



HM Passport  
Office

Authorised Persons Newsletter

General Register Office

# Authorised Persons Newsletter Issue 17: February 2023

## Introduction

Hello and welcome to the 17<sup>th</sup> edition of the Authorised Persons newsletter.

In this newsletter we highlight a forthcoming change to legislation that raises the minimum age that a person can get married or have a civil partnership from 16 to 18 years of age. This change comes into effect from 27 February 2023. This newsletter includes a background to the change in legislation, how it will be implemented, how it will affect you and some frequently asked questions.

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

## Background to the change in legislation

Currently in England and Wales people aged 16 or 17 can get married or enter a civil partnership, if they have parental consent to do so. The Government has recently passed legislation to increase the legal age to 18 to reduce the risks associated with child marriage and civil partnership in England and Wales.

The Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022 raises the minimum age of marriage and civil partnership to 18, and the new law comes into force on 27 February 2023. From this date both parties must be aged 18 or over to marry or enter into a civil partnership.

## How will the changes be implemented ?

GRO are engaging with religious organisations, local authorities (register offices) and other stakeholders to highlight the forthcoming change in the law. The Guide for Authorised Persons will be updated to reflect the new legislation.

From 27 February 2023, where a person gives notice to a register office of their intention to marry or form a civil partnership, registrars will not allow the notice to be proceed unless that person will be 18 on or before the end of the 28 day waiting (public notice) period. This is the earliest date that a schedule can usually be issued for a marriage or civil partnership to proceed.

## How will it affect me?

From 27 February 2023 a person under 18 years of age will not be able to marry or enter into a civil partnership under any circumstances, including those who have already given notice with parental or judicial consent before the law changed.

Prior to 27 February 2023, GRO will provide a report to register offices of couples who have given notice where one or both parties were under 18 on the date of notice and they have not yet married or formed a civil partnership. Where necessary, registration officers will contact their Authorised Persons to discuss options available for the couples.

If you are aware of any couples planning a marriage or civil partnership at your registered building where one of both parties are not 18 we would recommend that you contact the couple as soon as possible to advise them of the forthcoming change of legislation and discuss options with them.

The options available are to either;

1) Marry or form a civil partnership before 27 February 2023, as long as the schedule has been issued and is valid;

Or

2) Delay their marriage or civil partnership until they are both aged 18. If both parties have not reached the age of 18 by the expiration of their notice period, then fresh notice of marriage or civil partnership will be required.

## Frequently asked questions

No	Question	Answer
1	<b>Why is the legislation changing regarding age of marriage and civil partnership?</b>	<b>The changes are being made to reduce the risks associated with child marriage and civil partnership in England and Wales.</b>
2	<b>What change(s) does the new law introduce?</b>	<b>From 27 February 2023 there is no provision in law for a person who is under the age of 18 years to marry or form a civil partnership in England and Wales.</b>  <b>The change in law means, from that date, there is no longer a need to obtain consent for either party giving notice.</b>
3	<b>Does this new law apply to marriages which take place in the Church of England / Church in Wales?</b>	<b>Yes, the change in law applies equally to civil and religious marriages taking place in England and Wales.</b>
4	<b>Is there an offence if I conduct a marriage where someone is under 18?</b>	<b>The new law also introduces a new offence: Under section 121 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014</b>  "A person commits an offence under the law of England and Wales if he or she carries out any conduct for the purpose of causing a child to enter into a marriage before the child's

		eighteenth birthday (whether or not the conduct amounts to violence, threats, any other form of coercion or deception and whether or not it is carried out in England and Wales).”
5	<b>What if the couple have a schedule which has been issued before 27 February 2023 – can I use it as an authority for the marriage to proceed?</b>	<b>Where a schedule has already been issued and either of the parties is under 18 you can use the schedule if the marriage/civil partnership takes place before 27 February 2023, after that date the schedule cannot be used until they are both reach 18. If the schedule has expired before they are 18 it will be invalid and fresh notices will be required.</b>

If you have any comments about this newsletter, please contact [GROCasework@gro.gov.uk](mailto:GROCasework@gro.gov.uk)

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