



HM Passport  
Office

General Register Office

# A Guide for Authorised Persons

General Register Office  
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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This booklet has been designed to provide you with guidance in your role when attending marriage ceremonies. We hope you will find it helpful; if you have any queries please contact your local superintendent registrar or the General Register Office (GRO). Contact details are on page 25.

## Roles and responsibilities of an authorised person

- 1.2 Before you start your duties as an authorised person, you must have been appointed by two trustees or members of the governing body of the building. They will need to complete the form entitled “Authorised Person – Certificate of Trustees or Governing Body” (AP1 and supporting guidance notes AP1G) and send it to GRO. The forms, including Welsh versions, can also be downloaded from gov.uk via the links below

[LinkAP1](#)

[Link Welsh AP1](#)

[LinkAPG1](#)

[Link Welsh APG1](#)

- 1.3 A registered building may have more than one authorised person. The “responsible authorised person” will be the first point of contact for GRO and has a responsibility for the completion and return of the marriage schedule. The trustees or governing body may also appoint a number of “additional authorised persons.”
- 1.4 All authorised persons are responsible for ensuring that the legal requirements of marriages solemnized in a registered building are met; this includes marriage preliminaries and the signing of the marriage schedule and the return of the marriage schedule to the local register office.
- 1.5 You will normally attend a marriage at the registered building to which you have been appointed; however, you may also attend at another registered building, provided that it is in the same registration district as the building to which you have been appointed.

### **Marriage of same sex couples**

- 1.6 Before a marriage of a same sex couple can take place, the building must be registered accordingly. This registration is not automatic. Where the building is already registered for marriages of opposite sex couples (between a man and a woman), the proprietor or trustee can choose to ‘opt in’. This is done by completing a further application (Form 78 and 78A). Applications are submitted to the local superintendent registrar, along with consent(s) from all relevant governing bodies and an additional fee.
- 1.7 If you wish to attend at the marriage of a same sex couple, you must be specifically appointed to do so. As with a registered building, this appointment is not automatic. If you are only appointed to attend marriages of opposite sex couples, 2 x trustees or members of the governing body must submit a further appointment form (AP1). This form and guidance notes can be

obtained from your local register office, the General Register Office or downloaded from the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website. If you do not wish to be so appointed, you do not have to – you may be appointed only to attend the marriages of opposite sex couples.

- 1.8 A person who has been appointed to attend marriages of same sex couples can also do so in other buildings within the registration district, as long as the building in which the marriage is to be solemnized is also registered for the marriage of same sex couples.
- 1.9 An authorised person must always ensure that a religious marriage of same sex couples only takes place according to the rites and ceremonies of the governing authorities who have given their consent to such marriages. If you are unsure if the governing authority has given their consent, contact GRO for advice.
- 1.10 **Civil Partnerships in religious premises**

If your registered building is also approved for the formation of civil partnerships, (both opposite and same sex) then it is important to remember that a civil partnership formation in a religious building is by law, an entirely secular event. Any non-statutory religious ceremony, which is also allowed in law and may precede or follow the legal civil partnership formation, must be distinct and separate from the legal formation. It is also important that a civil partnership registrar, who is also an authorised person, clearly understands their different roles during the statutory and non-statutory elements of the civil partnership and clearly conveys this to the couple, the witnesses, and their guests.

We would suggest that authorised persons, who are also acting as civil partnership registrar, adopt the following procedure at a civil partnership formation.

Welcome the couple and their guests to the premises stating the following: -

“The..... (name of the registered building) has been approved according to the law for the formation of civil partnerships.

That according to the law A & B will become civil partners when they sign the civil partnership schedule in the presence of C & D, witnesses and myself as the civil partnership registrar for ..... registration authority.

That I am also the authorised person of ..... (name of building), I will lead a religious ceremony before the proceedings commence with a further ceremony taking place at the conclusion of the proceedings, when A, B, C, D and myself have signed the civil partnership schedule.”

When as authorised person, you are acting as a civil partnership registrar, then you should ensure that the civil partnership schedule is returned to the registration authority to be registered. The parties should be advised that until this is done, they will not be able to obtain a certified copy of their civil partnership.

If you have been appointed by your local registration authority to act as a civil partnership registrar, then you should be aware that it is an offence to fail to return the schedule without reasonable cause to do so.

### **Civil partnership conversion into marriage**

- 1.11 The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 allows couples in a civil partnership to convert their civil partnership into a marriage by signing a declaration in the presence of a superintendent registrar.
- 1.12 The declaration can be signed in the following settings, but only where a ceremony is to immediately follow.
  - Religious buildings registered for marriages of same sex couples (including military, naval and air force chapels)
  - A synagogue
  - A meeting place of the Society of Friends.
- 1.13 The civil partnership conversion into marriage will be registered by the superintendent registrar, who will be in attendance on the day. An authorised person may be involved in the ceremony that follows the signing of the declaration but will have no role to play in the registration.
- 1.14 The superintendent registrar will allow the person conducting the ceremony to view the signed declaration prior to commencing the ceremony. The signed declaration does not need to be copied and will be retained by the Superintendent Registrar so that the marriage resulting from the conversion can be registered. The registration will be carried by the superintendent registrar at the local register office, after which a certificate of the converted marriage can be issued.
- 1.15 It is the responsibility of the couple to make the necessary arrangements with the person conducting the ceremony and the superintendent registrar to attend the proposed venue. If you are approached to conduct a ceremony following the conversion of civil partnership into marriage, you should advise the couple to get in touch with the superintendent registrar at the Register Office.

### **Missing or stolen safe**

- 1.16 In the event of your safe being stolen, this matter should be reported to the Police immediately. If the duplicate registers or schedules are unaccounted for and there is the possibility that it may have involved a theft, you should also report this to the Police. In both cases a Police Crime Incident Number should be obtained.
- 1.17 In all instances, GRO must be notified immediately on telephone number 0300 123 1837 (select Option 1). When you ring GRO, they will take details of the incident, and send out a report form for completion. The details GRO require include the name, address and building number, and the number of registers stolen and the Police Crime Incident Number.
- 1.18 Your local superintendent registrar should also be notified of any loss or theft of schedules or registers.

### **Ink**

- 1.19 A permanent type of black ink should be used when signing the Marriage document/schedule. Registration ink can be purchased from: Ecclesiastical Stationery Supplies. Contact details are in Appendix C.

