

ANGLICAN MARRIAGE

CHANGES TO LAW AND PROCEDURE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



QUESTION	ANSWER
ESSENTIAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE CHANGES FROM 4 MAY 2021	
<p>What do we need to do differently for weddings that have been booked to take place after the system changes?</p>	<p>It will be for each minister to decided locally how to advise the couples regarding the changes prior to the day of the marriage.</p> <p><u>Key points to consider:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The option to record up to four mother/father/parent details for each of the couple – this may be contentious for some and time to consider the options ahead of the wedding day may be welcomed pastorally.• Advising the couple that they will not receive a marriage certificate on the day of the service. <p>It is very important that the couple verify the proposed entries before the marriage service to avoid mistakes and to ensure that the information is accurate and can be relied upon to produce the marriage certificate in due course.. When and how that verification takes place will be a matter for you and the couple but remember your due diligence obligations to check identity and information provided against original documents. It does not harm to belt and brace on the marriage rehearsal.</p>

<p>If banns have been called prior to 4 May 2021, but the marriage is on or after this date will I use the marriage register or a marriage document?</p>	<p>All marriage registers will be closed on 4 May 2021. All couples marrying on or after this date will need to sign either a marriage document or marriage schedule with the officiating minister and witnesses.</p>
<p>How do I know whether to use a marriage document or marriage schedule?</p>	<p>Where a couple are to marry following ecclesiastical preliminaries of banns, common licence or special licence the officiating minister will need to produce a marriage document. <i>[mnemonic: Divine = Document]</i></p> <p>Where the couple are unable to use ecclesiastical preliminaries and need to apply to the local register office, a marriage schedule will be issued by the local register office partly completed. Please note that a Superintendent Registrar's certificate will no longer be issued. <i>[mnemonic: Secular = Schedule]</i></p> <p>Couples will require either a marriage document or a marriage schedule and not both.</p>
<p>How do I obtain a marriage document?</p>	<p>The type and print marriage document is available to download on the LRSA website which is hosting the General Register Office's training materials.</p> <p>The Church of England Evangelism and Discipleship Team will also be providing a printable marriage document as part of the Life Events Diary.</p> <p>If a manual form is preferred, the type and print template can be printed as a blank form.</p> <p>Using the type and print option will help to avoid illegible handwriting issues.</p>
<p>What will happen in the marriage service at the point where the couple currently sign the registers?</p>	<p>You will still invite the couple and witnesses to sign the marriage document or marriage schedule in the same way they would have signed the marriage registers.</p>
<p>A single sheet of A4 paper is not particularly photogenic. What arrangements can we make for photographs of the signing of the documentation in the service?</p>	<p>That is for each parish to decide. You may perhaps wish to acquire a leather folder or similar to hold the marriage document or schedule for the purpose of wedding photographs.</p>

CANCELLATION OF REGISTERS	
Can we cancel and return registers and certificates at the register office before 4 May 2021?	No. We understand that some register offices will be notifying clergy in advance of drop in days or times, as they need to ensure that there are staff available to accept the returned stock. There will be local variations but it may be helpful if you prepare in advance in duplicate a receipt listing the number and details of the returned stock so that you can invite the receiving staff to sign and date the duplicate receipt for you to retain for your records.
Is there a deadline for the return of cancelled marriage registers and associated stock to the local register office?	No but you should make arrangements to do so as soon as possible after that date. The exact timeframe is likely to be subject to local variations across the diocese but until the registers are lodged, individuals will be unable to obtain copies of entries which may be needed for legal purposes, such as divorce.
Does every unused page in a marriage register need to have a diagonal line put across it or just the entry after the last one which has been completed?	You will be required to formally close your registers by drawing a diagonal line across each blank entry in registrar's ink and adding a label to the front outside cover of the book.
Do we need to "cancel" the duplicate marriage register as well?	Yes, in the same manner.
We have a register not started yet do we need to return the empty books as well?	Yes, you will need to cancel every blank entry in unused registers and return these in due course.
Do we return both registers to the local registry office?	No. The duplicate register will either be retained in the church safe for searches to be made (although no certificates can be issued) or lodged with the diocesan archivist.
Does the return system only apply to current registers, or do all historic registers need to be returned? We have them back to 15th century.	You need to return the current marriage register to the register office but you can retain the duplicate or file that with the diocesan archivist. If you have historic registers these can also be deposited with the diocesan archivist.

