



HM Passport
Office

ISSUE 6

March 2015

General Register Office

Clergy Newsletter

Introduction

Hello, and welcome to the sixth edition of the Clergy Newsletter and the first of 2015.

We really do value your feedback, so it has been wonderful to receive your comments and views on previous issues. It's helpful to know that you are finding the articles both informative and useful in your day to day duties as a member of the clergy.

In this issue, you will find information on the changes to the marriage notice period and a best practice reminder on your vital role in ensuring that certificate stock is kept secure.

We hope you enjoy this latest issue.

The Training and Improvement Team

General Register Office

The notice period for marriages and civil partnerships is increasing to 28 days.



HM Government

Change is here...

From Monday 2 March 2015, major changes to the process for giving notice of marriage or civil partnership came into effect.

From this date, the notice period for all couples wishing to marry following civil preliminaries in England or Wales, has been extended from 15 days to 28 days.

The changes, which are part of the Immigration Act 2014, will ensure that the Home Office has more time to identify and investigate suspected sham marriages.

Where one or both parties to an intended marriage is a non EEA national, the couple are now required to undertake civil preliminaries and obtain a superintendent registrar's certificate before they can be married in the Anglican Church. Couples should be advised to contact their local register office to establish where they can give their notice. In some instances, the notice period may be extended to 70 days to allow the Home Office to conduct their investigations.

Couples who have already been granted or have applied in writing for a common licence before 2nd March, are not affected by this change.

Updated Handbook now available

The General Register Office "Guidebook for The Clergy" has been updated to reflect the changes to marriage legislation. A copy of the revised Guidebook can be found on the GOV.UK website.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-the-clergy

This is a key document which contains details of the new provisions and guidance on your role in the administration of these important new changes. The Guidebook explains that, as well as extending the notice period for civil preliminaries, the new legislation has introduced a requirement for some couples who are subject to immigration control (including those with a marriage visa) to supply passport sized photographs when they are giving notice at a register office. Where these relate to a couple marrying at your church, these photographs will be sent to you by the register office to provide reassurance that the couple who gave notice, are the same couple who later marry in church.

The Guidebook also contains flowcharts and guidance on how to check the nationality of couples wishing to marry. Specimen documents are enclosed within the guide, including an example of the superintendent registrar's certificate.

Best Practice

Did you know?

Marriage certificate stock issued by the General Register Office (GRO) is classified as secure stock and assets of Her Majesty's Government. As such, all persons with responsibility for holding the certificate stock have a duty to ensure its safekeeping and prevent its loss or theft.

In following the best practice outlined below, you can contribute to public protection in helping ensure certificate stock is kept safe to prevent its misuse.

- **Receipt** – Upon receipt of certificate stock, it is advised that a completeness check is undertaken to ensure all certificates are present. This will allow you to raise any discrepancies immediately with GRO.

- **Storage** – Registers and stock must be kept in a fire resistant safe (ideally with internal dimensions of no less than 310mm or 465mm) and must be kept within the registered building, or in another building approved by the Registrar General. Keys should be held securely at all times and a note made of who holds any spare sets.
- **Record of issue** – It is vital that the certificate record sheet provided by GRO and the records of all marriages for which you have not submitted a quarterly return are kept separate from the actual Registers and certificate stock. In the event that marriage registers are stolen these marriages would need to be registered afresh; keeping these records separately will assist you in this process.
- **Counterfoil retention** – We advise that once a book of marriage certificates is exhausted, that the counterfoil is retained locally and securely for a three year period. This will help address any future questions from GRO (or couples) that may arise in relation to their marriage.
- **Assurance** – It is good practice to undertake an annual check of certificate stock held to provide a level of assurance that nothing is missing and to likewise check on the physical condition of registers held.
- **Reporting lost/stolen stock** – Where you find stock missing or stolen, the loss must be reported immediately to GRO on telephone number 0300 123 1837 (select Option 1). You should also inform your Local Superintendent Registrar.

Further information on your responsibility in relation to Registers and certificate stock can be found within the GRO "Guidebook for The Clergy" which can be found at:-

www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-the-clergy

Any comments on this newsletter?

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