

**P-05-960 Fund the funeral costs of all NHS staff who die from or with Covid-19, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 07.07.20**

Dear Petitions Committee

Can I thank you first for the time and care you put into your initial deliberations and for asking the minister to further consider the situation.

I can see from The Minister's response that he has confirmed that 'families of locum, agency and non-British citizens working in the NHS will be able to put forward a claim.' I am assuming that also means their claim will be considered which is very good news and thank you, this does indeed address one point of the petition.

The second issues addresses the £60k death in service benefit and the request in the petition for a separate fund to be created to pay for funerals. I appreciate how, from a ministerial position, it is easy to assume that the £60,000 should leave a family assured about funeral expenses. However I remain of the opinion that these matters should be considered as distinct issues. For any family who loses a loved one, the time and ability that they have to think and act is curtailed by their bereavement. It may be hard for families to decide how best to allocate the death in service benefit straight away, for example considering a single parent who was the victim of covid there might be issues for the family of moving house and or school, having to find transport for children, additional childcare as well as all the loss of income down the line and the consequent impact on a family's chances and opportunities. This is a very difficult point in life for people to compare short and long term decisions: will they be able to afford the funeral, what other costs, might they need to cover from the sum? If think it is highly unlikely most families will be able to make the application for the £60,000 and receive it in time to pay for a funeral. If you don't have much money then you are not able to just carry costs of three to four thousand pounds forward in the hope you will successfully get the grant later.

The point of the petition is that although the sum of money being asked for is miniscule in government expenditure terms it would have a massive impact on people's lives at a critical moment. We the public don't know how many NHS staff have died in Wales: in April the HSJ journal for health care leaders estimated the number at nine. Each life lost is one too many. For people who have lost their loved ones from covid whilst working for the NHS this petition aims to offer a guarantee that the government will cover the cost of a funeral with no complex applications and no waiting for a decision, they can grieve and put their energy into coping. These staff have died protecting us, their funeral costs are a direct cost of protecting us. We are not in England we don't have to be limited by their rules in this area, we can and should show that Wales is a compassionate place.

The minister states that the petition committee can contact fellow ministers to support death in service benefit scheme (and funeral costs), for health and social care workers. It would be good if he would add his support to such a claim.

I have come back again and ask the petition committee to support me on this, this is a chance for Wales to do better. This is not a huge cost for the government, but a huge support for families.

Thanks you for visiting this issue again

Jane Henderson

On behalf of the petitioners