

DEREGULATION ACT 2015

EXPLANATORY NOTES

COMMENTARY ON SECTIONS

Sections 98 and 99: information contained in entries of births and deaths etc

453. These two sections are related and deal with access to civil registration records relating to births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships.

Overview

454. Civil registration records, which include records of birth, death and marriage, date back to 1837. The Registrar General for England and Wales (RG) is responsible in statute for the system of civil registration, and through the General Register Office for England and Wales (GRO), maintains custody of the national record set.
455. Regardless of their age, the only way to access information from the records is to buy a certified copy (a certificate) at a cost of between £9 and £10, depending on whether the certificate is purchased from GRO or from the local register office for the district where the event occurred. For those who do not require a watermarked certificate, for example family historians, this is seen to be an inefficient and expensive method of providing access to civil registration information.
456. The sections provide regulation-making powers to introduce new products and services relating to birth, death, marriage and civil partnership records. As an illustration, new products could include plain paper extracts or PDFs as an alternative to watermarked paper certificates or online access to older records following precedent set by Scotland and Northern Ireland (where birth, marriage and death records are considered 'historic' at 100, 75 and 50 years respectively, at this point becoming more openly accessible).
457. The amendments of the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953 and the Marriage Act 1949 specify that the provisions relate to the certified copies of entries in registers sent to the RG under the relevant Acts and kept in the General Register Office. Entries in the original registers of events held locally by registrars are therefore excluded from these provisions; in addition, the RG cannot by virtue of these sections provide any additional products or services relating to entries in any original registers held solely at GRO, such as the Adoption register or register of Presumed Death.
458. The sections do not affect any current entitlement to a certified copy of an entry in the record.
459. The sections form part of the law of England and Wales. They come into force at the end of the period of 2 months beginning with the day on which the Act is passed.