Guidance note: marriage age change

From Monday 27 February 2023, the minimum age for anyone to marry in England and Wales will rise to 18. It is not commonly known that the current law allows someone to marry between the ages of 16 and 18 but it occurs more frequently within certain communities. The couple would currently need their parents’ consent until they are 18 but that is now to change.

For a person to enter into a legal marriage from 27February 2023, they will need to be at least 18 years old at the date of the marriage.

It will become an offence for anyone to use any conduct, whether that is coercion, threats or violence to force a child into a marriage under that age, including any ceremonies of marriage which are not legally binding, for example in community or traditional settings.

There are no transitional arrangements as this date approaches – either the marriage is before or after that date so if there are any weddings in the planning stage that might run into this date, everyone will need to be absolutely clear as to what this change will mean and make plans accordingly.

The change in law applies equally to civil partnerships which obviously are not directly relevant within the Church of England.

Who to contact

For further information about any of these points, please contact the Diocesan Registry -email bathandwellsregistry@harris-harris.co.uk or ring 01749 674747.