### **Disuse of building registered for religious worship**

- 1.20 If a building has stopped being used for religious worship by the congregation who originally certified the building, a 'Notice of Disuse of a Certified Place of Meeting for Religious Worship' (Form 77) must be completed by the trustee(s) and returned to the superintendent registrar. The superintendent registrar will then arrange the return of this document to the GRO. Your appointment as an authorised person for that building will also be cancelled, and you will no longer be authorised to attend marriages.
- 1.21 When the trustees or governing body of a building which is registered for both marriages of same and opposite sex couples decide that it only wants to offer marriage ceremonies for opposite sex couples (between a man and a woman), the trustee or proprietor can 'opt out' by completing a form 77A. Once completed, this form is sent to the local register office who will then forward it to GRO. Any authorised persons appointed to the building registered for marriages of opposite sex couples, and the registration of the building for marriage of opposite sex couples, will remain in place.

### **Leaving office**

- 1.22 If you leave office, the trustee(s) must inform GRO. If you are the responsible authorised person, the trustees must appoint a successor by completion of the relevant forms. This may be an additional authorised person, or it may be a new appointment. The responsible authorised person does not need to be the person who solemnizes the marriage; it may be anyone connected with the

church. Where GRO receive a letter directly from an authorised person advising that they have left their post, GRO will write to the trustees to advise.

- 1.23 If there is no other authorised person appointed to the building, the trustees or governing body must inform GRO when they expect to certify a new authorised person, take custody of the duplicate register until a new authorised person is appointed. Should there be no-one available to be appointed as an authorised person, the trustees or governing body may decide against having an authorised person and they should write to GRO. The building will still be registered for marriages and any marriages carried out there will need to be attended by a registrar from your local register office. A new authorised person can be appointed in the future if required.

### **Change of contact details**

- 1.24 Please notify GRO and your local superintendent registrar of any changes to your contact details, including name, home address, telephone number and email address. There is a form (AP2) that can be used for this purpose, which can be downloaded from the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website. Links to the English and bilingual versions of the form are below.

[Link AP2](#)

[Link Welsh AP2](#)

## **2. Marriage Preliminaries**

### **General information**

- 2.1 A marriage can only be solemnized and registered where couples have given notice of intent to marry at a register office, and the superintendent registrar has issued a schedule for the marriage. In March 2015, a scheme to tackle sham marriages and civil partnerships in the UK was introduced. A sham marriage or civil partnership is entered into by a couple who are not in a genuine relationship in order to obtain an immigration advantage, for one or both of them.

In all cases (including Anglican marriage), where one or both parties to the intended marriage is a non-Relevant National, the couple must give notice via civil preliminaries. In March 2015, the notice period for civil preliminaries was increased from 15 days to 28 days but for couples where one or both parties is a non-Relevant National with limited or no immigration status, the Home Office may extend the notice period to 70 days to investigate whether their case is a sham.



The scheme also introduced a requirement for both parties to a proposed marriage to provide a photograph of themselves to the superintendent registrar when they give notice of marriage, where one or both parties is a non-Relevant National and subject to immigration control (see chapter 3.1).

## **RELEVANT NATIONAL**

A relevant national is defined as one of the following:-

- (i) A British Citizen
- (ii) an Irish Citizen
- (iii) A person who has been granted EU Settlement Status (EUSS) either settled or pre-settled or has a pending application for that settled status submitted before 30 June 2021

If either party is not a British or Irish citizen and is unsure if they have EUSS, then they should contact their local superintendent registrar for further advice.

## **Hours of marriage**

- 2.2 Marriages may be solemnized at any hour of the day or night and on any day of the week, including Bank Holidays. However, this will be subject to the agreement of the authorised person and in the event that a registrar has to attend in place of an authorised person, then the couple will need to obtain agreement from the registration district concerned.

## **Restrictions on marriage**

- 2.3 The following are legal impediments to a marriage:
- a marriage contracted by anyone under the age of 18.
  - pre-existing marriage or civil partnership – polygamy/polyandry is not legal within England & Wales.
  - prohibited degree of relationship - a marriage solemnized between persons related within certain relationships by blood or adoption is void. Generally speaking, if there are 2 or less links e.g. a man marrying his mother's sister (aunt), this would be void.

## **Access**

- 2.4 The public must have unrestricted access to the registered building during any marriage ceremony to allow for valid objections against the marriage.

## **Witnesses**

- 2.5 Two or more witnesses must be present at the marriage; however, the statutory requirement is only two of the witnesses are required to sign the schedule. If pressed by the couple then they may have

up to four more, but the full name of the witnesses along with their signatures must remain legible within the space provided on the schedule.

There is no age limit for a witness, but they must be able to understand what is taking place and if necessary, give evidence as to what they have seen and heard if they are required to testify in court.

### Giving notice of intent to marry

- 2.6 Both parties to the marriage need to give notice at either the same or different register offices, depending on where they live and their nationality and immigration status. The couple must complete 7 full days residence in that district (ie district of residence) before they can give notice and they may only give notice up to 12 months ahead of the marriage. After 28 clear days from when the notice has been entered, the superintendent registrar may produce the schedule. The Registrar General may, when there are exceptional circumstances and compelling reasons, reduce the 28 day waiting period when the couple formally applies for this. On such occasions you should advise the couple to speak to the superintendent registrar of the registration district where they gave notice.

For couples where one or both parties is a non-Relevant National, with limited or no immigration status, the Home Office may extend the notice period to 70 days to investigate whether their case is a sham. You should be aware (before confirming a booking) that the notice period may, in certain circumstances, be extended to 70 days.

- 2.7 Where one or both parties to an intended marriage is a non-Relevant National, they must attend together at a designated register office in the registration in which one or both of them live to give notice of intent to marry, unless they are exempt from immigration control (e.g. they have right of abode in the UK or diplomatic status). Your local superintendent registrar will be able to advise you further. A flowchart in Appendix A provides a guide to marriage preliminaries. If, following any contact with the couple you feel that the marriage may be a sham, please follow the advice at paragraphs 3.7- 3.11.
- 2.8 Both parties must be 18 years of age or over on the day of marriage.
- 2.9 If either party has been previously married or in a civil partnership, evidence that the marriage / civil partnership has ended will need to be submitted at the time of giving notice. This is usually in the form of a death certificate, divorce decree absolute, dissolution, or annulment document.

- 2.10 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 take longer than the minimum 28 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.

- 2.11 If one of the parties is serving aboard one of HM Ships at sea, they may give notice to the Commanding Officer who will issue a certificate. In this case, the waiting period is a clear 21 days and not 28 days. There is no provision for the Registrar General to reduce this waiting period. Only when the Captain's certificate has been issued can the other party give notice at their local register office, the superintendent registrar's schedule may only be issued on the expiry of the 28-day waiting period.
- 2.12 A certificate of Publication of Banns in England and Wales, Scotland or Ireland or an Ecclesiastical Licence must not be accepted as authority for a marriage.
- 2.13 A certificate for marriage issued in Scotland (called a certificate of no impediment) for a marriage to take place in England or Wales must be presented to the Superintendent registrar of the district of the marriage, before they may issue their schedule, see appendix D. The certificate of no impediment is not an authority for the marriage to proceed, although after presentation to the superintendent registrar it will enable the schedule to be issued which will be presented to you as the authority for the marriage. On no account should you accept a certificate of no impediment as an authority for marriage and if you are, you should contact your local register office.

