



## From the Diocesan Registry: Fact Sheet

# Wedding Registration Changes

### coming into force on 4 May 2021

Important changes to the way in which weddings are registered come into effect on 4 May 2021. The new arrangements will allow all weddings to be recorded on a central, electronic register. All church wedding registers will be closed, and a new form (a "wedding document" or "wedding schedule") will be signed at the wedding instead. The wedding document or schedule will then be returned to the local register office, where the marriage will be registered on the electronic register.

### What will not change

Who can marry	The laws about who can marry in church are not changing, eg the right of parishioners to marry in their parish church, qualifying connections and legal impediments to marriage.
Preliminaries	The legal preliminaries to marriage remain the same.  If the marriage is by banns, common licence or special licence  Clergy will now produce a <i>marriage document</i>  If the marriage is by Superintendent Registrar's civil preliminaries (including Cases involving immigration control)  The local register officer will produce a <i>marriage schedule</i>
Checking details	Clergy are still responsible for checking the details shown on a marriage document or a marriage schedule with the couple. Any minor mistakes <sup>1</sup> can be manually amended and initialled (in registrar's ink) before it is signed – and <i>after it is signed</i> as well (as the marriage is not registered until later).
The Marriage	The wedding service will not change at all. The marriage is still legally formed in the ceremony.
Church records	Old wedding registers held in the church can still be searched by members of the public (but certified copies can only be issued by the local register office)

### What will change

#### *Preparing for the wedding*

Wedding document	This is a new form. It contains information similar to the current wedding registers. It is created by clergy when marriage is by banns, common licence or special licence.
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<sup>1</sup> Minor mistakes are ones which do not prevent the wedding from proceeding. Mistakes which might prevent the wedding from proceeding are ones which suggest a legal impediment to marriage, or cast doubt on the true identity of one of the parties.

More details are to follow, but it is expected that clergy will be able to download blank wedding documents from a secure website, or be e-mailed a copy.

There will also be a "type and print" version, available to fill in online.

Wedding schedule

This document is similar to a wedding document, but it is filled in by the register office following civil preliminaries. These are always required when immigration status needs to be checked.

The registrar will take and fill in the couple's details on the schedule, and then send the form to the minister for signature at the wedding.

Information recorded

Both the wedding document and the wedding schedule are A4 documents. They should always be completed in [registration ink](#).

The forms will look familiar, as they contain much of the same information recorded in the current wedding registers. However, there are some small changes:

Father's details	⇒	Mother / Father / Parent details Details of a mother, father, adoptive parent or step parent can be recorded. Up to 4 parents can be included; at least 1 must be included.
Rank of Profession	⇒	Occupation
Age	⇒	Date of birth
Witnesses	⇒	While the law requires only 2 witnesses, the form can now accommodate up to 6.

Churches can also add their own numbering system (eg 001/2021, 002/2021 etc) to help to keep track of records and returns.

#### *On the big day*

Signing

The wedding document or wedding schedule will now be signed instead of the wedding register.

Certificates

Clergy will be able to issue a wedding 'Acknowledgment Form' on the day, as evidence that the wedding has taken place (eg if the couple are travelling soon after the wedding). A template Acknowledgment Form will be issued in due course.

The wedding certificate will now be issued by the local register office after the wedding has been registered electronically.

Church Records

Regulations are due to be made requiring the church to keep a record of all weddings, probably in the Banns book. More details to follow.

#### *After the wedding*

Returns

The wedding document or wedding schedule must be returned to the local register officer within 21 days.

It can be delivered in person or by secure post, or (with the agreement of the couple) it can be taken to the register office by someone else (eg a close member of family).

Failing to return the wedding document or schedule in reasonable time is a criminal offence.

Quarterly returns Quarterly returns will end once the last weddings to take place before 4 May have been reported. Instead, the local register office may contact you if they believe a wedding schedule is outstanding.

Corrections Clergy have no legal role in correcting marriage entries once the wedding has been electronically registered, although they may want to support a couple through the process. Couples should be referred to the GRO or the local register office.

### What you need to do now

Close registers On 4 May you will need to close your church registers and return one of the registers to the local register office, together with any unused registration stock (unused certificates, quarterly returns, empty registers etc). At the moment the advice is to retain the second register in the church. Labels explaining why the register has been closed will be sent to you. Detailed guidance on how to mark and close the registers is available [here](#).

Contact couples If you have a wedding planned for *after* 4 May and you have already taken details from the couple, you may need to contact them to discuss the new information required for the wedding document (parents' details etc).

### Where can I get further help?

LRSA The Local Registration Services Association (LRSA) has produced training videos and materials for clergy on a secure section of its website. Contact your archdeacon if you have not yet received log in details for this site.

GRO The GRO are promising regular updated in their regular newsletters as 4 May approaches.  
  
The GRO's Guidebook for the Clergy will also be updated in due course. It is available for download [here](#).

Contacts You can also contact the Diocesan Registry, the GRO or your local register office for more advice.

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