



HM Passport
Office

Secretary for Marriages Newsletter

General Register Office

Secretary for Marriages Newsletter

Issue 12: June 2022

Introduction

Hello and welcome to the 12th edition of the Secretary for Marriages newsletter.

This issue celebrates the first anniversary of the introduction of marriage schedule system (MSS).

GRO would like to thank all Secretaries involved in the implementation of MSS and the return of marriage registers and stock to your local register office. We feel that first anniversary of implementation is a time to celebrate the success of MSS and have detailed a few areas for celebration below.

Additionally, we have included a few helpful tips relating to marriage registration.

The Training and Business Improvement Team, General Register Office

One year on - Marriage Schedule System

You will be aware that fundamental changes to marriage registration were implemented just over 12 months ago with the introduction of the Marriage Schedule System (MSS) on 4th May 2021.

One year on, MSS has bedded in as the standard marriage registration process for Secretaries across England and Wales. GRO have engaged with few stakeholders to hear your views about MSS one year on.

“Overall, we have found the introduction of marriage schedules to be an excellent change to the administrative process for the registration of marriages.”

“The changes made last year introducing the Schedule and removing the requirement to register in the registered building improved the service on so many levels. We are no longer responsible for holding the registers, carrying stock and providing quarterly returns. Whilst none of these tasks was a problem, I believe the new system provides a much more secure and reliable service... providing better consistency and accuracy in registration and an overall better service to the public.”

The comments above reflect the tone of feedback received, with the introduction of MSS being regarded as a welcome modernisation to marriage registration.

One year on - Return of marriage registers and stock

Feedback from register offices is that the majority of marriage registers and stock has now been returned to them or archived, as applicable. Some of the larger register office districts have advised that the process took a few months to resolve with quite a few engaging with their Clergy, Authorised Persons and Secretaries through drop in days or even arranging to collect registers in person.

“We received all registers by the end of June 2021. We gave the Clergy, Authorised Persons (and Secretaries) an “Open Week” in early June 2021 when they were invited to bring in the registers. About 80% were brought in on that week and the rest came in within a month.”

GRO expected this process to take some time for completion. Register offices have been working closely with Secretaries to achieve this goal and this collaboration is cause of celebration. However, a number of register offices are still experiencing issues with the return of marriage registers. To assist them, please would you double check to see if you still have any marriage registers and/or stock. If you do, please engage with your local register office, following the guidance “MSS AP Closure Instruction” which is held on the Local Registration Services Association (LRSA) website <https://www.lrsa.org.uk/> and can be accessed by clicking on the link “For Authorised Persons” in “Marriage Schedule System & Immigration Act changes (Clergy Only)”

Marriage Registration – Guidance and helpful tips

GRO advice on all aspects of the role of secretaries is held in the “Guidebook for Secretaries (for marriages) held on Gov.uk.

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

Feedback from Register Offices has highlighted some re-occurring issues relating to returned marriage schedules. Most of the issues raised are covered in the guide and GRO included additional MSS hints and tips in our newsletter 11 from July 2021.

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

We would ask that you re-acquaint yourself with the Guidebook for Secretaries and the additional hints and tips. We have highlighted a few areas relating to registration below which should assist in reducing instances where a register office may need to contact you further when they are creating the electronic marriage registration.

Space 1 - Date and place of marriage – A reminder to check the date of marriage recorded prior to the signing of the schedule. The field may be blank if the couple did not provide a date of marriage when they give notice of their intention to marry, or the date of marriage may have changed.

Space 7 – Mother / father / parent name surname and occupation – step-parent details can be recorded but not Grandparents details.

Spaces 8 to 11 – names and signatures. Please ensure that all names are recorded clearly and where a signature is illegible please print the signature in pencil on the reverse of the schedule.

Additionally, where an officiating Rabbi is also acting as Secretary for the ceremony then they should record their signature, name and designation in both Space 8 and Space 11.

If you have any comments about this newsletter, please contact GROCasework@gro.gov.uk
