



HM Passport
Office

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General Register Office

Secretaries for Marriages Newsletter

Introduction

Hello and welcome to the fifth edition of the Secretaries for Marriages Newsletter and the first of 2019.

In this issue you will find information on the forthcoming changes resulting from the Immigration Act 2016 in relation to new fees for services. There are also some reminders on best practice in relation to the quarterly return process and the security of registration stock and how it aligns with our wider public protection and counterfraud agenda.

We hope you enjoy this latest issue.

Previous newsletters can be obtained from:-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/secretary-for-marriages-newsletter>

**The Training and Business
Improvement Team**

General Register Office

Immigration Act 2016

Secretaries of Marriage may wish to be aware that on 30 November 2018, amending fees regulations, The Registration of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Fees) (Amendment) and Multilingual Standard Forms Regulations 2018 were laid in Parliament and are due to come into force on 16 February.

- Certificate fees have remained unchanged since 2010. The new fees, as agreed by Parliament, will introduce charges to reflect the cost of the service provided. This includes accounting for the additional work required to process an application that is not made online, the cost of searching for an index reference number and the work involved in the processing an application where we are unable to produce a certificate. Certificates issued by local registration officials have also been revised and remove the current three-tier fee currently in place. Certificate fees will be £11 for all certificates issued as a standard service and a new priority service for a fee of £35.
- Additionally the current two tier fee system for the secretaries will be replaced with a single (standard) fee for marriage certificates of £11.00, regardless of when the application is made.
- Also from 16 February, following a successful pilot, copies of register entries for historical birth and death records in England and Wales will be made available in Portable Document Format (PDF) as part of our regular services.
- The fees follow “Managing Public Money” principles and have been approved by Her Majesty’s Treasury.

Details of the changes/new fees for GRO services are listed overleaf.

If you require any further information the regulations, the Registration of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Fees) (Amendment) and Multilingual Standard Forms Regulations can be found at :

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2018/1268/memorandum/contents>



Best Practice

GRO Service	Current fee	Fee at 16 February 2019
Standard certificate (short and full certificates)	£9.25	£11.00
Priority certificate (short and full certificates)	£23.40	£35.00
Offline (Non-digital) application (Non-refundable)	-	£4.00
General index search fee (Non-refundable)	-	£3.00
Retained fee (Unable to process the certificate application from the information given)	-	£3.50
PDF service (historic digital records)	£6.00	£7.00
Priority certificate delivery Options		
Weekday Royal Mail special delivery (before 1pm)		£7.25
Saturday Royal Mail Special delivery (9 am)		£19.25
Overseas courier service		£12.00

MULTI-LINGUAL STANDARD FORMS

A new EU regulation will also be coming into force on 16 February to promote the free movement of citizens by simplifying the requirements for presenting certain public documents in EU countries. It introduces the Multilingual Standard Form (MSF) which will translate the fields from a certificate issued in England and Wales into the official language of the EU country that is required by the customer. The MSF benefits the citizen by providing a cheaper alternative to official translations and will be issued on behalf of the Registrar General by the General Register Office.

Why are we telling you this?

Some countries will only accept an MSF where the corresponding certificate has been issued recently. It is therefore possible you may receive a request for a marriage certificate so the customer may then apply for an MSF. In these circumstances you may wish to inform the customer that a certificate will be issued by the General Register Office at the same time as the MSF. The customer should be directed to the General Register Office to avoid them having to pay for the certificate twice.

In our last Newsletter in March 2015 we included an article with some hints and tips on dealing with marriage certificate stock. We would like to thank you for your continued assistance in this respect. Following on from this we would like to add some general reminders about the completion of quarterly returns :

- **Illegible information** – please note in pencil any information, in particular signatures, that are not clear. This will enable a complete record to be captured on the Registration on-line system (RON) and avoid the need for contact with you.
- **Omitted information** – if any information is not available, for example, father's occupation please put a horizontal line in the appropriate box. Again this will prevent the need for further contact.
- **Certification** - please check that all quarterly copies are certified, un-certified copies have to be sent back to the Register Office.
- **Multiples** - ensure only marriages for the same quarter are on the quarterly copy please. GRO administration and filing is organised by quarters.

Facts and Figures

All England and Wales marriages are entered onto our booking in system by district, church or building and entry number.

The details from the quarterly copy are manually input on the Registration on Line (RON) system and when a full quarter has been actioned, all quarterly copies are sent to a secure storage facility.

Since the introduction of the RON system in 2011, over 400,000 marriages have been captured by the Keying Team. This enables customers to apply directly to GRO for a copy of their marriage certificate (from 2011 onwards). Information is also extracted from the RON system for the Office for National Statistics (ONS) who then produce annual marriage statistics for publication. A link to the latest marriage statistics published by ONS is below.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/marriagecohabitationandcivilpartnerships/bulletins/marriagesinenglandandwalesprovisional/2015>

BEST PRACTICE

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

- **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 to safes should be held securely at all times to prevent any unauthorised access to registration data or blank certificates. It is recommended that a record should be kept of anyone who holds any spare sets of keys which allow access to registers and stock and these should be signed for when transferring responsibility to a new recipient.
- **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. Checks on certificate stock must include checking the serial numbers of any part used and full books. Additionally it is good practice to retain a record of certificate stock that has been issued to you by GRO and note when certificate books have been used.
- **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. You may also be advised to contact the police in relation to the incident.

Guidebook for Secretaries

Since our last newsletter in March 2015, the Guidebook for Secretaries has been amended. The latest version can be downloaded from:-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-book-for-secretaries-for-marriages-of-synagogues>

And finally.....

The Government Secure Intranet or 'gsi' domain was created in 1996 to allow government agencies to communicate in a secure and reliable way. However, advances in technology have meant that the inclusion of 'gsi' is no longer necessary and in March 2019 the domain will be withdrawn and all government agencies need to have removed the '.gsi' from their email addresses before this date. Secretaries are advised that the current GRO email address is therefore going to change. This means that '@gro.gsi.gov.uk' will change to '@gro.gov.uk'. There will however be dual running of both email addresses until at least 31st March 2019. Secretaries should continue to use the publicised email addresses. GRO are currently updating the guidebook for Secretaries related and documentation to ensure that the new email address will be shown by 31 March. Secretaries may wish to make a note of the commencement date of the new email addresses in paragraphs 1.8, 1.18 and Appendix A of the guidebook.

Any comments on this newsletter?

Please contact GROCasework@gro.gsi.gov.uk