SEARCHES AND ISSUING CERTIFICATES	
What is issued to those who ask for a duplicate marriage certificate if the marriage registers have been sent to the local register office?	From 4 May 2021 only the local register office can issue a duplicate certificate and so the individual will need to be directed to the local register office. Payment of the required fee is to the local register office.
Does the prohibition upon provision of copy certificates after a search being made only apply to marriages after 4th May 2021 or all historic entries?	From 4 May only the secular registrar can issue certificates whether or not historic.
Is it possible to keep a copy of the completed new type and print documents for the Churches records?	Copies of completed marriage documents should not be kept. The Church of England is producing a Register of Marriage Services in order to keep a record of marriage services that have taken place in the particular church or chapel and as a means of reconciliation with the local register office
REGISTER OF MARRIAGE SERVICES	
Is the new register of marriages, which can be acquired from Church House Publishing, a non-legal record or does every parish church need to obtain one?	It is recommended that any church or chapel which currently has a marriage register acquires the new register of marriage services.
Should we acquire one marriage service register one per church or per benefice?	As the officiating minister will need to sign the register, there should be one per church.
Will hospitals now need to acquire their own book of marriages, rather than recording them in the registers of the parish where the hospital is situated?	This is a matter for each hospital to determine but it may well assist with any reconciliation queries raised by the local register office.
If we are not registering marriages, why cannot the service details go in the usual service register? Is there a legal requirement to have the separate register?	The usual service register will not have sufficient space to record all the relevant information.
What about churches that are LEPs, do we need a register of marriage services for each denomination?	This will be a matter for discussion with the other denominations and if the register is to be shared, the denomination of the officiating minister would need to be made clear. It could also result in some confusion with the informal numbering system being suggested for reconciliation purposes, as Church of England services will generally submit

	marriage documents whereas other denominations will be using marriage schedules.
MARRIAGE DOCUMENT/ SCHEDULE	
Do couples need both documents or is it just one of them?	<p>Just one of them. Ecclesiastical preliminaries require the officiating minister to produce a marriage document.</p> <p>Where ecclesiastical preliminaries do not apply, a marriage schedule will be issued by the local register office partly completed to the couple who will then bring to the officiating minister to complete on the day. It is still the officiating minister's responsibility to check the marriage schedule for accuracy.</p>
Can the register office issue a marriage document for a Church of England marriage after banns or licence?	<p>No, as banns or a licence are ecclesiastical preliminaries not secular.</p> <p>The member of the clergy who is to solemnize the marriage must issue the marriage document. It is for parishes to decide in conjunction with the officiating minister if a lay official such as a churchwarden or marriage administrator could be asked to prepare the paperwork on his or her behalf. However it remains the legal obligation of the officiating minister to ensure that all information is correct.</p>
COMPLETING THE DOCUMENT/SCHEDULE	
Is registration ink to be used on the marriage document or marriage schedule?	Yes, registration ink must be used.
Who decides which parent names are included on the marriage document?	The couple in conjunction with the officiating minister, who will advise them on the legal requirements of who can be included as a parent.
Is there a set order that the mother, father or parent's details must be recorded on the marriage document?	No. Each party may choose the order in which the details are recorded on the marriage document and who is named.
In terms of the parent details to be recorded, could it be someone who is not a mother/father/parent e.g.: a grandfather is recorded instead?	<p>No, only a mother, father or parent including step-parent (who is/was either married to or a civil partner of the parent) may be recorded.</p> <p>It should be recognised that this may be a sensitive area for some couples.</p>

