



HM Passport
Office



General Register Office

Authorised Persons Newsletter ■ Issue 6 ■ Dec 2014

Introduction

Hello and welcome to the sixth edition of the Authorised Persons Newsletter.

We really do value your feedback so it has been wonderful to receive your comments and views on previous issues. It's great to know that you are finding the articles both informative and useful in your day to day duties as an Authorised Person.

In this issue you will find information on the forthcoming changes to the marriage and civil partnership notice period and a best practice reminder on your vital role in ensuring certificate stock is kept secure. We have also included an update on the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013.

We hope you enjoy this latest issue.

**The Training and Improvement
Team
General Register Office**

Immigration Act 2014

Change is coming....

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

From this date, the notice period for all couples wishing to marry following civil preliminaries or form a civil partnership in England or Wales, will be 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 and civil partnerships.

A sham marriage or civil partnership is entered into by a couple who are not in a genuine relationship in order to seek to obtain an immigration advantage for one or both of them.

For couples where one or both of the parties is a non-EEA national with limited or no immigration status, the Home Office may extend the notice period to 70 days to investigate whether the case is a sham.

Couples who give notice of a marriage or civil partnership before 2 March 2015 will not be affected by the changes.

We would be grateful for your help in raising awareness of these new requirements with any couples who are planning to arrange marriage preliminaries after 2 March.

Further information about the change is available on gov.uk at <https://www.gov.uk/marriages-civil-partnerships/giving-notice-at-your-local-register-office>

Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013

The final provisions of the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 come into force on 10 December. From this date, couples in a civil partnership will be able to convert their civil partnership into a marriage by signing a declaration in the presence of a superintendent registrar.

The declaration may be signed in a building that is registered for the marriage of same sex couples provided that a ceremony is to immediately follow. The marriage resulting from the conversion will be registered by the superintendent registrar in an electronic register held at the register office. Where an Authorised Person is involved in the ceremony following the signing of the declaration, no entry must be made in the marriage registers they hold or certificates issued.

Further guidance can be found within the updated Guide for Authorised Persons
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-guide-for-authorised-persons>

Best Practice

Did you know?

Marriage certificate stock issued by the General Register Office are classified as secure items 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.

Over recent years there has been an increase in the number of burglaries at religious buildings and in many cases marriage certificate stock has been specifically targeted. Stolen blank certificates are often used to facilitate criminal activity and the creation of false identities leading to serious crimes and fraud.

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 Guide for Authorised Persons which can be found at:-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-guide-for-authorised-persons>