### Place of marriage

- 2.14 The couple may only marry in the registered building which is specified in the superintendent registrar's schedule for marriage. To qualify to marry in the registered building, at least one of the parties must either:
- reside in the registration district where the registered building is located
- or
- the building is the usual place of worship.

or

where there is no registered building of the denomination required by the couple in which either of them resides, they may marry in the nearest district which does contain a building of the required denomination. This also extends to buildings registered for the marriages of same sex couples. In these instances, the registered building must also be the nearest building, of the required denomination, registered for the marriage of same sex couples.

## **Marriage by Registrar General's Licence**

- 2.15 The Marriage (Registrar General's Licence) Act 1970 provides for a marriage to take place when one of the parties is seriously ill and not expected to recover. The marriage can be a civil or religious ceremony (except for Church of England or Church in Wales marriages). As all marriages by Registrar General's Licence, (except those according to the usages of the Jews and the Society of Friends), require the attendance of a registrar; there is no legal duty required by an authorised person. If you have any queries about obtaining a Registrar General's Licence, please contact your local superintendent registrar.

## **Marriage of housebound and detained persons**

- 2.16 The Marriage Act 1983 provides for the marriage of a person who is housebound through illness or disability or detained, for example in a prison, to be solemnized where that person resides.
- 2.17 The marriage can be a civil or religious ceremony, and the schedule must be completed by a registrar; therefore, you have no duty to carry out, though if you are a minister or priest, you may be asked to perform the religious ceremony and sign the schedule as the officiating minister in space 8. Notice of marriage must be given to the superintendent registrar in the normal way. If you have any queries about housebound or detained person's marriages, please contact your local superintendent registrar.

## **Two marriage ceremonies on the same day**

- 2.18 If a couple wish to have two separate marriage ceremonies performed on the same day, they should be advised that this is not possible. The couple could choose to have either a religious marriage ceremony or a civil marriage ceremony followed by a religious blessing.

## **Religious ceremony after a civil marriage**

- 2.19 Section 46 of the Marriage Act 1949 allows a couple to have a religious ceremony i.e. a blessing, after their civil marriage. The couple must produce a certificate of their civil marriage before the ceremony may take place.
- 2.20 Where the religious ceremony follows the marriage of a same sex couple, the authorised person must ensure that the consent of the relevant governing authority to the religious reading, or ceremony in the case of a marriage of a same sex couple, has been obtained.
- 2.21 The religious ceremony does not invalidate or supersede the civil marriage and no record may be made in the marriage registers

kept under the Marriage Act 1949. No legal preliminaries are required for such a religious ceremony.

### Re-marriage

- 2.22 A couple who are already lawfully married or in a civil partnership cannot choose to re-marry each other unless there is some doubt as to the validity of the earlier marriage / civil partnership.
- 2.23 Where there is no apparent informality in the previous marriage/civil partnership and the couple merely wish to go through another marriage ceremony with each other they should be informed that they are already lawfully married / in a civil partnership with each other and there is no statutory provision for marriage preliminaries to be completed in these circumstances.
- 2.24 If it is unclear whether a previous marriage ceremony / civil partnership is capable of recognition as lawful, advice should be sought from the General Register Office. If the couple are unable to remarry then there remains the option of have a religious blessing as outlined at paragraphs 2.19-2.21.

### Parental Names

- 2.25 The Regulations now provides for up to four parents to be recorded in a marriage schedule and subsequently the marriage entry for each of the parties to the proposed marriage. These are mother, father, parent and step-parent. These details will be captured when the couple give notice at the local register office.

However, the recording of parental details is a sensitive issue and to avoid any embarrassment on the day of the marriage, we would suggest that you check with the couple well in advance (i.e. prior to them giving notice of marriage) which parental options that they require. The term “Step-parent”, in relation to a party to a marriage, means a step-parent who is or was married to, or the civil partner of, a parent of the party.

## 3. Solemnization of Marriage

### Pre-marriage checks

You must carry out the following checks before you allow the ceremony to go ahead.

### Superintendent registrar’s schedule for marriage

- 3.1 One schedule is issued per couple, by the superintendent registrar of the registration district in which the marriage is to take place and should be presented to you on or before the day of the marriage by the parties to the marriage. In some instances, the schedule will be sent to you directly with a template that includes photographs of the

couple, see paragraph (v and vi below). You must check all the details on the schedule are still correct, paying special attention to ensure that:

- i. the registered building where the marriage is taking place is correctly specified on the schedule (see chapter 2 paragraph 2.14).
  - ii. the schedule is valid (a schedule is valid for 12 calendar months from the date of entry in the marriage notice book).
  - iii. if the marriage is taking place in one of the couple's usual place of worship outside the district in which they live, space 1 of the schedule state "Such building being the usual place of worship of the said *one or both names of the party*".
  - iv. Where one or both parties to a proposed marriage is a non-Relevant National and subject to immigration control, there is a requirement for both parties to provide a photograph to the superintendent registrar when they give notice of marriage. A copy of the photographs will be sent to the Authorised Person along with the superintendent registrar's schedule before the wedding is due to take place. In no circumstances will the couple be asked to pass on the photo template.
  - v. The photographs should be used to ensure the person, who attends the ceremony, is the same person who attended to give notice. If there is any doubt, then please contact GRO on 0300 123 1837 (Option 1). However, if for any reason the photographs are not received, the marriage should proceed as planned. Once the marriage has taken place, the photographs should be confidentially destroyed.
- 3.2 If either iii or iv. have not been completed and you are satisfied that the marriage should go ahead, then you allow it to proceed.

An example of a superintendent registrar's schedule for marriage is in Appendix D.

### Pre-marriage questions

- 3.3 You must check that there is no legal impediment to the marriage and ask the following questions of both parties:

- **What is the name by which you are known, and have you been known by any other name?**

The names and surnames must agree with those on the schedule. If there are any discrepancies, you must question the parties further. If the differences can be satisfactorily explained, you should go ahead with the marriage. If the

differences cannot be explained you should contact your local superintendent registrar or the General Register Office.

See also the example in Appendix D.

