



HM Passport
Office

Clergy Newsletter

General Register Office

Clergy Newsletter Issue 9: May 2020

Introduction

Hello and welcome to the 9th edition of the newsletter for members of the clergy.

In this issue, you will find an introduction and background to the forthcoming changes resulting from the Civil Partnerships, Marriages and Deaths (Registration etc.) Act 2019 in relation to the registration of marriages.

We recognise that church buildings are closed during the current emergency period, that weddings are not taking place and that you have other pressures at this time. However, we wanted to keep you informed of developments as you will already be aware that changes were being discussed.

This newsletter is the first of a series on this subject and future publications will outline the proposals and support available in more detail.

The Training and Business Improvement Team, General Register Office

The Civil Partnerships, Marriages and Deaths (Registration etc.) Act 2019

- You will be aware that on 26 March 2019 the Civil Partnerships, Marriages and Deaths (Registration etc.) Act 2019 received Royal Assent and became law.
- The Act confers powers on the Secretary of State to reform the way in which marriages are registered in England and Wales, moving from a paper-based system to registration in an electronic register, creating a single and more secure system for the maintenance of marriage records.
- The Act enables the introduction of a “schedule” system for the registration of marriages in England and Wales, similar to that already in place for civil partnerships in England and Wales and for marriages and civil partnerships in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

How will this impact my work as a member of the Clergy?

- The changes are to the manner of the registration of marriages and do not affect any of the preliminaries to marriage, i.e. the calling of banns, issue of common or special licence or where required the prior attendance of the couple at the local register office. Nor do they affect the form of the marriage ceremony.
- The new arrangements will see the removal of all hard copy registers and certificate stock, with only the local authority registrar for the district registering marriages, which will be in the new electronic register.
- A marriage document or a marriage schedule will be required for each marriage. This will be issued prior to the marriage and contain the personal details of the parties getting married; these will be broadly in line with those collected and recorded in the existing register. After the marriage has been completed it will be signed by the couple, their witnesses and the officiant.
- The signed document will then be returned to the register office for the registration district in which the marriage was solemnised. It will then be registered in the new electronic register, which will be maintained by the Registrar General. After the marriage has been registered couples will be able to obtain a certified copy certificates from the register office.

When are these changes being introduced?

- GRO and representatives from the Church have been working together since the Act became law to look at the processes and systems needed to introduce the marriage schedule system.
- Before the changes can be commenced secondary legislation will need to be laid and debated in Parliament. In readiness for this, GRO are in discussion with representatives from the Church and from the Faculty Office, on the regulations and finer detail. The changes proposed will also facilitate the inclusion of mother and parent details in the register, instead of just those of the fathers, as is currently the case.
- Further updates on processes and procedures will follow as they are finalised. Training will also be provided. We will be in touch again as soon as we are able to answer more detailed questions.
- We are very aware of the pressures clergy are under as they respond to the Covid-19 emergency. This has affected our work too, and explains why we are not yet in a position to announce a timetable for implementing the changes.
- A firm implementation date for commencement of the changes will be announced in due course. Meanwhile, if you wish to find out more about the 2019 Act then you can access the links below:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2019/12/contents/enacted/data.htm>

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/civilpartnerships marriages and deaths registration etc.html>