

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL
REGULATION AND ENFORCEMENT

REGISTER OFFICE
SERVICE PLAN 2017/2018

4. Introduction to the Service and the Service Plan

Statutory requirements

The Registration Service Act 1953 requires every local authority to provide a Registration Service. The service is a statutory service and local authorities in general are obliged by law to provide accommodation and staffing to enable the registration of all civil events within a statutory time frame. Such events include the registration of births, deaths, stillbirths, marriages and civil partnerships, the provision of a certificate service and the provision of Citizenship Ceremonies. Various other Acts, such as the Marriage Act 1949 and the Birth and Death Registration Act 1953, place a statutory requirement on the public to register such events.

Although the Registration Service is regulated by the Registrar General, whose office is part of the Identity and Passport Service, the local and legal responsibility for the provision of the Service is given to a senior council officer called the Proper Officer for Registration Matters. The Proper Officer for Birmingham City Council is Jacqui Kennedy, Acting Strategic Director of Regulation and Enforcement.

4.1 The Core Statutory Elements of the Service are to:

- Register all births occurring within Birmingham within 42 days.
- Register all deaths occurring within Birmingham within 5 days.
- Attest declarations for births and deaths occurring outside Birmingham.
- Provide and certify copies of all registrations to the Registrar General.
- Provide a service as a Designated Register Office for persons who are subject to Immigration Control and who may or may not be Birmingham citizens.
- Undertake the legal preliminaries to marriage and civil partnership.
- Provide certificates of birth, death, marriage and civil partnership.
- Attend, provide a ceremony for and register civil marriages and civil partnerships at the Register Office.
- Attend and register marriages and civil partnerships taking place at registered buildings.
- Assist in the registration of places of worship.
- Attend, provide a ceremony for and register civil marriages and civil partnerships at approved premises.
- Assist in the certification of registered buildings as a place for the solemnization of marriages.
- Make statutory payments to authorised persons for making returns of marriage ceremonies in religious buildings.
- Arrange and provide citizenship ceremonies.
- Assist the public with corrections to registrations.
- Re-register births in accordance with the Registration Acts.
- Provide statistical information to the Registrar General and Birmingham City Council.
- Ensure the security, maintenance and restoration of registers and indexes.
- Arrange for the approval of buildings to be used as venues for civil marriage and civil partnership ceremonies.

- Arrange for the approval of religious buildings to be used as venues for the registration of civil partnership.
- Provide a conversion procedure for Civil Partners
- Report Sham marriages to the Home Office (UKVI) and fraudulent applications for certificates to the Registrar General.

4.2 **Non-statutory services provided**

The Service provides a range of non-statutory services as set out below:

- Civil ceremonies, for example baby naming and renewal of vows.
- Nationality Checking Service.
- Settlement Checking Service.
- Provision of advice, searches and copy certificates for use in genealogical research.
- Provision of advice on name changes, bereavement procedures, Tell Us Once.
- Provision of an Emergency Bereavement Service outside normal office hours e.g. at weekends and bank holidays including short notice death registration and out of England removal orders.

The legislation that regulates the Registration Service is listed below:

The Registration of Births Deaths and Still Births

- Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953
- Population (Statistics) Act 1960
- The Registration Service Act 2007
- Registration of Births and Deaths Regulations 1987
- Marriage (Registrar General's Licence) Act 1970
- Legitimacy Act 1976
- The Deregulation (Still-Birth and Death Registration) Order 1996
- The Contracting Out (functions of the Registrar General in relation to authoring re-registration of births) Order 1997.
- The Deregulation (Correction of Birth and Death Entries in Registers of Other Records) Order 2002
- The Registration of Births and Deaths (Electronic Communications and Electronic Storage) Order 2006
- Legitimacy Act 1976
- Adoptions and Children's Act 2002
- The Adopted Children and Adoption Contact Register Regulations 2005
- The Adoption Information and Intermediary Services (Pre-commencement) Adoptions Regulations
- Gender Recognition Act 2004
- The Gender Recognition Register Regulations 2005
- The Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Regulations 1968
- The Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Amendment) Regulations 2007
- The Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Amendment) No 2 Regulations 2007
- Perjury Act 1911
- The Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Amendment)

