

FAITH & SOCIETY

Impending changes to marriage notice in England and Wales

For information

In late November the Home Office [announced](#) the timetable for changes to the law on marriage notice to come into effect on **Monday 2 March 2015**. From that date:

- the notice period for marriage and civil partnership will be extended from 15 days to 28 days for all couples in England and Wales marrying following civil preliminaries or forming a civil partnership;
- where one of the couple who wish to marry in the Church of England or the Church in Wales is a non-EEA national that person will be required to complete civil preliminaries and give notice at a register office;
- all proposed marriages and civil partnerships involving a non-EEA national who has limited or no immigration status in the UK, or who does not provide specified evidence that he or she is exempt from the scheme, will be referred to the Home Office;
- where there are reasonable grounds for suspicion the Home Office will be able to extend the notice period in referred cases to 70 days in order to investigate and take appropriate enforcement or casework action; and a couple will be unable to get married or enter into a civil partnership on the basis of that notice if they do not comply with an investigation under the scheme. The proposals for investigations are contained in the draft [Proposed Marriages and Civil Partnerships \(Conduct of Investigations, etc.\) Regulations 2015](#).

The referral and investigation scheme will be extended to Scotland and to Northern Ireland from 2 March 2015, subject to Parliamentary approval of the necessary secondary legislation: the draft [Referral and Investigation of Proposed Marriages and Civil Partnerships \(Northern Ireland and Miscellaneous Provisions\) Order 2015](#) and the draft [Referral and Investigation of Proposed Marriages and Civil Partnerships \(Scotland\) Order 2015](#).

Those who give notice of marriage or civil partnership before 2 March 2015 will not be affected by the changes. Transitional arrangements will also apply for couples including a non-EEA national who before 2 March 2015 have been granted, or have applied for and are later granted, a common licence to marry in the Church in England or Church in Wales. Couples in this situation will be able to marry on the basis of that licence and will not be required to complete civil preliminaries before marrying.

[Source: House of Commons Written Statement 24 November 2014]