- **What is your date of birth?**

The couple must both be over 18 for the marriage to be valid. If not, you must postpone the marriage. This question also ensures that the correct date of birth for each party was entered into the marriage schedule.

- **Have you been through any form of marriage or civil partnership in this or any other country?**

The condition must agree with that shown on the schedule. If there is a discrepancy, you must question that person further and if in doubt contact the superintendent registrar before the ceremony. If you are unable to contact the superintendent registrar, you should seek advice from GRO. If at the time of the marriage evidence shows that the party is free to marry you may proceed with the ceremony. Where the evidence relates to a divorce outside the United Kingdom, Isle of Man or Channel Islands you should contact GRO.

3.4 If the details on the superintendent registrar's schedule do not match the information given to you by each of the parties to the proposed marriage and the discrepancy does not affect the identity or status of the parties to the marriage, or disclose a legal impediment, then you should correct the marriage schedule before the marriage is solemnized. You should cross through any inaccurate information so that it is still legible, and any correction or addition should be made in registration ink and be initialled by you and the party to the marriage. In cases where the discrepancy relates to the status or identity of the parties and you have decided to go ahead with the marriage, you should write an explanation of the circumstances on the back of the schedule.

A flowchart showing the process for pre-marriage checks can be found at Appendix B.

### 3.5 **Forced marriages**

Both parties must be present at the ceremony, be able to recognise each other and enter into the marriage contract knowingly and voluntarily. If you are in any doubt, the marriage should not take place. Some signs that you may wish to consider include:

- either party showing signs of emotional distress;
- either party may show signs of physical harm or assault;
- one party may do all the talking or be reluctant to let the other party be spoken to alone;

- the parties are unable to converse in the same language;
  - an allegation of a forced marriage has been made by someone else.
- 3.6 If you suspect that one of the parties about to is doing so against their will, you should enquire whether they wish to proceed and offer to contact the Forced Marriage Unit at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (see page 26 for contact number). You will need to act with sensitivity, and it is recommended that you find a way to discuss the matter privately (without family members) with the person – be aware that this could be their only chance to let someone know they are being forced to marry. If the person decides to proceed with the marriage it is best practice to get written confirmation that they are entering into the marriage voluntarily. If you decide to not proceed with the marriage, you must inform GRO. If, however the party insists on the marriage proceeding, you should go ahead. Further guidance on forced marriage is available on GOV.UK: [Link](#)

### Sham marriage

- 3.7 Under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, a sham marriage is one entered into for the purposes of evading the provisions of United Kingdom immigration law or the immigration rules and involves at least one party who is not a Relevant national.
- 3.8 The signs of a sham marriage may be similar to those associated with a forced marriage listed above. However, the following may also be indicative of a sham marriage.
- either party giving the impression of knowing very little about the other person;
  - either party referring to notes to answer questions about the other person;
  - one of the parties is seen to receive payment for the marriage;
  - an allegation that it is a sham marriage has been made by a credible third person, e.g. Immigration Officer or Police Officer;
  - there is little interaction between the couple; or,
  - one of the parties seems unable to give the full name or address of the other person.
- 3.9 None of these reasons may in itself indicate that the marriage is a sham and there may be other factors which may arouse your suspicions that are not listed. But it is generally expected that it will be a combination of factors.
- 3.10 A sham marriage should not be confused with a traditional arranged marriage that is usually organised by family members, where there may be no intention to circumvent immigration law.
- 3.11 If you have any concerns that a marriage may be a sham, you should contact your local superintendent registrar, who, if satisfied, is obliged under the 1999 Act to report the facts of the matter to



Home Office (Immigration). You can report your suspicions to the superintendent registrar at any time before or after the marriage has taken place. It is important to remember that a sham marriage is not an impediment to a marriage and therefore is not a reason to prevent a ceremony from proceeding. If you are in any doubt you should contact your local superintendent registrar for advice.

### **Mental capacity and Vulnerable adults**

3.12 Both parties to the marriage must have the mental capacity to understand the nature of the marriage that they are about to contract. A vulnerable adult is defined as a person aged 18 and over and who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and who is or may be unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or serious exploitation. A vulnerable adult could include an individual:

- with learning difficulties
- with dementia
- who lacks capacity as defined under the Mental Capacity Act 2005

In all cases demeanour should not be used solely as a guide that the person is entering into the marriage of their own free will as they may not show signs of emotional distress or harm e.g. just because a person appears happy about a forthcoming wedding does not mean that they have the capacity to consent to the marriage.

A person should understand:

- (i) that they are taking part in a marriage ceremony and understands the words used;
- (ii) the nature of the marriage contract. This means the person must be capable of understanding the duties and responsibilities which normally attach to marriage.

3.13 A person's mental capacity will have been assessed and considered at the time they gave their notice of marriage. However, if at pre-marriage questioning you have any concerns, you should immediately discuss the matter with your local superintendent registrar or GRO who will be able to advise you further. A marriage cannot proceed if a person does not have the mental capacity to marry.

3.14 A key principle of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 is that a person must be assumed to have capacity unless it is established that he/she lacks capacity. It should never be assumed that because a person has a learning disability, that they lack the capacity to marry.

# The Marriage Ceremony

## Declaratory and contracting words

3.15 You and the witnesses must hear the couple use one of the following declarations and one of the following contracting words during the ceremony:

3.16 Declaration

I do solemnly declare that I know not of any lawful impediment why I, *(name)* may not be joined in matrimony to *(name)* **or** I declare that I know of no legal reason why I, *(name)* may not be joined in marriage to *(name)* **or** by replying "I am" to the question "Are you, *(name)* free lawfully to marry *(name)*).

3.17 Contracting words

I call upon these persons here present to witness that I, *(name)* do take thee  
*(name)* to be my lawful wedded  
wife/husband **or**  
I *(name)* take you/thee *(name)* to be my wedded wife/husband

## Welsh translations

3.18 Declaration

'Yr wyf fi yn ddifrifol yn hysbysu na wn i am un rhwystr cyfreithlon, fel na ellir fy uno, i, *(Enw)*, mewn priodas â *(Enw)*'.

### Neu

'Yr wyf yn hysbysu na wn i am unrhyw reswm cyfreithlon fel na ellir fy uno i *(Enw)* mewn priodas â *(Enw)*.'

### neu

'trwy ymateb "Ydwyf" i'r cwestiwn "Ydych chi *(Enw)* yn rhydd, yn gyfreithlon, i briodi *(Enw)*?".'