- Regulations 2005
- The Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Amendment) Regulations 2007
- Family Law Reform Act 1987
- Guardianship of Minors Act 1971
- Affiliation Proceeding Act 1957
- Statutory Declaration Act 1836
- Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990
- Human Fertilisation and Embryology (Deceased Fathers) Act 2003
- Baptismal Registers Measure 1961
- National Health Service Act 2006
- Education Act 1996
- Population (Statistics) Act 1938 and 1960
- The Anglo Spanish Consular Convention 1963

Marriages and Civil Partnerships

- Marriage Act 1949
- The Marriage Act 1976
- The Marriage Act 1983
- Perjury Act 1911
- The Marriage (Prohibited Degrees of Relationship) Act 1986
- The Marriage Act 1994
- The Registration Service Act 2007
- The Registration of Marriages Regulations 1986
- The Marriage Act 1994 (Approved Premises)
- The Registrar General's Act 1970
- The Reporting of Suspicious Marriages and Registration of Marriages (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2000
- The Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants) Act 2004
- The Immigration (Procedure for Marriage) Regulations 2005
- The Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Fees) Order 2002
- Marriage Act 1983 (Housebound and detained persons)
- Marriage (Registrar General's Licence) Act 1970.
- Marriage (Scotland) Act 1956 as amended by the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977
- Marriage (Ireland) Act 1846
- Marriage of British (Facilities) Acts 1915 and 1916
- Marriage with Foreigners Act 1906
- Marriage with foreigners Act 1892-1988
- The Foreign Marriage Order 1970
- Places of Worship Registration Act 1855
- The Civil Partnership Act 2004
- Civil Partnership Act 2005
- The Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005
- The Reporting of Suspicious Civil Partnerships Regulations 2005
- The Civil Partnership (Registration Provisions) Regulations 2005
- The Immigration (Procedure for Formation of Civil Partnerships) Regulations 2005
- The Registration of Civil Partnerships (Fees) (No. 2) Order 2005
- The Marriages Act (Same Sex Couples) 2013

- The Immigration Act 2014

Registration Service and Certificates

- Marriage Act 1949
- Birth and Deaths Registration Act 1953
- Civil Partnership Act 2004
- Civil Partnership Act 2005
- The Registration Service Act 2007
- Legitimacy Act 1976
- Gender Recognition Act 2004
- Places of Worship Registration Act 1855
- The Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005
- The Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Fees) Order 2002
- Baptismal Registers Measure 1966.

4.3 Service Plan

This Service Plan details the work undertaken by the service, both in terms of quantity and quality, how this contributes to, and supports, the high level intended outcomes of the City; customer feedback; intended improvements; financial, people, IT and accommodation resources; and details what service will be provided.

4.4 Planned Service Improvements in 2017/2018 and beyond

- To introduce new income generation schemes.
- To make increasingly effective use of the service's Stopford electronic diary system by offering an online death registration appointment facility, on line payments and online design of bespoke orders of service for wedding ceremonies.
- To continue to review processes and introduce electronic systems to make them more efficient.
- To continue to extend electronic payment facilities to speed up processes and improve the customer journey.
- To introduce enhancements to the ceremonial courtyard.
- To continue with partnership working with hospitals and GP's to improve the quality of death certificates issued by doctor's in order to decrease the return of incorrect certificates, speed up death registration and improve communication channels.
- To improve the weekend provision of the out of England Service for bereaved people who want to repatriate bodies rapidly.
- To implement a full registration service on a Saturday
- To explore and where appropriate enter into partnership working arrangements with neighbouring registration districts for the registration of births and deaths.

4.5 **Current Organisational Assessment**

The intensive workload, of the Register Office, has continued to provide the driver to make further improvements to processes and procedures. Various processes and procedures have been reviewed over the past year and improvements implemented to make the processes leaner. The main improvements include the further employment of the Stopford electronic diary system with the availability to book birth registration appointments online.

Service managers have strengthened partnership working with faith advocacy groups, GPs and hospitals to help reduce factors which delay the death registration process.

A review of the registration appointments system has resulted in a significant increase in the number of appointment slots available.

An electronic cash book was introduced in April and an electronic card payment facility was piloted in January 2017, both of which have helped with efficiencies.

The citizenship ceremonies were reviewed in the autumn and the service has subsequently been enhanced. A representative from the Lord Lieutenants Office and the Lord Mayor or Deputy now attend each ceremony.