<p>Do all parent details need to be included?</p>	<p>It is the choice of the relevant party how many and who they record in the mother, father, parent space.</p> <p>It is not mandatory to record details in space 7 of the marriage document or schedule.</p> <p>However, a maximum of four per party to the marriage may be entered.</p>
<p>Do signatures have to be legible on the marriage document?</p>	<p>The register office will need to be able to read signatures and you should explain this to the couple. It is recommended that you pencil their names underneath each signature for clarification purposes to reduce the number of queries from the secular registrar.</p>
<p>Do we make a note of the names if signature not clear?</p>	<p>Yes it is very important that the name is noted in pencil next to the signature, otherwise the register office will simply query it.</p>
<p>Can we print the document partly filled in from a computer before it is signed or do we hand write it all with the registrar's ink?</p>	<p>You can hand write or type and print before it is signed.</p>
<p>ERRORS</p>	
<p>What if there is an error and we need to make an amendment to the marriage document or schedule before the couple sign it?</p>	<p>It is important to carry out the pre marriage checks with the couple prior to the ceremony to reduce the number of errors.</p> <p>If an amendment is required, you should check the details in the guidance for the clergy issued by the General Register Office which explains what details may be amended and how to carry amendments out before the couple sign the documentation.</p>
<p>SUBMITTING THE DOCUMENT/SCHEDULE</p>	
<p>Who is responsible for taking the completed marriage document to the register office after the marriage?</p>	<p>It is the responsibility of the officiating clergy to return the completed marriage document or marriage schedule to the register office within 21 days of the marriage, for the registration to take place.</p>
<p>Is there a way of directly sending this form or alert to the local register office?</p>	<p>The Regulations do not currently provide for the electronic return of the document once it has been signed but section 53D(4) makes provision for <i>'sending a copy in an approved electronic form'</i> so this is likely to follow in the future.</p>

<p>Can we post the completed marriage document to the register office rather than delivering in person?</p>	<p>The local register office will expect that each church returns any marriage documents as soon as possible and certainly within 21 days of the marriage service. . Some registrars have expressed a preference for weekly return.</p> <p>The recommendation is for personal delivery not post. However the ultimate responsibility for delivering the documents to the register office is that of the officiating minister. Therefore he/ she can decide to post or delegate delivery in person as he/she sees fit to the couple or one of their family members or to the parish administrator or churchwarden. However if the document is lost the officiating minister will be the one held accountable.</p>
<p>Are we able to retain a copy of the completed marriage document?</p>	<p>According to current guidance, copies should not be retained by the church. You should record the marriage in your new register of marriage services, allocate an informal number to the marriage document and mark that number against the relevant entry in the new register for reconciliation purposes.</p>
<p>Will the local register office issue a receipt to clergy who deliver a completed marriage document?</p>	<p>This will be a matter for each local register office and may be subject to local variation across the diocese.</p>
<p>What happens if the marriage document or schedule is lost or damaged prior to the marriage?</p>	<p>Legislation allows for the marriage document or marriage schedule to be re-issued.</p>
<p>RECONCILIATION PROCESS</p>	
<p>Are the document/schedule serial numbered on special paper?</p>	<p>No, the marriage document and marriage schedule will be printed on plain white A4 paper.</p>
<p>Will the new register of marriage services have a numbering system which we can reconcile with weddings that have taken place?</p>	<p>There is a column for a number to be inserted.</p>
<p>How would an informal document numbering system work?</p>	<p>You may wish to note on the back of the marriage document or marriage schedule the number which matches that which you have allocated in your register of marriage services.</p>

