

Introduction

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

Since the General Register Office (GRO) became part of the Identity and Passport Service we have been reviewing who our customers are and how we communicate with them. It was highlighted that as an incumbent you will normally only come into contact with GRO when you;

- order stock
- have a query regarding a marriage, burial or birth re-registration following a baptism
- find an error in a marriage entry.

We acknowledge that the majority of training and guidance that you have received on these particular matters has been provided by staff at your local register office.

The main aim of this newsletter is to establish a direct communication link with yourselves and to provide you with information that you will hopefully find both engaging and useful as you perform your registration duties.

Help Us to Help You

Change is here.....!

As you may be aware, the marriage returns you send to your local Superintendent Registrar every quarter are currently forwarded to the Receipt and Indexing Team at GRO.

This team process the returns and create a central record and index of all marriage registrations in England and Wales.

From 1st January 2011 all marriage registrations are being captured electronically onto the "Registration On Line" system – a system affectionately known as RON - by the Receipt and Indexing Team at GRO.

Whilst the majority of returns that we process are completed correctly, we frequently see errors that create problems for the team at GRO. Following the guidance below will help us process the registrations as quickly and efficiently as possible and avoid unnecessary contact with you. This will ensure that we hold an exact and up to date record of all marriages that have occurred within England & Wales.

- 1. Signatures/Legibility.** We appreciate that not everyone's signature is legible and would ask that you print the name of the persons signing including the witnesses and the officiating officer, in pencil, in the margin. Likewise we ask that all fields on the return are clearly written as this will help with both the GRO keying process and the production of any handwritten certified copies in the future.
- 2. Certification.** Please ensure that quarterly copies are always certified and the certificate for marriage forms are attached (e.g. the 262). This is a legal requirement of Section 57 of the Marriage Act 1949.
- 3. Date of marriage.** Please ensure that this is recorded in the correct format e.g. Tenth March 2011
- 4. Father's details - columns 7 and 8.** If the fathers details are not known please insert a dash in both columns (-). If the columns are left blank we would investigate the omission to establish if a correction is required.
- 5. Registration district.** Please ensure that you complete this information in every registration.

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- 6. Quarterly returns.** Please only enter marriages from the same quarter on one quarterly copy form. There have been instances where marriages from up to four different quarters have been entered onto one form. This causes delays when processing the returns
- 7. Timeliness.** Please ensure that you submit your return (even if it is "nil") to your Superintendent Registrar by the required date. Again this is a legal requirement of the 1949 Act and enables a full public index to be produced without delay.
- 8. Method of solemnisation.** It is important that the method of solemnisation is inserted. As an Anglican marriage can proceed on either ecclesiastical or civil preliminaries (but not both) the correct description should be used e.g. before Banns, by licence or by certificate. There have been occasions when a name has been inserted instead. Omitting or inserting incorrect information may result in the entry being investigated and a subsequent correction may be required.
- 9. Registration ink.** As the marriage registers are to be kept as a permanent record please use proper registration ink. The Clergy guidebook details where this can be obtained.
- 10. True Copy.** The quarterly return that you submit must be a true copy of the register entry including all marginal notes



Clergy Guidebook

We have recently placed an updated and fully revised version of the 'Suggested guidance for the Clergy' on the Home Office website and we hope that you will take the time to read it. The booklet provides useful guidance on all aspects of your registration responsibilities. It covers the following topics:

Clergy Guide

- *Roles and Responsibilities*
- *Registration Stock*
- *Civil Marriage Preliminaries*
- *Pre Marriage Checks*
- *Forced Marriages*
- *Marriage Registrations*
- *Corrections*
- *Quarterly certified copies*
- *Certificate of name given in baptism*
- *Burials*

The updated Clergy guide is available to download via the Home Office website

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/agencies-public-bodies/ips/civil-registration/marriage-reg/> alternatively you can request a copy by emailing GRO at marriages@jps.gsi.gov.uk



This newsletter has been sent to all Diocesan Registrars for them to distribute to the relevant persons. We have also sent a copy to the local registration service for their information.

Further copies of the newsletter can be downloaded via the Home Office website at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/agencies-public-bodies/ips/civil-registration/marriage-reg/>



And finally – Did you know...?

- The Clergy submit around 48,000 quarterly Marriage entries each year.
- Over 95% of these marriages are by ecclesiastical preliminaries.