

Banns of Marriage and how to avoid an emergency Common Licence

From 1 July 2021 only British, Irish or those foreign nationals from countries in the European Economic Area (EEA) and who have EU Settled or Pre-Settled Status are classed as '*relevant nationals*' under the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS). Therefore, if both members of the couple are relevant nationals, they may be married by banns or under the authority of a common licence, as necessary for their particular set of circumstances.

Each year we continue to receive a number of emergency applications for couples whose Banns have been forgotten, not read in all of the correct churches or parishes, or where couples have moved but not told the minister until the wedding rehearsal.

Checks to make

In a bid to try to help couples and ministers avoid the unnecessary, stressful and expensive (currently £200) intervention of obtaining a Common Licence, we suggest that the minister or parish administrator check the following with the couple at the beginning of the three month period before their wedding:

- (i) whether they have arranged the reading of their banns in their home parish(es), assuming they are not resident in the parish where they are getting married.

Some couples are so caught up in the excitement of their marriage that they overlook this vital stage, even if this is highlighted in correspondence or during meetings with them. An enquiry to make sure they have made the necessary arrangements in their parish of residence will save a great deal of (last minute) stress for everyone.

- (ii) whether they are still living at the same address as when they applied to get married

If they have moved, it should be established that (a) they know where their Banns should be read, and (b) they still have a 'qualifying connection' to the church where they hope to be married. The website 'A Church Near You' (www.achurchnearyou.com) can be helpful in identifying the church in their new parish where Banns should be read. But if they have lost their right to be married with the church, please contact the Registry immediately for further advice.

- (iii) whether they plan to move at any stage before they get married

The couple need to be asked whether they are moving during the three months before their wedding. If so, it needs to be checked whether it would be likely or possible to complete all three readings of their Banns before or after they move. The correct parish for the

couple needs to be included each time their Banns are read and everyone will need to be clear that the Banns also need to be read in one or more other parishes (which might depend on when the couple move and whether they have completed all three readings before or after any such move).

Encountering difficulties

If ministers or parish administrators encounter any difficulties, it should be reiterated that the couple cannot be legally married unless their Banns have been read in all relevant parishes and the minister where they are marrying receives all the necessary Banns Certificates. It may be helpful to let the couple know the fee for a Common Licence (currently £200), which may be an added incentive.

Contact the Registry or a Surrogate if a Common Licence is required

Even with the best laid plans, a Common Licence may still be necessary. If this proves to be the case, please contact the Registry or a Surrogate as soon as possible to ensure the marriage can proceed.

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