued per year

Processing and Delivery Times

Target time for processing and delivery is 10 working days from point the order is received. However the RSU team recommend that you order replacement stock at least one month prior to the date that you anticipate making your last entry. Any orders received where information provided is incomplete or illegible may result in longer processing and delivery times.

Foreign Divorces

When a couple approach you wanting to marry in your building, there are some instances when you may refer them to the local Register Office to give notice of intention of marriage.

If either party has been married before and have a divorce which was obtained outside the UK the superintendent registrar may refer it to the Casework Team at GRO.

This referral process can often take longer than the minimum 15 day waiting period. To reduce the number of marriages that have to be postponed whilst waiting for this clearance, it is recommended that the couple are advised to give their notices at the earliest possible point i.e. up to 12 months prior to the intended date of marriage.

Whilst this newsletter has been distributed by your local Diocesan Registrar please feel free to pass it on to other Clerks in Holy Orders who may not have received a copy.

Further copies of the newsletter can be downloaded from the Home Office website as detailed below.

Quick find guide.....

- The most up to date version of the Clergy guidebook and all newsletters are available to download from the Home Office Website <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/agencies-public-bodies/ips/civil-registration/marriage-reg/>