Private Citizenship ceremonies are also now available.

Service managers have continued to offer DWP work placements and work with other service areas to help resource the Register Office.

The fees and charges were reviewed and following a benchmarking exercise a number of none statutory fees were revised which has helped improve the services' financial position.

4.6 **Key Performance Indicators**

The Key Performance Indicators for the local registration service are set nationally.

They are as follows:

- 98% of all births registered within 42 days.
- 98% of all stillbirths registered within 42 days.
- 95% of all deaths registered within 5 days of occurrence.
- 95% of appointments made to register births are within 5 working days of the request.
- 95% of appointments made to register deaths are within 2 working days of the request.
- To see 95% of all customers, who have an appointment, within 10 minutes of their appointed time.
- To see 95% of other customers i.e. those without an appointment, within 30 minutes of their arrival.
- 95% of all applications for certificates dealt with within 5 working days from receipt of application.
- 92.5% of customers surveyed expressing satisfaction with the service.

- Total number of complaints not to exceed 0.3% of all registrations.
- To provide all new citizens with a Citizenship Ceremony with 3 months of being notified that their application to become a British Citizen has been successful.

4.7 **National Returns**

A local Registration Service is required by law to make annual and quarterly returns to the General Register Office.

An annual report is also required about performance and achievement this report is made to the Registrar General after the end of the financial year.

4.8 **Performance Indicators**

The Registration Service reports on a series of nationally agreed key performance indicators. The outcomes for the last and previous years are shown below.

Type of Indicator	Indicator	Performance	
National Good Practice Guide Indicators	% of births registered within 42 days of birth	2013	95%
		2014	89%
		2015	94%
		2016	63%
	% of deaths (excluding post mortem and inquest cases) registered within 5 days of occurrence	2013	75%
		2014	75%
		2015	66%
		2016	58%
	% of applicants for certificates dealt with in 5 working days from receipt of application	2013	100%
		2014	100%
		2015	100%
		2016	100%
	% of appointments for birth registrations that are within 5 working days of the request	2013	Sept – Dec 33.5%
		2014	36%
		2015	44.2%
		2016	42.5%
	% of appointments for death registrations that are within 2 working days of the request	2013	Sept – Dec 97.5%
		2014	97%
		2015	93%
		2016	93.4%
	% of customers, who have an		
		2013	98%

	appointment, who are seen early, on time or within 10 minutes of their appointment time	2014 2015 2016	94% 92% 93%
Regulation and Enforcement Local Indicators – customer satisfaction	We will respond to correspondence within 5 days		
		2013	100%
		2014	100%
		2015 2016	100% 90%
Registration Service Local Indicators – speed of dealing with customer requests	To issue copy certificates on the same day as application to customers attending the office		
		2013	100%
		2014	100%
		2015 2016	100% 100%
	To issue copy certificates within five working days to customers applying by post or online.		
		2013	100%
		2014	100%
		2015 2016	100% 100%

4.9 **Quantity of work**

Year	Number of Certificates issued	Number of Births registered	Number of Deaths Registered	Number of marriages at Register Office
2016	137,475	24,425	9,990	1,377
2015	130,564	22,707	10,172	1,315
2014	132,785	23,791	10,160	1,637
2013	134,628	23,636	10,001	1,749
2012	132,000	25,175	9,726	1,808

Year	Number attending citizenship ceremonies	Number of search room post and e mail applications	Number of search room personal applicants	Total Primary Customers attending the Register Office
2016	3,327	16,150	9,938	69,055
2015	2,076	14,882	11,551	66,516
2014	3,332	15,984	16,088	73,816
2013	5,534	15,718	15,718	84,861
2012	4,977	13,981	17,093	84,565

4.10 **Customer Research and Feedback**

As Birmingham is one of the Designated Register Offices and registers births and deaths for non-Birmingham residents not all service users are council taxpaying citizens of Birmingham. A large part of the number of births registered and deaths registered are for residents living in other authorities.

Applicants for certificates are from all over the world. There is also a growing number of customers who live around the world and who contact us to marry in Birmingham or ask about marrying in the UK in general.

In order to gauge how the customer views our service to them we have traditionally provided three separate customer satisfaction questionnaires which relate to the service received in the three main service areas of Ceremonies, Certificates and Registration. Very high levels of satisfaction are achieved and we react to customer feedback when comments or suggestions are made which will improve future service provision.