<p>Are the clergy required to copy and retain the marriage documents and schedules?</p>	<p>No there is no requirement for you to retain any copies of marriage documents and schedules and current guidance advises that you do not. The signed marriage document or schedule will be submitted to the register office, whose staff will register the event and retain the signed documentation.</p>
<p>How will the local register office ensure all the Church of England marriages that have taken place have been registered?</p>	<p>There will be a reconciliation system in place with the local churches to ensure marriage documents and schedules have been returned and registrations are complete.</p> <p>We understand that some register offices are requesting that clergy notify them in advance of marriage services taking place.</p>
<p>After implementation how often will I be contacted by the local register office to confirm what marriages have taken place in my church?</p>	<p>This will be up to each local register office to decide on the frequency and method of contact with the churches in their districts.</p>
<p>OBTAINING THE MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE</p>	
<p>If couples require a marriage certificate urgently following their marriage ceremony, what can be done?</p>	<p>A form of acknowledgement has been produced, which presumably will be issued by the local register office.</p> <p>Further guidance is currently awaited on this.</p>
<p>Will the arrangements with the Passport Office, whereby we send a chit to allow them to issue a passport in the bride's new name before the service takes place, stay the same?</p>	<p>We are not aware of any change to this process.</p>
<p>Is it the couple's responsibility to apply for and pay for the marriage certificate? Are the fees changing?</p>	<p>Yes, the couple will need to obtain their certificate from the local register office and pay the statutory fee for this. There is no change to any other current statutory fee payable for a Church of England marriage service.</p>
<p>Will marriage certificates issued for marriages after 4 May 2021 still look the same as they do now?</p>	<p>No, marriage certificates for marriages after 4 May will be in a new portrait format.</p> <p>Certificates for marriages that took place before 4 May will be issued in the existing landscape format, to reflect the registers that the details were recorded in.</p>

<p>After implementation on 4 May 2021, can a couple obtain a marriage certificate on the day of their marriage from the local register office?</p>	<p>As the completed marriage document or schedule needs to be delivered to the register office and entered onto the electronic register a certificate will not be issued on the day of the marriage. This applies to both religious and civil marriages.</p>
<p>How long will a couple have to wait to obtain a marriage certificate?</p>	<p>The registration by the register office will be made by the seventh day after the marriage document or schedule is received at the register office.</p> <p>A certificate will be available after this time, though local arrangements for issuing of certificates will also be factored into the timescale.</p>
<p>Is posting out such an important document safe and secure?</p>	<p>Arrangements can be made to collect in person but otherwise the registration service and the General Register Office use the postal system to provide certificates to customers.</p> <p>The difference between using post for a marriage certificate and current advice not to use post for the delivery of a marriage document or schedule is because the marriage document or schedule is the hard copy evidential authority used by the local register office to register the marriage electronically using RON and to issue the marriage certificate from that electronic database. To produce a copy of the marriage certificate from that database is straightforward.</p>
<p>LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMPLIANCE WITH THE NEW PROCESS</p>	
<p>Is all this the responsibility of the "officiating minister" or the incumbent?</p>	<p>The legal responsibility is that of the officiating minister although the incumbent should be aware and be satisfied that officiating ministers know and adhere to current marriage law.</p>
<p>Who is responsible for the checks if an officiating minister goes off sick and a stand in minister officiates? Does the stand in have to check nationality etc.?</p>	<p>Any substitute ministers have always had the duty to satisfy himself or herself that the legal requirements have been met.</p>
<p>In a team with a Team Rector or at the Cathedral where there are a number of clergy, who will be the person named as responsible for the paper work to be submitted on time?</p>	<p>Again this is the responsibility of the officiating minister. However the Team Rector or Dean would have to be satisfied that the minister fully understands and has agreed to follow due process because the marriage has taken place in his or her church and it will be something that will impact on</p>

