

# MARRIAGE IN SCOTLAND

- By law both parties to a proposed civil, religious or belief marriage are required to submit marriage notice forms to the registrar of the district in which the marriage is to take place informing them of their intention to marry.
- Forms for giving notice can be obtained from any registrar of births etc. in Scotland or from the National Records of Scotland website at [www.nrscotland.gov.uk](http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk).
- Notice must be given in the three-month period prior to the date of the marriage and **NOT LATER** than 29 days before that date.

This leaflet gives general guidance only and should not be treated as a complete and authoritative statement of the law. If, after reading it, you are still in doubt you should seek advice from any registrar of births etc. in Scotland or from staff in  
Marriage/Civil Partnership Section of the National Records of Scotland (NRS),  
New Register House,  
Edinburgh EH1 3YT  
- email: [marriage@nrscotland.gov.uk](mailto:marriage@nrscotland.gov.uk)

## WHO CAN BE MARRIED IN SCOTLAND?

Any two persons, regardless of sex or where they live, may marry in Scotland provided that:

- Both persons are at least 16 years of age on the day of their marriage.
- They are not related to one another in a way which would prevent their marrying (see the list at Page 6 of this leaflet).
- They are unmarried and not in a civil partnership\*.
- They are capable of understanding the nature of a marriage ceremony and of consenting to marrying.
- In the case of an opposite sex marriage, the marriage would be regarded as valid in the party's country of domicile.

\* If you are in a qualifying civil partnership you can change it to a marriage – a qualifying civil partnership is a civil partnership which was registered in Scotland, England, Wales or Northern Ireland and has not been dissolved, annulled or ended by death or an overseas relationship registered outwith the United Kingdom which is treated as a civil partnership in Scotland and has not been dissolved, annulled or ended by death.

## TYPES OF MARRIAGE

You can be married in either of two ways in Scotland - by a religious or belief ceremony or by a civil ceremony:

- A religious or belief marriage may take place anywhere and may be solemnised only by a minister, clergyman, pastor, priest or other person approved to do so under the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977.
- A civil marriage may take place in a registration office or at any place agreed between the registration authority and the couple and may be solemnised only by a registrar or an assistant registrar who has been authorised by the Registrar General for that purpose.

## HOW AND WHEN TO GIVE NOTICE

You can each obtain a marriage notice form, and information about fees, from any registrar of births etc. in Scotland. In most cases you can get the address of your local registrar from the telephone directory. A list of registrars is also available on the NRS website at [www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/registration/reglist.pdf](http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/registration/reglist.pdf).

- Each of you must complete and submit a marriage notice, along with the required documents (see below) and the appropriate fee, to the **registrar for the district in which the marriage is to take place**. This means that both parties must be aware of the marriage and independently complete and sign the declaration on the marriage notice form. Failing to give proper notice can result in a marriage being postponed or prevented from proceeding.
- Timing is important. The notices must be submitted early enough to enable the registrar to satisfy themselves that you are free to marry one another. Normally notices should be in their hands about TEN to TWELVE weeks beforehand. The **minimum** period is **29 days before the date of the proposed marriage**, but if you leave things as late as this you **could** be faced with the need to postpone your marriage.
- Only in exceptional circumstances will the Registrar General authorise a marriage to take place if 29 days' notice has not been given.
- Although you need not both attend personally at the registrar's office to hand in your marriage notice, at least one of you may be asked to attend there personally before the date of the marriage. This is necessary, in the case of a religious or belief marriage, to collect the Marriage Schedule (see page 4) or, it might be necessary in the case of a civil marriage, to finalise arrangements with the registrar.
- Every person giving notice is required to sign a declaration to the effect that the particulars and information given on the notice are correct. As a safeguard against bigamous marriages a subsequent check of the information is made by NRS.
- Persons related in any of the ways listed at paragraph 2 at the end of this leaflet will each require to sign a separate declaration form which, like the marriage notice form, is obtainable from any registrar of births etc. in Scotland.

## IF YOU LIVE IN ENGLAND OR WALES

- As an alternative to the normal procedure of giving notice to a registrar in Scotland, if you intend to marry
  - (i) a person residing in Scotland, or
  - (ii) a person residing in England or Wales who has a parent residing in Scotland, you may give notice of marriage to the superintendent registrar in the district of England or Wales in which you reside. The person you are marrying should, however, give notice in Scotland in the usual way.
- You should seek the advice of the superintendent registrar if you wish to proceed in this way. The certificate for marriage obtained from him should be sent to the Scottish registrar as quickly as possible.

## DOCUMENTS TO BE PRODUCED

When giving or sending the marriage notice forms to the registrar each of you must supply the following:

- Your birth certificate or, if you are adopted, your adoption certificate.
- Evidence of your usual residence.
- If you have been married or in a registered civil partnership before and the marriage or civil partnership has been dissolved or annulled, a decree of divorce or dissolution or annulment or a certified copy decree. A decree of divorce or dissolution granted outwith Scotland must be absolute or final - a decree nisi is not acceptable.
- The registrar will ask to see your valid passport or other document to provide evidence of your nationality.
- If your spouse or civil partner is deceased, the death certificate of your former spouse or civil partner.
- If you are in a qualifying civil partnership, an extract from the entry in the civil partnership register relating to the civil partnership.
- If you are in an existing marriage, your marriage certificate.
- If your domicile is abroad, a certificate of no impediment issued by the competent authority to the effect that you are free to marry - see **IF YOU ARE DOMICILED OUTSIDE THE UNITED KINGDOM** (below).
- If any of these documents are in a language other than English, a certified translation in English must also be provided.

