

# **Cross Party Group for Funerals and Bereavement**

## **Annual Report and Financial Statement**

**2021-22**

***DRAFT***

### **Membership of the group**

#### **Senedd members**

- Mark Isherwood MS
- Mike Hedges MS
- Jane Dodds MS
- Russell George MS
- Darren Millar MS
- Llyr Gruffydd MS
- Altaf Hussain MS

#### **External members**

Membership of the Cross Party Group has expanded to encompass a wide range of bereavement-focused organisations and representatives of the funeral profession. These include:

- National Association of Funeral Directors
- Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors,
- Golden Charter
- Cardiff City Council
- Ty Hafan
- St David's Hospice
- CFF
- Cruse Wales
- 2 Wish Upon A Star
- O'Driscoll & Daughters
- Marie Curie
- Churches together in Wales
- PR Blatchly & Son
- White Rose Funerals
- Tovey and Sons
- Gwilym Price

### **Office Holders**

Mark Isherwood MS (Chair) – elected July 2021

Deborah Smith, Wordsmith Communication UK Limited (Secretary) – elected July 2021

### **Meetings held by the Group**

The Cross Party Group has met three times in the period from 5 July 2021 to 9 June 2022 (the date of the 2022 Annual General Meeting).

These meetings can be summarised as follows:

#### **5 July 2021**

Mark Isherwood was elected Chair of the Group and Deborah Smith of Wordsmith Communication was elected Secretary.

The group received an update on COVID-19 issues, focusing on the planned lifting of final restrictions in Wales and issues relating to attendance at funerals and care of deceased people.

The Group also considered issues relating to the June 2021 publication of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) Funerals Market Investigation Order 2021, which introduces statutory regulation to all funeral directors in the UK and the publication of rules and a timetable for regulation of funeral plan sales in the UK by the Financial Conduct Authority.

A Legacy Report was published which summarised the key themes that the Group had sought to address during the last parliament and there was a discussion about additional themes and topics that the Group would like covered in future meetings, which included environmental sustainability and the re-use of graves in Wales.

### **23 September 2021**

At the September meeting there was a discussion about challenges being experienced with recordkeeping in respect of grave purchases, particularly where they were intended to be for more than one deceased person. There was a presentation from Jon Cross, of the Environmental Stewardship Group, a collaboration between burial and cremation authorities and a private company (CDS Group), on the role that the funerals and bereavement sector has to play in meeting the UK's sustainability targets.

There were also updates on COVID-19, the enforcement on the CMA Funerals Market Order and the FCA regulation of funeral plans. In addition, Cruse Wales updated the CPG on the Bereavement Framework for Wales.

### **20 January 2022**

Mark Isherwood MS reported back on a meeting of the All Party Group for Funerals and Bereavement in Westminster, which he attended and at which the establishment of a cross departmental working group to better connect discussions on funerals and bereavement issues within government was discussed as well as recognition of the sector as Category 2 Responders within the Civil Contingencies Act and a re-use of graves campaign.

Mark Isherwood also highlighted the issue of a lack of accessible bereavement support communication for certain faith and minority groups, which has been discussed at previous CPG meetings.

Dr Emily Harrop, a researcher at Cardiff University working in palliative care, with a background in the social sciences, provided an update to the meeting on the joint project between Cardiff and Bristol Universities to explore bereavement experiences during COVID-19.

There was a discussion on the National Bereavement Framework for Wales and £1m Bereavement Support Fund led by Cruse Wales and an update from the NAFD efforts to protect beneficial easements to death registration processes introduced in the Coronavirus Act.

The Group also returned to the issue of the FCA regulation of funeral plans, discussing the implications for consumers of funeral plan firm failure to secure authorisation.

### **9 June 2022**

The Annual General Meeting was held at the beginning of this meeting. Mark Isherwood MS was re-elected as chair and Deborah Smith was re-elected as Secretary.

The Group also received a presentation from the Independent Funeral Standards Organisation, which was set up to take over inspections and standards monitoring of NAFD member firms, but acting independently of the NAFD.

The Group returned to the issue of re-use of graves in Wales, for which a survey had been circulated to gather views from group members - as well as from bereavement, faith & belief and community organisations. There was discussion about the impending regulation of funeral plans and an update on a meeting relating to faith and belief considerations for the Welsh Government's Bereavement Framework

The aim was to make faith and belief more central to the Welsh Government's Bereavement Framework and to ensure both that all communities were able to access bereavement services and that there was a good understanding, from those providing the services, of the particular needs of each community.

## **Meetings with professional lobbyists, and voluntary or charitable organisations**

During the period 1 July 2021-9 June 2022 the Group met with, or invited presentations from, the following organisations:

- JBP consultants (Westminster, secretariat to the All Party Group for Funerals and Bereavement) regarding perspectives about the re-use of graves in Wales. (Virtual meeting, April 2022)
- Jon Cross, the Environmental Stewardship Group, regarding sustainability in the funerals sector (September 2021 meeting)
- Brevia Consulting (periodically attends CPG meetings on behalf of Cruse Wales)
- Charitable organisations, voluntary groups and representative organisations (listed in the first section of this report) attend Cross Party Group meetings.

## **Annual Financial Statement**

### **Expenses**

During the period 5 July 2021 – 9 June 2022 the following expenses were incurred:

- £2,911.25 fees for Secretariat services, paid to Wordsmith Communication UK Limited and funded by the National Association of Funeral Directors.
- £71.74+ VAT (50% contribution) Zoom fees for virtual meeting services, paid via Wordsmith Communication UK Limited and funded by the National Association of Funeral Directors.

### **Benefits**

Group secretariat and meeting costs are funded by the National Association of Funeral Directors.

### **Hospitality received**

Mark Isherwood MS (Chair) was invited to make a speech to open the National Association of Funeral Directors conference in Newport on 7 May 2022. Refreshments (tea/coffee) were provided.

All other engagements have been virtual.