3.19 Contracting words

'Yr wyf fi yn galw ar y personau hyn sydd yma'n bresennol i dystiolaethu fy mod i,  
*(Enw)*, yn dy gymryd di, *(Enw)*,  
yn wraig briod gyfreithlon (neu  
yn ŵr priod cyfreithlon) i mi'. **neu**

'Yr wyf fi, *(Enw)*, yn dy gymryd di, *(Enw)*, yn wraig briod (neu yn ŵr priod) i mi'

3.20 When the couple are saying the contracting words, a male will always be described as a 'husband' and a female will always be described as a 'wife'. It may be that not all couples are happy with

this terminology, but the law does not allow for a female to be described as husband, or male as a wife.

After the contracting declarations have been made, it is customary for the person solemnizing a marriage to confirm that the couple are now “husband and wife”. If it is known that a same sex couple are unhappy with the new terminology to be used e.g. “husband and husband” or “wife and wife” a more neutral conclusion could be used to confirm that the couple are now “legally married”.

- 3.21 If either of the parties is unable to speak, or understand English (or Welsh where the marriage is to be solemnised using the Welsh language), they must bring an interpreter. The declaratory and contracting words must be said by the couple in both their own language, and English, and the interpreter should sign the marriage schedule as a witness.
- 3.22 If either of the couple have a speech or hearing impediment, they should bring along an interpreter, or you may wish to write out the declaratory and contracting words for them to sign; it is your responsibility to ensure that you are content that the legal requirements have been fulfilled.

## 4. Completion and Signing the Marriage Schedule

### Errors found before the ceremony

- 4.1 The authorised person should check the details on the marriage schedule with the parties to ensure they are correct. If a discrepancy is found at this stage and does not affect the identity or status of the parties, then it can manually amended and initialled by the relevant party and the authorised person as outlined at paragraph 3.4.

### Signing the schedule

- 4.2 On the completion of the ceremony. In space 8 you should add the rites used in the ceremony, i.e. Methodist, Hindus etc, and your signature after” by schedule by me” and your name and designation. Alternatively, if a minister of religion officiated at the ceremony, then they must add their name and signature in space 8 instead. In space 9 the parties should add their usual signatures followed by the witnesses in space 10. The witnesses should also add their names of their signatures in space 10. In space 11 you should sign adding you name and designation.

For marriages in a registered building the person signing space 8 of the marriage schedule may also be the same person signing space 11 (see above).

Any correction to the marriage schedule should be done following pre-marriage questioning and before the marriage is solemnised, see paragraph 3.4. However, a minor typographical or transcription error,

for example the misspelling of an occupation may be corrected at this stage.

Once the schedule has been signed you should advise the couple that you will return it to the local register office for the marriage to be registered and a certificate issued. Alternatively, and with your agreement, the parties or a relative can return the marriage document to the local register office on your behalf. Once this has been done, and not before, the couple or their representatives will be able to apply for and purchase a marriage certificate.

4.3 Where a person makes a mark or signs in a foreign language, you should write either

- “the mark of.....”

or

- “the signature of.....”

next to the mark or signature and then input the forenames and surnames of that person.

### **Illegible signatures**

4.4 If one or more of the signatures (including the officiating officer) are illegible, please ensure that you print the names that they relate to, in pencil, on the reverse of the schedule. As a matter of good practice, we would suggest that this is done in all cases, ie whether the signatures are illegible or not as this will help the registration officer who registers the marriages on RON at the local register office, when the schedule is returned to there. It will also reduce telephone calls from the local registration service, querying the legibility of a signature.

4.5 When a marriage is attended by an authorised person from another registered building within the registration district, they should describe themselves in the attestation as ‘Minister, Imam etc of ..... adding the name of the building they are appointed to.

As a matter of good practice, we would strongly recommend that you should print the signatures of the parties to the marriage on the reverse of the marriage schedule. This will reduce the incidence of registration officers contacting you to clarify a signature prior to registration.

### **Return of the schedule to the Local Register Office**

4.6 The Authorised Person is legally required to return the signed marriage schedule to their local register office within 21 days of the

date of marriage. If the register office has not received the schedule within the 21 days, they will write to you to request the return of the marriage schedule.

- 4.7 If the signed marriage schedule has still not been received within 8 days of the date of this letter, then the local registration service will send a further notice requiring you to attend in person at the register office within 8 days of the date of the notice.

Failure to attend the register office after being given a notice to do so is an offence and you may be liable to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale, which is currently £1000.

Alternatively, and with your agreement, the parties or a relative can return the marriage document to the local register office on your behalf. Once received at the register office the marriage is registered, in the electronic register (Registration Online, RON), and the parties can then apply for and purchase a marriage certificate.

### **Filled register books and searching and issuing certificates**

- 4.8 Following the implementation of the Civil Partnerships, Marriages and Deaths (Registration etc.) Act 2019 (the 2019 Act), there is no requirement for marriage registers to be completed by Authorised persons (see above paragraphs). The place of worship will however have a number of registers that are completed or closed. These registers cannot be used for issuing certificates. However, a member of the public may still search the registers if they wish, although if they require a certified copy then they will need to contact the local register office or the GRO. Your closed duplicate registers must be kept in a fire-resistant safe (ideally with internal dimensions of no less than 310mm by 465mm) and must be kept in the registered building, or in another building approved by the Registrar General.

- 4.9 There may be occasions where a couple will have insufficient time to obtain a marriage certificate after their marriage, yet they may still require some proof of their marriage. For example, they may be travelling abroad on their honeymoon very soon after the marriage ceremony. In these circumstances you may wish to complete and give them Acknowledgment Form at Appendix F. This is a non-statutory form, which confirms the details of their marriage and may, if so required, be produced to any other authority in this country or abroad as evidence that their marriage has taken place. However, they must be warned that it is not a marriage certificate and that as soon as practicably possible, they should obtain a marriage certificate from their local register office.

### **4.10 Examples of completed schedules**

Examples of marriage schedules can be found at Appendix D

## 5. Corrections

### Types of corrections

- 5.1 There are two types of corrections – those discovered before the schedule is complete and those discovered afterwards, this includes when it is registered. For any other errors or cancellation of entries, please ring GRO.

Since the introduction of the 2019 Act there is no provision for an authorised person to correct a marriage entry.

Corrections relating to errors to entries contained in marriage registers will be authorised by GRO and completed at the register office where the register held. The correction will not be made in the closed, duplicate register held at the registered building.

Corrections to marriages which are registered following the signing of a marriage schedule will be authorised by and carried out at GRO.

