

# Meeting of the Cross-Party Group for Funerals & Bereavement, including Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 15 July 2025 18:30-20:00 – Hybrid

## Draft minutes

### 1. Attendees

- Mark Isherwood MS (chair)
- Rebecca Aylott (secretary)
- Darren Millar MS
- Altaf Hussain MS
- James Evans MS
- Russell George MS
- Sam Rowlands MS
- Amanda Davies, Papyrus
- Ahmed Alsisi, White Rose
- Paula Williams, Papyrus
- Philip Blatchly, PR Blatchly & Son
- Kirsty Rees (Mike Hedges MS support staff)
- Stephen Tom, Philip Tom & Son
- Terry Tennens, SAIF
- Mari Vaughan-Owen, Humanists UK
- Eleanor Hunt, The Woolen Cwtch Company
- Rachel Bradburne, NAFD
- Andrew Judd, NAFD
- Gordon Swan, NAFPP
- Father Illtyd Williams, St Alban's, Splott
- Father Sebastian Jones, St Alban's, Splott

### 2. Welcome and apologies

Mark Isherwood MS welcomed attendees to the meeting, and listed apologies received, which were as follows:

- Peredur Owen Griffiths MS
- Llyr Gruffydd MS
- Verity Sterling, Church in Wales
- Kathy Riddick, Humanists UK
- Martin Birch, Cardiff City Council
- Emma Kneebone, 2Wish
- Helen Thomas, 2Wish
- Iestyn Davies, Cytun
- Brendan Day, Greener Globe Funeral Standards
- Kate Edwards, NAFD
- Andrew Judd, NAFD
- Martin Jones, Sandy Bear

Mark Isherwood MS noted that Revd Nicola Frail has recently left her post with the Ministry of Defence, and her successor Heather hopes to join future CPG meetings.

### 3. Minutes of the previous meeting

Draft minutes of the previous meeting of the Cross-Party Group for Funerals and Bereavement, which was held jointly with the Cross-Party Group on Hospices and Palliative Care, were provided ahead of the meeting. No amendments were suggested. Philip Blatchly proposed the minutes for approval, and this was seconded by Mari Vaughan-Owen.

#### **4. Matters arising**

Rebecca Aylott provided an update on matters arising. On the matter of the Law Commission's project on Burial, Cremation and new Funerary Methods, the Group received confirmation from the Welsh Government that it is maintaining a watching brief and would provide a further update should its involvement in the project take a more formal role. The Law Commission currently has an open public consultation on the new funerary methods strand of this work, which is accepting responses until 4th September.

At the last meeting of the Group Dr Jason Shannon provided an update on the work of the Medical Examiner service, and he noted the delays being experienced with death certification and registration. Rebecca Aylott noted that in the time since, the length of these delays in registering a death have decreased from 13 days to 10 days.

Further to correspondence with the Welsh Local Government Association on potential digital post-mortem provision in Wales, the Association has advised that while there is no current digital post mortem provision available in Wales, they have been used on occasion by Welsh Coroners in neighbouring regions, and that some services in Wales are at various stages of discussion about the possibility of their introduction. The Association also offered for a representative to attend a future meeting of the Group.

Ahmed Alsisi commented that there is keen interest in establishing a public mortuary with the need to have extra capacity, particularly considering that there are fewer forensic pathologists within Wales. Ahmed Alsisi noted that many bereaved families are struggling with the delays in arranging a funeral, and Sebastian Jones commented on the importance of supporting clergy, particularly within the traveller community, and spoke about people feeling like their lives are on hold amid the delays. Father Sebastian also spoke of the role of the funeral director in this regard, and the need for pastoral consideration. It was agreed to liaise with the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Funerals and Bereavement after the summer recess, as well as Dr Jason Shannon, regarding what recognition of cultural and religious sensitives currently exists within Medical Examiner service guidance.

#### **5. Presentation from Papyrus**

Mark Isherwood MS invited Amanda Davies from Papyrus to present to the Group on the work of the organisation. Amanda Davies advised that [Papyrus](#) is a suicide prevention charity for young people (up to age 35), people who are bereaved of suicide, and those supporting others through thoughts of suicide. Papyrus has a 24/7 'hopeline' and also offers a debrief session, available to anyone supporting bereaved families or professionals in the sector needing to talk through something that has impacted them. Papyrus also has a British Sign Language provision, as well as a Welsh and 'language line' for anyone whose first language isn't English.

Andrew Judd commented on the role of the funeral director as not only caring for the deceased but also the bereaved family. Andrew Judd noted the important work going on with the National Advisory and Liaison Service in terms of signposting and resources for support, amid a system under strain.

Ahmed Alsisi commented that while suicide is against the Muslim faith, as with others, he recognised that there is a cultural support that can be provided. It was also suggested to highlight the support provided by Papyrus to the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

It was agreed to invite a representative from the National Advisory and Liaison Service to a future CPG meeting, and to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Education about the Suicide Prevention and Self-harm Strategy for Wales, and including suicide prevention on the curriculum.

## **6. AOB**

Mark Isherwood MS thanked Amanda Davies for her presentation and asked whether members of the Group had any other items of business to raise. Rebecca Aylott raised the publication of the Fuller Inquiry's Phase 2 Report, which had been released earlier that day. Darren Millar MS commented on the importance of this topic and suggested to have the Fuller Inquiry as a standalone agenda item at a future CPG meeting. It was agreed to write to the Welsh government on the recommendations made by the Fuller Inquiry, to clarify how they might apply to Wales.

It was also agreed to invite Mike Birkinshaw from the FBCA to present at a future CPG meeting.

## **7. Annual General Meeting, including election of Officers**

Mark Isherwood MS invited Rebecca Aylott to oversee the election of a Chair for this Group for the forthcoming year. Rebecca Aylott asked for nominations, at which point Mark Isherwood was nominated by Darren Millar MS to continue as Chair, and this was seconded by Russell George MS. No other nominations were received and so Mark Isherwood MS was duly elected as Chair.

As Chair, Mark Isherwood MS then oversaw the election of a Secretary for the Group for the forthcoming year. Mark Isherwood MS opened up the floor for nominations, and Rebecca Aylott, External Affairs Manager for the NAFD, declared her interest. Mark Isherwood MS asked for a proposer for Rebecca Aylott's nomination as Secretary, which was offered by Darren Millar MS, and then seconded by Sam Rowlands MS. Mark Isherwood MS asked those in the room and online in favour of Rebecca Aylott's nomination to raise their hands, which they did, and Rebecca Aylott was duly elected to continue as the Secretary of the CPG.

## **8. Any other business and close of AGM**

Mark Isherwood MS concluded the AGM and thanked those in attendance for their time. Mark Isherwood MS confirmed that the AGM minutes and documents would be published in accordance with the rules for the operation of Cross-Party Groups.

Mark Isherwood MS advised that the next meeting of the CPG would be held after summer recess, with details to be circulated in due course.

## **9. Agreed actions**

- It was agreed to liaise with the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Funerals and Bereavement after the summer recess, as well as Dr Jason Shannon, regarding what recognition of cultural and religious sensitives currently exists within Medical Examiner service guidance.
- It was agreed to highlight the support provided by Papyrus to the Children's Commissioner for Wales.
- It was agreed to invite a representative from the National Advisory and Liaison Service to a future CPG meeting, and to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Education about the Suicide Prevention and Self-harm Strategy for Wales, and including suicide prevention on the curriculum.
- It was agreed to write to the Welsh government on the recommendations made by the Fuller Inquiry, to clarify how they might apply to Wales.
- It was agreed to invite Mike Birkinshaw from the FBCA to present at a future CPG meeting.

