

Marriage Registration Changes – 4 May 2021

The Registration of Marriages (Amendment) Regulations 2021 came into force on **4 May 2021**. From that day forward, Marriage Registers or Marriage Certificates should no longer be used by clergy.

Closure of Marriage Registers

The local civil Register Offices contacted clergy in relation to closing Marriage Registers and returning registration stock, including Marriage Certificates, to them. If parishes still have duplicate registers and other registration stock, please be in touch with the civil Register Office to arrange return.

NB clergy should not use Marriage Registers or Certificates for any weddings which take place from 4 May 2021 onwards.

Marriage Documents and Marriage Schedules

Please note when a Marriage 'Document' is used and when a Marriage 'Schedule' is used:

- *Marriage Document*

If a couple can get married by **Banns**, **Common Licence** or **Special Licence** (i.e. ecclesiastical preliminaries), clergy or parish administrators will need to produce a **Marriage Document**.

Marriage Documents will be completed based on the ID documentation (passports, evidence of address, paperwork about any previous marriages and residence/qualifying connection etc) and marriage application form (as updated) provided by the couple.

The Marriage Document will be signed and witnessed during the marriage service, where marriage registers were signed previously.

The local civil Register Office will not be involved in this process until after the wedding.

Once a marriage has taken place, the officiating minister will be responsible for delivering the signed Marriage Document to the local Register Office (in the Registration District where the marriage takes place) although this can be delegated.

The civil Register Office will then issue a Marriage Certificate directly to the couple on payment of the £11 fee.

- *Marriage Schedule*

If a couple has to be married following **civil preliminaries** by serving Notice at their local civil Register Office (because they are foreign nationals without EU Settled or Pre-Settled Status), the local civil Register Office will issue a **Marriage Schedule** for the couple (the equivalent of a Superintendent Registrar's Certificate).

Clergy still need to see couples' documentation (passports, evidence of address and paperwork about any previous marriages) and ensure that they are either resident in the parish or have a qualifying connection with the church or parish but couples will need to serve Notice at the civil Register Office so that a Marriage Schedule can be issued and sent to the minister conducting the marriage.

The Marriage Schedule will be signed and witnessed during the marriage service, where marriage registers were signed previously.

Once a marriage has taken place, the officiating minister will be responsible for delivering the signed Marriage Schedule to the civil Register Office (in the Registration District where the marriage takes place) although this can be delegated.

The civil Register Office will then issue a Marriage Certificate directly to the couple on payment of the £11 fee.

Marriage Document now available

A **type and print** version of the **Marriage Document** is available on the LRSA website (www.lrsa.org.uk – log-in details provided to clergy on request – please contact Sara Leader at the details below). It is also available on the Life Events Diary website (www.lifeeventsdiary.org) for those who use the website.

New Information Required for Marriage Document

The main changes to the information required in the Marriage Document are (i) **date of birth** rather than age and (ii) **Mother/Father/Parents name surname and occupation** rather than only father's details. Please keep this in mind for forthcoming weddings so that these details are requested and can be recorded in the Marriage Document.

A numbering system has also been included in the Marriage Document, as set out in the accompanying notes to the Marriage Document. For those clergy in multi-parish benefices or in parishes with more than one church, a system needs to be adopted which enables easy identification of which church the wedding took place in. Perhaps using the first two or three letters of a parish name followed by numbers or part of the Saint's name followed by numbers.

General Register Office ('GRO') Guidance for completing the Marriage Document

There are PowerPoint presentations (both with and without narration) and a Word version of the narration on the LRSA website (www.lrsa.org.uk – log-in details provided to clergy on request – please contact Sara Leader at the details below) for those who would like further guidance about how to complete a Marriage Document both before and during the marriage service.

Guidance for Clergy and Parish Administrators

The GRO's Guidance for the Clergy is available at the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-the-clergy>

Clergy and parish administrators will also find a step-by-step guidance note, produced by the Diocesan Registry, about completing Marriage Documents and Schedules in the Diocesan Registry section of the Diocesan website at this [link](#).

Marriage Application form

Many parishes may have their own marriage or banns application forms which are used to obtain details relating to couples' marriages, however, a revised Marriage Application form, which reflects the new information required for the Marriage Document, can be found at the link below:

<https://churchsupporthub.org/download/welcome-forms-new-design/>

Register of Marriage Services

The Marriage (Keeping of Records in Churches and Chapels) Regulations 2021 came into force on 4 May 2021. This means that parish churches and church buildings which are licensed for marriages are legally required to have a **Register of Marriage Services** in order to maintain a local record (though not a legal register) of all marriages taking place in the building from 4 May. A printed Register of Marriage Services is available via this link: [Register of Marriage Services - Hardback \(chpublishing.co.uk\)](#).

The information contained in the Register of Marriage Services should be the same as that contained in the Marriage Document or Marriage Schedule, including the name and surname of each of the witnesses.

Marriage Certificates

From 4 May 2021, Marriage Certificates will be issued by the civil Register Office only, whether the marriage has taken place using a Marriage Document or a Marriage Schedule.

Clergy will no longer be authorised to issue Marriage Certificates. No fee should be charged by 'the church' or PCC to a couple for a Marriage Certificate. The Parochial Fees Table, fees form and fees information for couples have been updated to reflect this change (please see this link: <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/clergy-resources/life-events-parochial-fees-and-guidance>).

The fee of £11 will now be payable direct to the civil Register Office, and details about how couples can obtain a Marriage Certificate after their marriage has been registered can be found on the websites of civil Register Offices, local to the church where the wedding took place.

Darren Oliver | doliver@wslaw.co.uk

Partner | Winckworth Sherwood LLP

Solicitor and Registrar of the Diocese of Oxford

Sara Leader | sleader@wslaw.co.uk

DT: 01865 297211

Registry Manager