

Impressions of a Celebrant Registrar's Life

The day starts on a high note when friendly greetings are exchanged as I enter the office with my pen newly filled with registrar's ink and my glasses to hand!

I take a deep breath and try to remember everything we covered during training – it was thorough so I've scanned the notes we were given. I check the registrar's bag, and photocopy the blue authority forms so that any alterations can be written on the copy during the pre-ceremony interviews with the couple – then, unless we are working in the office, we are off!

Travelling to venues with a more experienced colleague is a pleasure once you have learned the routes. Only specified rooms are approved for ceremonies – your colleague will know them, and you will soon be familiar with them, too. We ask the person in charge at the venue to direct us to the couple, so that the deputy registrar (usually the Celebrant) can check their details and record any amendments. Then the officiating registrar briefly runs through the ceremony – you will learn much by listening, as there will be times when you will take the speaking role! Most couples are interviewed separately – it still seems strange to me to interview in a limousine or in the bride's room if the bride is still getting ready!

At first, it can feel scary – there's a lot to know and it's important to remember to give customers a welcome and reassurance. The instructions for completing a register entry are straightforward – until the moment comes when the ceremony is under way when suddenly you become aware of time ticking. You have to be alert. Remember to keep previous entries private by covering them over; match the venue address in the register to that on the blue authority, write the date alphabetically, remember "years" as well as a figure in the age column, use capitals for surnames of the couple and their fathers, enter "deceased" or "stepfather" and/or "retired" as appropriate . . . and you have to be sure to fit each piece of information neatly into the boxes provided, without blotting them! Not a problem ordinarily – but if someone has been known by several previous names you may have a challenge fitting them all in legibly!

No-one likes to make a mistake, but at first you will have to accept that you may do so. However, your colleague will be helpful and supportive in showing how authorised corrections can be done. After a while all the tasks become almost second nature and you really enjoy them; after all, every ceremony is unique, no two are the same!

As Celebrant Registrar you will also learn to conduct ceremonies – marriage, civil partnership, baby naming, renewal of vows. It can be nerve-racking to stand up in front of a room full of people but you will be trained. Preparation is the key; have a mind-map of the ceremony, then you can concentrate on putting the couple at ease. Deep breath, moderate pace, variety of tone and a smile in your voice make the unique day special. If your mind goes blank, you have a copy of the ceremony to refer to. You may have to deal with an emergency – for example, check that a couple are happy to proceed if unexpected noise arises – but this rarely happens.

The register and certificate books are kept with us at all times – we can't leave them in the ceremony room whilst we go elsewhere to interview anyone. They are returned to a safe at the office and we also complete the Registration Online (RON) entry.

It is a most enjoyable job and easy to recommend as we see people on their happiest occasions. What's more, it's a job that really *feels* worthwhile – there is a glow of satisfaction when a ceremony has gone well. We also get to know staff at the venues, so we are warmly welcomed wherever we go.

Written by a newly trained Celebrant Registrar

What is it really like really to be a celebrant??

A day in the life of a celebrant registrar is a lovely snapshot of what it is like to be a Celebrant for Kirklees.

It is a wonderful job and the role you undertake is vital to the success of the celebration, however you will have glammed up and have made sure you got to the venue in more than enough time, only to have to leave as the partying starts.

The busiest time of year for us are the warmer months and you will work a lot more hours in the summer than in the winter. You will often work Saturdays and Sundays in the same weekend and possibly even Monday, Thursday, Friday as well. You may work all the bank holidays in the year. On a busy bank holiday weekend you could end up attending 9 ceremonies all at different venues across Kirklees. Sometimes you may only have one wedding in a day which could mean you only work a couple of hours over a lunchtime or a couple of hours towards the end of the day. For example: a 1pm wedding at one of our venues in Huddersfield would mean that you would start work at 11.30am and finish at around 2.30pm.

Saturdays are especially popular. Of course, you do occasionally get a Saturday off on your rota, in our new modern world, couples get married every day of the week. We might need you to work Mondays or Tuesdays more regularly than you expect.

Rotas are drawn up several months in advance and we will need to know your annual leave requests well before the rota is completed. Amendments after a rota has been finalised are not always possible, although we will do our best to be flexible we can't manage patterns of continual amendments.

The pandemic has naturally had an impact on our workloads. We are nowhere near as busy as we were going to be in 2020 and are a little uncertain as to what the first quarter of 2021 will look for us. We will have to be creative regarding training and on the job shadowing, whilst ever numbers for weddings are restricted. What we do know is that never has our role been more important. The ceremonies we are holding might only have a small number of guests and be relatively low key but that means we have to work even harder to make sure that every couple feels like their ceremony has been extra special despite COVID. Bookings for 2021 and 2022 are growing all the time as couples are rearranging their 2020 bookings and so we are confident that by the time you are fully trained you are going to be helping an awful lot of couples celebrate their special day.



We asked all our celebrant team members what they wished they had been told before applying for the role and this is what they shared.

"Team working is super important in this role. If you don't want to work as part of a team you shouldn't proceed"

"it's not just about standing up and performing on the day"

"there is a lot of computer input to do and a lot of routine preparation "

"You could find yourself working every weekend both days during peak times (a lot of our former colleagues assumed 100 hours meant 2 hours a week all year!)"

"The nerves never completely go away"

"I work with a fabulous bunch of people and have made friends for life"

"you can't just assume you will get leave whenever you ask for it. That forethought and planning ahead are all important. I really think you need to stress that these are people's special days and once allocated it's not always simple to reallocate duties.

"there is a lot to learn and a lot to remember - but that it is very rewarding once you know the roles"

"I do love my role"

"My manager is great and provides loads of support, the role is very part time and without that it could be very different"

"Providing such an important service – job satisfaction"

"The big time commitment involved"

"High level of responsibility"

"Relatively low pay"

"The nerves never completely go away"

"Fascinating insight into people's lives "

"Get to see fabulous weddings but don't have to stay for the speeches and fights"

"I thought I might be toasting the happy couple with a glass of champers after the wedding but instead I'm off back to the car for another ceremony, the days fly"