4.11 Needs of Stakeholders

The Service is continually seeking ways to improve the service and accordingly officers attend meetings with various stakeholder groups. The regular meetings with the Senior Coroner for Birmingham and Solihull, twice yearly Funeral Directors meetings and quarterly Faith Advocacy Group meetings have proved invaluable in moving the service forward to better meet customer needs.

4.12 Likely Future Developments

- It is expected that approval of the revised budget, alongside the approval of the new fee structure will allow the Register Office to operate without causing a financial pressure to Regulatory Services or Birmingham City Council in the immediate future.
- Plans to introduce new chargeable services and income generation schemes should help the service to return income to the city.
- There are statutory services for which fees will be applicable in the future and the GRO has indicated that in 2017 the first phase of these fees will become chargeable.
- Marriage law is due to be revised in the near future making it compulsory for the majority of marriages to be registered at a Register Office; this will assist with verification of marriages and has the potential to be an income generating stream.
- There are challenges to traditional income generating schemes with the announcement of by the GRO to move to on-line application forms for all United Kingdom Visa and Immigration (UKVI) which brings some challenge to the long term sustainability of the current process operated by Local Registration Services in partnership with UKVI with regards to the Nationality Checking Service (NCS).
- The planned tendering of some UKVI services has the potential to further significantly impact this service.
- The service is driven by customer demand. The number of marriages in 2016 has increased slightly on 2015 as have the number of new citizens. The number of birth registrations has increased against 2015 which has resulted in increased income.

- The fees for use of the ceremony rooms are benchmarked against neighbouring districts. The Tell Us Once Government initiative has reduced the need for additional certificates traditionally a means of generating income. The Passport Agency viewing documents provided by the General Register Office (GRO) and the Deregulation Act 2015, which allows GRO only to provide cheaper copies of events rather than certificates from local offices has also damaged this potential income generation stream.
- Although the service is restricted in the ways in which it can generate income in that the majority of fees are statutory and do not reflect the cost of delivery, review of non- statutory services has resulted in an increase in the fees charged for non -statutory to reflect the cost of delivery.
- In 2017 the GRO is to introduce a raft of fees for services which previously have been non chargeable.
- In recent years staffing levels have been reduced and some posts held vacant to mitigate a challenging income target, however this has impacted on the ability of the service to meet the nationally agreed KPIs timeliness registration targets which are reflected in the measures table below and has attracted GRO intervention. It should be noted that failure to provide some duties is an offence. Although more appointments have been made available this is not sustainable in the long term and limited recruitment is therefore necessary.

4.13 **Potential for Services to be provided by outside organisations**

The Registration Service is a statutory function governed by the Registrar General and is not open to provision by outside organisations or competition from outside the council. The law requires the service to be provided by local authorities even though it is a national requirement,

4.14 **Service Delivery**

The service will continue to provide excellent services including the following:

- Registration services for the Citizens of Birmingham and beyond, as required in legislation.
- The reporting of sham marriages and fraudulent applications for certificates.
- The forwarding of any submitted foreign divorces accepted at the time of giving notice of marriage or civil partnership, to the Registrar General, within two working days of receipt.
- All requests for corrections requiring the authority of the Registrar General, will be forwarded to the General Register Office, within two working days of receipt from the customer.
- All correspondence will be answered, where possible, within 48 hours.
- The treatment of customers will be carried out in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Birmingham Promise and the Service Area's Customer Care guidelines.

- 4.15 The service clearly and directly supports the Council **Business Plan 2015+ Priorities** of “A Fair City” as it has delivered the service within budget and is supporting the drive to channel shift by moving more processes on line for example on line appointments.

It is also supporting the Council's 2020Vision by supporting the provision of a “Modern Council” in offering a weekend and bank holiday Out of England service and is working towards the provision of full a registration service on a Saturday , online payments and an online bespoke wedding service.

It supports a “Strong Economy” by the delivery of services within budget
It supports a “Happy health city” by helping to prevent family breakdown with the provision of weddings and civil partnership services, holding of a spring Wedding fayre and reducing waiting times to registrations thereby supporting safeguarding of new borns by providing them with an identity as soon as possible.