	the wider church community and the reputation of the church.
Will ecclesiastical insurance provide cover for clergy who make a mistake and do not comply with the new system?	Clergy will need to make their own enquiries in this respect.
THE NEED FOR CHANGE	
Why are we moving to an online register of marriages?	<p>The register online (RON) is being introduced as an opportunity to modernise the marriage registration processes. This includes updating the contents of the marriage entries. In accordance with the Marriage Act 1949 and associated regulations the marriage register entries currently only provides space for the name of the father of each party to the marriage and not that of the mother.</p> <p>Whilst there has been growing pressure from the public and MPs to enable the details of both parents to be recorded and it would be possible to simply amend the marriage register entries under secondary legislation, this would entail replacing 84,000 current marriage registers and associated certificate stock at an estimated cost of some £3m.</p> <p>Modernising the system from hard copy to electronic will enable changes to be made to the marriage entries more easily and at a lower cost. It will also allow more flexibility which reflects the changing family circumstances in society today, for example the inclusion of same-sex parents in the marriage entries.</p> <p>It will be the General Register Office and local register office who have access to RON and issue all certificates. Clergy are not expected to utilise this system, hence the new register book to be kept in the church to record marriage services which have taken place.</p>
What is the cost of implementation of this system for the couple?	<p>The system itself does not bring any additional charge to the couple. The cost for the marriage will remain the same. There is no charge for registering the marriage.</p> <p>The certificate fee also remains unchanged. In future a certificate may be purchased for the appropriate fee from the register office or the General Register Office.</p> <p>Introduction of the schedule system brings with it the closure of the registers and return of the secure</p>

	certificate stock. It will therefore no longer be possible to purchase certificates from the church.
Are banns going to be scrapped?	<p>Presently there will be no change to the ecclesiastical preliminaries and couples will need to complete banns, acquire a common licence or special licence or obtain secular permission in the form of a marriage schedule issued by the local register office (replacing what was formerly known as a Superintendent Registrar's certificate). Without completing one of these preliminaries, the officiating minister is unable to proceed with a marriage service.</p> <p>A wider review of marriage is being undertaken by the Law Commission and other changes will be introduced in due course.</p>
MORE INFORMATION	
Will there be guidance for couples with clear instructions?	Yes, the General Register Office has indicated that guidance materials for couples will be available including leaflets in advance of implementation together with information on www.gov.uk .
Is it possible for you to create a template checklist for us while we are getting used to the new system so that we can be sure we have done everything correctly?	The Registry is currently in the process of preparing this and will circulate the same shortly.
When is the training for marriage coordinators in churches and parish administrators?	A date prior to the end of April will be advertised shortly.
How do we access the recording made of the clergy training sessions?	The recordings were made for the purposes of capturing all questions raised in those sessions and there is currently no intention for the recordings to be made accessible.
Will these notes be available to download?	The PowerPoint slides from the clergy training sessions are available to download in the documents section of the diocesan website together with additional materials such as flowcharts, specified evidence checklist etc.

REGISTER OFFICES WITHIN THE DIOCESE	
Blackburn	Town Hall King William Street Blackburn BB1 7DY Tel No: 01254 588660 Email: registrars@blackburn.gov.uk
Bolton	Albert Halls Victoria Square Bolton BL1 1RU Tel No: 01204 331185 Email: registrars@bolton.gov.uk
Bury	Bury Town Hall Manchester Road Bury BL9 0SW Tel No: 0161 253 6026 Email: registeroffice@bury.gov.uk
Manchester	Heron House 47 Lloyd Street Manchester M2 5LE Tel No: 0161 234 5005 Email: registeroffice@manchester.gov.uk
Oldham	Chadderton Town Hall Middleton Road Chadderton Oldham OL9 6PP Tel No: 0161 770 8960 Email: registrars@oldham.gov.uk
Rochdale	Number One Riverside Smith Street Rochdale OL16 1XU Tel No: 01706 924784 Email: register.office@rochdale.gov.uk

Rossendale	Rawtenstall Library Queens Square Rawtenstall Rossendale BB4 6QU Tel No: 0300 123 6705 Email: Accrington.Registrars@lancashire.gov.uk
Stockport	Stockport Town Hall John Street Entrance Stockport SK1 3XE Tel No: 0161 474 3363 Email: register.office@stockport.gov.uk
Tameside	Town Hall King Street Dukinfield SK16 4LA Tel No: 0161 342 5032 Email: registrars@tameside.gov.uk
Trafford	Sale Town Hall Sale Waterside Sale M33 7ZF Tel No: 0161 912 3026 Email: registrars@trafford.gov.uk
Wigan	Life Centre The Wiend Wigan WN1 1NH Tel No: 01942 705025 Email: wiganregisteroffice@wigan.gov.uk