If a couple wish for their marriage registration to be corrected please refer them to the local register office after completing the Corrections application form [Link](#). Guidance notes for the application form are also available [Link](#)

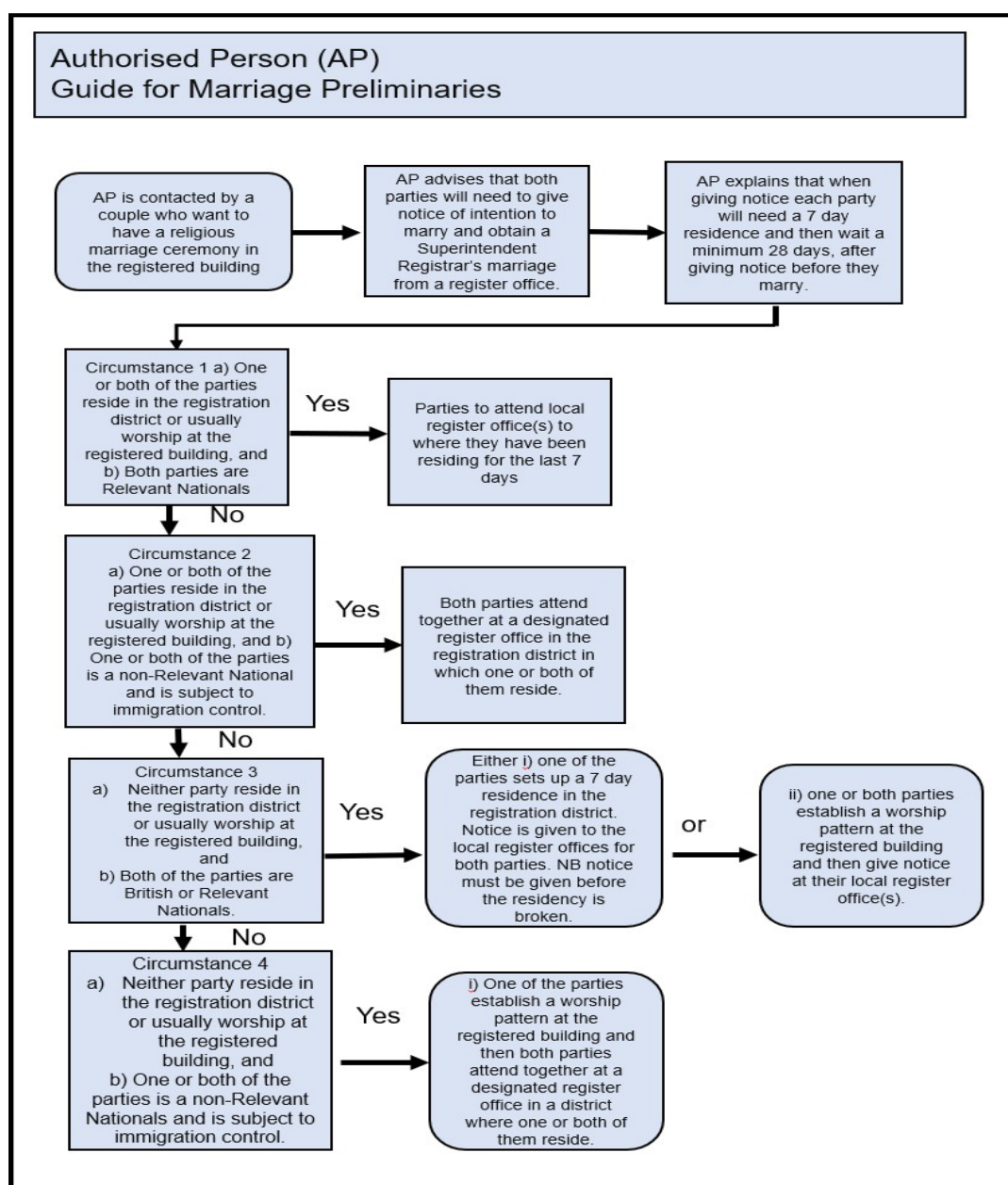
You can, if you wish, also approach the local registration service on behalf of the couple. Any correction made by the local registration service or GRO will be not require the parties to the marriage or any witnesses to be present to witness the correction.

As part of the correction application process, the superintendent registrar may require a copy of the register page for the marriage solemnized at your building. The copy may be provided as a photocopy of the entry or a digital copy and may be transmitted digitally or by another method to the superintendent registrar.

## 6. Offences and Penalties

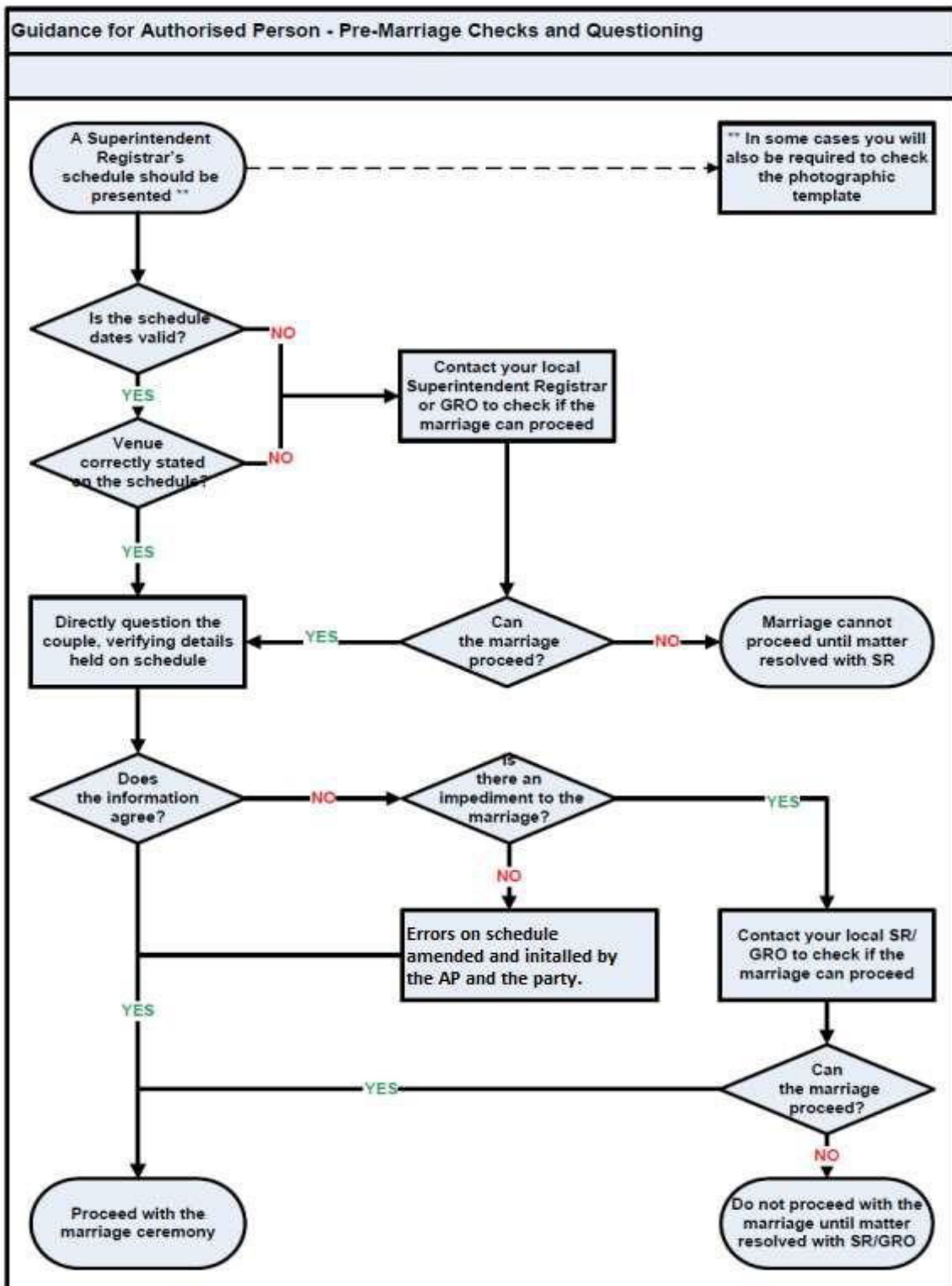
- 6.1 Section 76 of the Marriage Act 1949 sets out certain provisions to impose penalties on persons who refuse or neglect to sign the marriage schedule, or who carelessly lose or allow damage to the marriage schedule or closed marriage register books in their custody. See also paragraphs 4.6 and 4.7 and the paragraph on Civil Partnerships.

