

# Cross Party Group for Funerals and Bereavement

## Annual Report and Financial Statement

2023

### 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
- Cruse Wales
- 2 Wish
- O'Driscoll & Daughters
- Marie Curie
- Churches together in Wales
- PR Blatchly & Son
- White Rose Funerals
- Tovey and Sons
- Gwilym Price
- Muslim Council for Wales

### Office Holders

Mark Isherwood MS (Chair) – elected June 2022

Deborah Smith, Wordsmith Communication UK Limited (Secretary) – elected June 2022

### Meetings held by the Group

The Cross Party Group has met three times in the period from June 2022 to July 2023.

These meetings can be summarised as follows:

#### 10 June 2022

Mark Isherwood was elected Chair of the Group and Deborah Smith of Wordsmith Communication was elected Secretary. A draft Annual Report and Financial Statement was adopted by the Group, having been circulated in advance.

John Withington, Director of Regulation, the Independent Funeral Standards Organisation addressed the meeting. There was a discussion on the re-use of graves, following a meeting of the All Party Group for Funerals and Bereavement in Westminster, which Mark Isherwood MS attended on behalf of the CPG. The Group resolved to explore perspectives in Wales through a survey, to encourage development of a policy position by the Welsh Government.

The Group was also updated on group on a meeting held with the Muslim Council for Wales, to discuss access to bereavement support by faith and belief communities as part of the Welsh Government's Bereavement Framework, with a particular focus on Muslim communities.

The Group was also provided with an update on the imminent introduction of regulation to funeral plan sales and failure of Safe Hands funeral plans. The group resolved to write to Treasury Minister John Glen regarding the protection of consumers and a letter was duly sent.

### **24 November 2022**

At the first in-person meeting of the Group since the pandemic, there was a presentation on the on the reuse of graves in Wales project, which noted that there had been 25 responses to the survey, including faith organisations, funeral directors, trade associations, local authorities, a palliative healthcare provider, an EDI outreach group, a bereavement support organisation, and a bereaved individual/former supplier to the sector.

It was resolved that there would be further work on this issue and a position statement for the CPG would be drafted.

The meeting also considered the Bereavement Pathway following the loss of a child and the work to highlight the issue to the Welsh Government through a petition, which has led to the subject being included in the Draft Bereavement Framework and one of the framework steering groups, which had led to the development of a specific pathway following the loss of a child

The meeting was updated on the Fuller Inquiry into care of bereaved people, following the crimes of hospital electrician David Fuller. It was noted that, in 2023, the Inquiry will expand its scope from the Kent hospital where the crimes were committed to include all settings where deceased people are cared for – including funeral homes and other community settings.

There were also updates on the Launch of the Bereavement Commission report: 'Bereavement is Everyone's Business' with specific focus on the recommended actions for Wales and also on the Quality Statement for palliative and end of life care.

The Group resolved to continue to blend meetings in person with hybrid and fully virtual meetings to provide as much flexibility as possible for Group members.

### **27 March 2023**

At the first meeting of 2023, Mark Isherwood MS drew the Group's attention to the response received from Andrew Griffith MP following the letter sent to the Rt.Hon. John Glen MP, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, in relation to funeral plan regulation and vulnerable consumers, after the last meeting.

On the same topic, there was a brief update on meetings underway to form a new representative body for funeral plan providers, which would engage with FCA on a range of matters including this.

The Group received a presentation from the Muslim Council of Wales on draft guidance for policy makers on re-use of graves and the Muslim faith as part of the Group's ongoing work to investigate the issue of grave re-use in Wales.

There was also a discussion on the use of digital post-mortems in the UK and an update on both the Law Commission review of Burial and Cremation Law and the Data Protection and Digital Information (No. 2) Bill, which seeks to secure the reintroduction of remote death registration in England and Wales.

Finally, there was an update on a report, by the National Centre for Social Research, recommending an overhaul of bereavement support in the UK in the wake of COVID-19, having identified longstanding gaps in support for bereaved people which have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

It was resolved to hold an in-person joint meeting of the CPG for Funerals and Bereavement and CPG for Hospices and Palliative Care, at Ty Hywel, in Autumn 2023.

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

During the period July 2022-July 2023 the Group met with, or invited presentations from, the following organisations:

- the Independent Funeral Standards Organisation
- The Muslim Council of Wales
- Charitable organisations, voluntary groups, and representative organisations (including those listed in the first section of this report) attend Cross Party Group meetings.

## **Annual Financial Statement**

### **Expenses**

During the period June 2022 – July 2023 the following expenses have been incurred:

- £2,562.75 fees for Secretariat services, paid to Wordsmith Communication UK Limited and funded by the National Association of Funeral Directors.
- £168.65 in travel expenses and accommodation costs for Deborah Smith, Wordsmith Communication UK Limited for the November 2022 meeting.
- £17.46 in tea/coffee services provided by Compass Group (on behalf of Ty Hywel), paid by and reimbursed to Wordsmith Communication UK Limited for the November 2022 meeting.

### **Benefits**

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

### **Hospitality received**

None to report.