The table below details the service provision for the year and links it to outcome measures. A number of key targets have not been met due to an increase in birth registrations and staffing levels:

Service Provision	Outcome	Measure	Target	Actual
To be available to Register births and deaths within statutory time limits	To provide an efficient and timely Registration service for our customers	Customer Satisfaction with the overall quality of our services	92.5%	95%
		Waiting times	95% of customers seen within 10 minutes with appointment	95%
To be available to Register births and deaths within statutory time limits	To provide an efficient and timely Registration service for our customers	Ability to make an appointment % of appointments for registration of births within 42 working days of birth (Or 5 working days of request)	98%	63.%
			95%	43%
		% of appointments	95%	93.%

		for registration of deaths within 2 working days of request		
To respond to all written applications for certificates within five working days	To provide an efficient and responsive Registration service for our customers	Customer Satisfaction with the overall quality of our services	92.5%	100%

4.16 **Financial and Resource Planning Management**

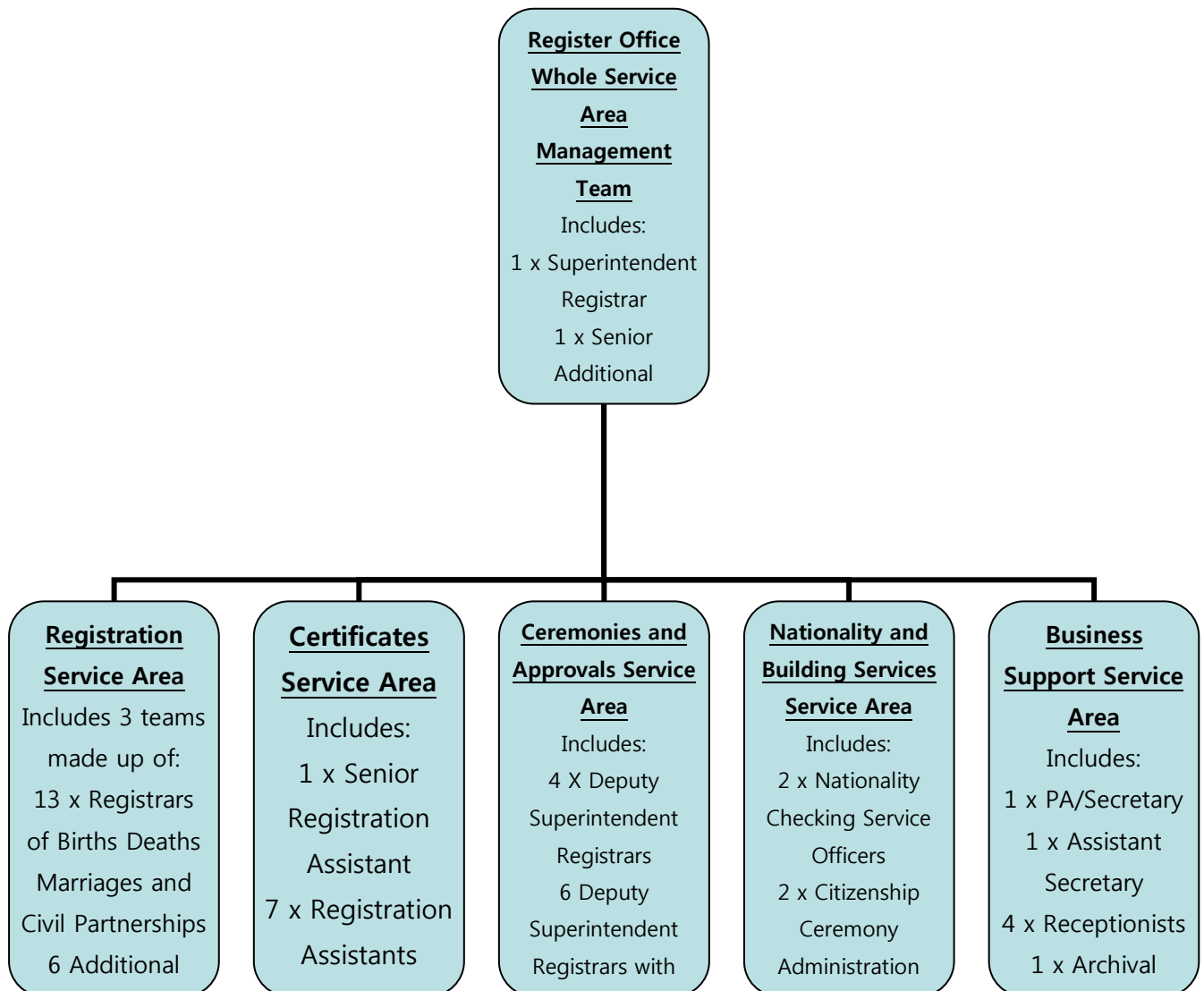
The service has a staffing compliment of 74 FTEs. There are 12 peripatetic staff and 12 weekend only staff the peripatetic staff attend ceremonies at Approved Premises and Citizenship Ceremonies. The weekend only staff provide ceremonies and registrations at the Register Office and registered religious buildings at weekends as well as the out of hours Emergency Bereavement Service.