# Appendix A- Flowchart- Guide to Marriage Preliminaries



The flowchart also enables the authorised person to be able to advise the couples whether or not they are Relevant Nationals.

## Appendix B – Flowchart – Pre-marriage Checks



In these circumstances the couple will be questioned directly, and any discrepancies will be amended on the schedule and initialled by the couple and the authorised person. Any discrepancies that disclose a possible impediment to the marriage means that the marriage may not proceed until the matter have been investigated by GRO.



## Appendix C - Useful Contact Details

GRO  
General Register Office  
Smedley Hydro, Trafalgar Road  
Southport  
Merseyside  
PR8 2HH  
Tel : 0300 123 1837  
Email : [GROcasework@gro.gov.uk](mailto:GROcasework@gro.gov.uk)

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GRO Data Unit  
Tel: 0300 072 2321  
Email: [gro.fdu@gro.gov.uk](mailto:gro.fdu@gro.gov.uk)

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GRO, Registration Supplies Unit  
Tel: 0151 471 4259/4736  
Email: [registration.supplies@gro.gov.uk](mailto:registration.supplies@gro.gov.uk)

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Ecclesiastical Stationery Supplies 28 Windmill Rise, Hun don, Suffolk CO10 8EQ  
Tel: 01440 784596  
Website: <https://www.registrarsink.co.uk>

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Forced Marriage Unit, Foreign, Tel: 0207 008 0151  
Commonwealth & Development Office [www.gov.uk/forced-marriage](http://www.gov.uk/forced-marriage)

# APPENDIX D: EXAMPLES OF FORMS: SAMPLE SUPERINTENDENT REGISTRAR'S SCHEDULE FOR MARRIAGE

Date / Time

## MARRIAGE SCHEDULE

System No. \_\_\_\_\_

Marriage schedule issued by ..... (designation) in the registration district of ..... in the ..... (administrative area) on .....  
 The waiting period in respect of both notices of marriage has expired, or has been reduced on the authority of the Registrar General. The marriage must be solemnized on or before .....

1. Date and place of marriage		
2. Name and surname		
3. Date of birth		
4. Condition		
5. Occupation		
6. Residence at time of marriage		
7. Mother/Father/Parent name surname and occupation		

8. Marriage solemnized according to the rites and ceremonies of <del>any</del> * in the parish of* ..... by schedule by me ..... (signature) ..... (name) ..... (designation)		
<small>* delete as appropriate</small>		
9. Signature of parties married		
10. Name and signature of witnesses		
11. Signature of person authorized to sign the schedule	..... (signature)	..... (name) ..... (designation)

## REVERSE OF SCHEDULE WITH INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORISED PERSON

These instructions are issued in accordance with section 31(5) of the Marriage Act 1949

### Instructions for the solemnization of a marriage in a registered building without the presence of a registrar.

1. This marriage must take place in the registered building named in the marriage schedule, and nowhere else.
  2. The authorised person duly appointed for the registered building named in the marriage schedule, or an authorised person for some other registered building in the same registration district, must be present at the marriage.
  3. At least two witnesses must also be present, and the doors of the registered building must be open. (The doors need not be actually open provided they are not so closed as to prevent persons from entering that part of the building in which the marriage is solemnized).
  4. The marriage schedule issued by a superintendent registrar as the legal authority for the marriage must be delivered to the authorised person in whose presence the marriage is to be solemnized. Unless this schedule is in their possession, the authorised person must on no account allow the marriage to take place.
  5. It is essential to the validity of the marriage that in some part of the ceremony (and in the presence of the witnesses and the authorised person) each of the parties makes a declaration in one of the following forms:-
    - (a) by saying "I do solemnly declare that I know not of any lawful impediment why I [name] may not be joined in matrimony to [name]"; or
    - (b) by saying "I declare that I know of no legal reason why I [name] may not be joined in marriage to [name]"; or
    - (c) by replying "I am" to the question put to them successively "Are you [name] free lawfully to marry [name]?"
- and that each of them says to the other one of the following forms of words of contract:-
- (a) "I call upon these persons here present to witness that I [name] do take thee [name] to be my lawful wedded wife[or husband]"; or
  - (b) "I [name] take you [or thee] [name] to be my wedded wife [or husband]".
6. These declaratory and contracting words must be said in the presence of the authorised person acting on the occasion and of the witnesses to the marriage.
  7. Immediately after the marriage is solemnized the authorised person must ensure that the marriage schedule is signed by the parties married, by two witnesses and by the authorised person. The signed marriage schedule must be returned to the registrar of the district in which the marriage took place within 21 days of it being signed.

Form 262A

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These instructions also include the requirement for at least 2 witnesses to be present, that the marriage must be solemnised with open doors and options for the words of declaration and contract.

## EXAMPLE OF A COMPLETED MARRIAGE SCHEDULE

The ceremony was according to the rites and ceremonies of the Methodist Church. A minister performed the ceremony, and the schedule was signed by the Authorised Person, in whose presence the marriage was solemnised.