- Do not delay giving notice simply because you are waiting for any of the documents mentioned above to come to hand. If time is getting short it is better to give notice first and then pass the documents to the registrar when they become available; but they must be made available to the registrar before the marriage. Provided the documents are in order, the marriage can proceed as arranged.

If you are a non-UK citizen, you will have to provide extra documentation to that outlined above. In particular, you will need to provide a Declaration of Status by Non-UK Nationals form which can be obtained from the registrar or the NRS website. Evidence to support the statement you make on the Declaration of Status form will also be required. If you have EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) status you must share your status code with the registrar. You can apply for your status code by visiting <https://www.gov.uk/view-prove-immigration-status>. If a decision is still pending on your application for EUSS status, you should submit your Certification of Application as evidence. If you are in any doubt about what is required, or if you need further information, you should consult the registrar or contact NRS.

## **IF YOU ARE DOMICILED OUTSIDE THE UNITED KINGDOM**

The normal procedure of giving notice to the registrar in Scotland must be followed but, as previously mentioned, an additional requirement is placed upon you.

- If, being domiciled in a country outside the UK, you are subject to the marriage laws of that country, you should obtain, if practicable, a certificate issued by the competent authority (usually the civil authority) in that country to the effect that there is no impediment to your proposed marriage. If the certificate is in a language other than English you should also produce a certified translation.
- In the absence of such a certificate without good reason being shown, it may not be possible for you to marry in Scotland.
- If you are now resident in the UK, and have lived here for the last two years or more, you need not submit such a certificate.
- If you are a UK citizen living abroad, or an Australian or New Zealand or Canadian or United States of America citizen you need not submit such a certificate.
- If you are in any doubt about what is required, or if you need further information, you should consult the registrar or write to NRS at the address shown at the start of this leaflet.

## **MAKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY**

It is important to make early arrangements for the date and time of your marriage.

- If you are having a religious or belief ceremony, contact the person performing the marriage before completing the notice of marriage.
- For a civil marriage, make advance arrangements with the registrar. This is particularly important if the ceremony is to be in towns and cities, where large numbers of people want to be married at certain times of the year.

- Arrange for two persons, aged 16 years or over, to be present at your marriage to act as witnesses. They are required whether it is a religious or belief or civil ceremony.
- Be sure to let the person performing the marriage know if you change your plans or decide to postpone your marriage.

## **THE MARRIAGE SCHEDULE**

When they are satisfied there is no legal impediment to the marriage, the registrar will prepare a Marriage Schedule from the information you have given them. The Schedule is a most important document - **no marriage can proceed without it.**

- If you are having a religious or belief marriage the Marriage Schedule will be issued to you by the registrar. The Schedule cannot be issued more than seven days before the marriage and the registrar will advise you when to call to collect it. The Schedule cannot be collected on your behalf by a relative or friend - the registrar will issue it only to one of the parties to the marriage.
- The Marriage Schedule **must** be produced before the marriage ceremony to the person performing the marriage.
- Immediately after the ceremony, the Schedule must be signed in black fountain pen by both parties, by the person performing the marriage and by the two witnesses. Thereafter, it must be returned to the registrar within three days so that (s)he can register the marriage.
- If you are having a civil marriage, a Marriage Schedule will not be issued, but the registrar will have it available at the marriage ceremony for signature. Subsequently, the registrar will register the marriage.
- A fee for the civil marriage and, if applicable, for the attendance of an authorised registrar if the location is somewhere other than the registration office, is payable to the registrar in advance.

## **MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE**

After the marriage has been registered, you can obtain copies of the marriage certificate from the registrar on payment of the appropriate fee.

## **DEGREES OF RELATIONSHIP WITHIN WHICH MARRIAGE IS UNLAWFUL**

See Page 6 of this leaflet.

## DEGREES OF RELATIONSHIP WITHIN WHICH MARRIAGE IS UNLAWFUL

### 1. Relationships by consanguinity

*Parent*

Child

Grandparent

Grandchild

Sibling

Aunt or uncle

Niece or nephew

Great-grandparent

Great-grandchild

### 2. Relationships by affinity – see note below

*Child of former spouse*

Child of former civil partner

Former spouse of parent

Former civil partner of parent

Former spouse of grandparent

Former civil partner of grandparent

Grandchild of former spouse

Grandchild of former civil partner

### 3. Relationships by adoption

Adoptive parent or former adoptive parent

Adopted child or former adopted child

Note: Parties related within the degrees listed at 2 can marry if both are 21 years of age or over at the time of the marriage and the younger party has not, before his or her 18th birthday, lived in the same household as the other party and been treated by that person as a child of the family.