Whilst the majority of fees are set nationally by the Registrar General some non-statutory fees are set by the City Council through the Licensing and Public Protection Committee. There have been comments, by elected members, about the burden placed on the council tax payer of Birmingham in supporting a registration service for non-Birmingham residents. Senior managers are in discussions with neighbouring districts to enter into partnership arrangements around registrations. It has also been suggested that many central government agencies use the local registration service as a source of information and data as well as a free service. For example, the DWP use the local registration service to provide the Tell Us Once system and the Office for National Statistics uses the statistics from birth and death registrations freely. It has been further suggested that central government should financially support such a vital, valuable and necessary service rather than hope that someone buys a certificate or gets married to provide an inadequate fee. Service managers continue to lobby the GRO.

4.17 The current staffing structure is attached as Appendix 3A.

4.18 The statutory fees charged by the service appears in Appendix 3B.

REGISTER OFFICE ORGANISATION STRUCTURE



STATUTORY REGISTER OFFICE FEES

Statutory or PPC Fees	Current Fees	Statutory or PPC
Superintendent Registrar's Cert of Birth, Death or Marriage	£10	Statutory/National
Registrar's Certificate issued at the time of Registration	£4	Statutory/National
Registrar's Certificate after Registration	£7	Statutory/National
A general search in indexes not exceeding 6 hours	£18	Statutory/National
Certificate of Worship	£29	Statutory/National
Registration of a religious building for marriage	£123	Statutory/National
Registration of a religious building for marriages for same sex couples (that is already registered)	£64	Statutory/National
Notice of Marriage	£35	Statutory/National
Notice of Marriage subject to immigration Act	£47	Statutory/National
Notice of Civil Partnership subject to immigration Act	£47	Statutory/National
Notice of Civil Partnership	£35	Statutory/National
Fee to reduce the legal waiting period of a notice of marriage/civil partnership	£28	Statutory/National
Fee payable to Registrar for marriage Ceremony at register Office	£46	Statutory/National
Fee payable to Registrar for marriage Ceremony at registered building	£86	Statutory/National
Attendance of Civil Partnership Registrar at Register Office	£46	Statutory/National
Notice given at Housebound Person's abode SR attendance	£47	Statutory/National
Notice given at Detained Person's abode SR Attendance	£68	Statutory/National
Attendance of Registrar at Housebound Person's Marriage	£81	Statutory/National
Attendance of Registrar at Detained Person's Marriage	£88	Statutory/National
Attendance of Superintendent Registrar at Housebound Person's marriage	£84	Statutory/National
Attendance of Superintendent Registrar at Detained Person's marriage	£94	Statutory/National
Attendance of CP Registrar at Housebound Person's CP	£81	Statutory/National
Attendance of CP Registrar at Detained Person's CP	£88	Statutory/National
Registrar General's Licence for Marriage	£15	Statutory/National
Standard Conversion Civil partnership to marriage	£45	Statutory/National
Two stage procedure stage 1 conversion civil partnership to marriage	£27	Statutory/National
SR attendance Conversion Civil partnership to marriage according to Jews / Society of Friends	£91	Statutory/National
SR attendance Conversion Civil partnership to marriage Housebound	£99	Statutory/National
SR attendance Conversion Civil partnership to marriage detained	£117	Statutory/National
Registrar General's Licence for Civil Partnership	£15	Statutory/National
CP Registrar's attendance at religious building	£86	PPC/Local
CP certificate issued at time of registration	£4	Statutory/National
CP certificate issued after registration	£10	Statutory/National