		Date / Time
MARRIAGE SCHEDULE		System No.
<p>Marriage schedule issued by John Smith (name) Superintendent Registrar (designation) in the registration district of Sefton in the Metropolitan District of Sefton (administrative area) on 17 July 2023</p> <p>The waiting period in respect of both notices of marriage has expired, or has been reduced on the authority of the Registrar General. The marriage must be solemnized on or before 17 July 2024</p>		
1. Date and place of marriage	Fourth March 2024, Methodist Chapel, Alma Road, Southport	
2. Name and surname	Howard Andrew JACKSON	Elizabeth Alison Mary WILLIAMS
3. Date of birth	2 <sup>nd</sup> February 1997	10 <sup>th</sup> September 1998
4. Condition	Single	Single
5. Occupation	Civil Engineer	Estate Agent
6. Residence at time of marriage	39 Cheyney Walk, Southport, PR8 9JN	49 Buxton Walk, Southport, PR8 2GG
7. Mother/Father/Parent name surname and occupation	Joseph JACKSON Timber Merchant (retired) Elizabeth JACKSON (step-parent) Civil Servant	Harold Edwin WILLIAMS (deceased) Haulage Contractor June WILLIAMS Housewife
<p>8. Marriage solemnized by according to the rites and ceremonies of/organizer* The Methodist Church.....  <del>James Baxter</del> by schedule by me J Baxter..... (signature)          James Baxter..... (name) Minister..... (designation)          *delete as appropriate</p>		
9. Signature of parties married	<i>H A Jackson</i>	<i>E A M Williams</i>
10. Name and signature of witnesses	<i>John Brown</i> <i>Sheila SMITH</i> ..... <i>J Brown</i> <i>S SMith</i> .....	
11. Signature of person authorized to sign the schedule	<b>R EVANS</b> ..... (signature) <b>Richard Evans</b> <b>Authorised Person</b> ..... (name)..... (designation)	

**MANUALLY AMENDED SCHEDULE AND THEN INITIALLED BY THE AUTHORED PERSON (INDERJIT SINGH) AND THE BRIDE**

Date / Time

**MARRIAGE SCHEDULE**

System No.

Marriage schedule issued by John Brown (name) Superintendent Registrar (designation) in the registration district of Slough in the County of Berkshire (administrative area) on 15 April 2023  
 The waiting period in respect of both notices of marriage has expired, or has been reduced on the authority of the Registrar General. The marriage must be solemnized on or before 15 April 2024

1. Date and place of marriage	Fourth January 2024, Siri Guru Singh Sabha Sikh Temple, Woodland Avenue	
2. Name and surname	Ashok MAHAY	Bimla <del>Lata</del> JAKHU <i>Dev &amp; D J</i>
3. Date of birth	2 <sup>nd</sup> January 1991	15 <sup>th</sup> March 1999
4. Condition	Widower	Single
5. Occupation	Machine Operator (Metal Box Factory)	-----
6. Residence at time of marriage	262 Stamford Road, Slough SL1 3NN	56 Stoney Place, Slough, SL2 4PT
7. Mother/Father/Parent name surname and occupation	Tareem LAL (Farmer) Layla KAUR Housewife	Daxx RAM Foundry Worker Kareet LOTA Florist

8. Marriage solemnized by schedule before me .....	..... (signature)
..... (name) .....	..... (designation)
9. Signature of parties married	
10. Name and signature of witnesses	..... .....
11. Signature of person authorized to sign the schedule	..... (signature) ..... (name) .....

**The amendment was made by the Authorised Person and initialled by him and initialled by the bride.**

## MARRIAGE ENTRY SHOWING CORRECT DETAILS AFTER AMENDMENT & REGISTRATION

<b>MARRIAGE</b>		Entry No.25
<p>Marriage solemnized by Inderjit Singh at Siri Guru Singh Sabha Sikh Temple, Woodland Avenue in the district of Slough in the County of Berkshire according to the rites and ceremonies of the Sikhs</p>		
1. Date of marriage	Fourth January 2022	
2. Name and surname	Ashok MAHAY	Bimla Devi JAKHU
3. Date of birth	2 January 1991	15 <sup>th</sup> March 1999
4. Condition	Widower	Single
5. Occupation	Machine Operator (Metal Box Factory)	-----
6. Residence at time of marriage	262 Stamford Road Slough SL1 3NN	50 Stoney Place, Slough SL2 4PT
7. Mother/Father/Parent name surname and occupation	Tarsem LAL Farmer Layla KAUR Housewife	Dass RAM Foundry Worker Keerat LOTA Florist
8. Signature of the parties married	A Mahay	B D Jakhu
9. Name and surname of witnesses	Amerjit UPPAL, Ran CHOPRA, Preet BANERJEE	
10. Signature of the specified person and the person by whom the marriage was solemnized, if different	Inderjit Singh, Authorised Person for the said Temple	

# CERTIFICATE OF NO IMPEDIMENT (SCOTLAND)

## CERTIFICATE OF NO IMPEDIMENT (SECTION 7 OF THE MARRIAGE (SCOTLAND) ACT 1977)

Name.....

Address.....Postcode.....

The above applicant has supplied me the following information concerning his or her intended marriage.

	<b>Bridegroom</b>	<b>Bride</b>
<b>1. Forename(s)</b>		
<b>2. Surname(s)</b>		
<b>3. Date of birth</b>		
<b>4. Nationality</b>		
<b>5. Country of birth</b>		
<b>6. Country of residence</b>		
<b>7. Place of usual residence</b>		
<b>8. Marital or civil partnership status</b>		
<b>9. Date of proposed marriage</b>		
<b>10. Place of proposed marriage</b>		

I hereby certify that

- the applicant has met the legal requirements of the law of Scotland as set out in the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977; - the applicant is not known to me to be subject to any legal incapacity under the law of Scotland which would prevent the applicant from marrying;
- it appears to me that there is **NO IMPEDIMENT** to the proposed marriage as far as the applicant is concerned.

Signature.....

..... Registrar for the District

of..... in Scotland

**THIS CERTIFICATE IS VALID FOR THREE MONTHS  
FROM.....**

**After this has been produced the superintendent registrar will issue their schedule to the couple to allow the marriage to proceed. This should not be used as an authority for the marriage.**

## APPENDIX F - FORM OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This is to confirm that a marriage between \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ and

was solemnized on \_\_\_\_\_  
at \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Designation \_\_\_\_\_

The register office will be informed that the marriage has  
taken place. Once registered, a certificate can be  
obtained from:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

A fee is charged for the certificate.

Details of register offices can be found on Gov.UK  
<https://www.gov.uk/register-offices>

\_\_\_\_\_