

## CPG for Funerals and Bereavement

10 July 2019  
Conference Room B

### Meeting Minutes

#### In Attendance:

Mark Isherwood AM (Chair)	Kim Bird (About the Funeral)	Morgan Harris (NAFD)
Russell George AM	Patrick McGlinchey (Golden Charter)	David Beamer (Secretary)
Darren Millar AM	Jean Letton (BASW)	James Tovey (SAIF Charter)
Janette Bourne (Cruse)	Gwyneth Sweatman (Marie Curie)	Ahmed Alsisi (White Rose / Acceptance)
David Emery (Chaplain Assembly)		Emma Kneebone (2 Wish Upon A Star)

#### Item 1: Apologies

Janet Finch-Saunders AM	Philip Blatchly (NAFD)	Terry Tennens (SAIF)
Nigel Lymn Rose (NAFD)	Kate Edwards (NAFD)	Jon Levett (NAFD)
Martin Birch (Cardiff City Council)	Gordon Swan (Golden Charter)	Cary's Moseley (EBCPCW)
Paul Davies AM	Neil McEvoy AM	Tony Curtis (Dreams & Wishes)
Neil Hamilton AM	Helen Mary Jones AM	Lorraine Barrett (Humanist Celebrant)
Gemma O'Driscoll (Past President, SAIF)	Wendy Hobbs (Dreams & Wishes)	Natalie McKail (Inspector of Funeral Director, Scotland)

#### Item 2: Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

#### Item 3: Update

The Secretary circulated response letters from the following:

- The Chief Coroner regarding coroners removals
- Vaughan Gething AM regarding pacemaker re-use

The Group discussed the response from the Chief Coroner and a request was made for further information on the Thames Valley body removal scheme that is now provided by the fire service. It was agreed that the Chair would write a letter to seek additional information on how the scheme operates including how best practice was defined, tendering process, type of vehicle used, quality checks, membership of a trade association, rota system, code of practice adherence, equipment utilised, and fee per collection.

#### Item 4: Children Funerals – financial support

Jean Letton raised concerns about regional variations in support for children funerals that existed before 2017. There was widespread support for the work of Carolyn Harris MP in her campaign to improve financial support to help pay for the funeral of a child.

The Group noted that in Wales, the cost of the coffin was not paid for by the Welsh Government unlike in England. It was agreed that the Chair would write to Vaughan Gething AM to request that the Welsh Government pay for the cost of a coffin. The letter would also include questions to clarify what the Welsh Government scheme currently covers.

**Item 5: Bereavement Services Review**

The Group discussed recent media coverage of a review being held into bereavement services by the Welsh Government. It was noted that the Welsh Government was working with the End of Life Care Board, Marie Curie and Cardiff University to review bereavement services.

It was agreed that the Group would make a submission to the review. The Chair asked for 2 Wish Upon A Star, Marie Curie, Cruse Bereavement Care, and Hospices UK to provide input to the Secretary to include in the submission.

The Chair kindly offered to provide contact details to the Secretary for Hospices UK.

**Item 6: Funding for Bereavement Services**

Darren Millar AM stated that he had met with Cruse Bereavement Care to discuss funding for bereavement services in Wales. A number of Assembly questions had been tabled and responses were circulated to the Group and discussed.

The Group agreed that the submission discussed in Item 5 would include the importance of funding bereavement services.

**Item 7: Social Fund / Funeral Affordability**

The Group discussed the upcoming launch of the Funeral Expense Assistance (FEA) in Scotland and how the capped element of the current social fund funeral payment would increase annually by inflation. It also offered a simpler application process for applicants.

A discussion was then held on what should be done in the rest of the UK and the Group agreed that the capped element should be increased by inflation and a simpler application process introduced.

It was agreed that the Chair would write to the DWP Minister following the conclusion of the appointment of a new Prime Minister in July setting out the views of the Group.

**Item 8: CMA: Funerals Market Study**

Morgan Harris outlined developments with the Funeral Market investigation now underway by the CMA. The Group discussed the social fund funeral payment and how competition would be unable to bring the cost of a simple funeral down to £700 plus disbursements.

The Group agreed that the Chair would write to the CMA to request that they examine the Social Fund Funeral Payment cap and the need for this to be raised to cover the cost of a simple funeral for those on qualifying benefits. The letter would also include the importance of funeral directors being a member of a trade association that adhere to a Code of Practice in order to ensure that standards are maintained.

**Item 9: HM Treasury: Pre-paid funeral plans consultation**

The Group discussed the outcome of the pre-paid funeral plan consultation that closed in August 2018. The statement issued by HM Treasury on 3 June 2019 was reviewed and the Group agreed to write to HM Treasury on the following matters:

- Seek clarity on what will happen to the current voluntary regulation that exists due to the views expressed by HM Treasury.
- Will local authorities be included when all funeral plan providers fall under the remit of the FCA.

**Item 10: AOB**

Ahmed Alsi informed the Group about 'The Wales Bereavement, Palliative Care & Mental Well-Being Conference 2019' on 27 November. It was agreed that the Secretary would circulate details to Group members.

A discussion was held on the important role undertaken by forensic pathologists and Ahmed Alsi agreed to invite a local forensic pathologist to the next meeting of the Group.

A discussion was held on the availability of MRI scanners and it was agreed to put this topic on the agenda of the next meeting.

Morgan Harris circulated a document on the Funeral Service Consumer Standards Review. He discussed the paper and set out the timetable of the Working Groups and an indicative date for making recommendations to government, industry bodies and policy makers. Morgan agreed to provide an update at the next meeting of the Group.

**Item 11: Date of next meeting**

It was agreed to invite Natalie McKail, the Inspector of Funerals Directors in Scotland, to speak at the next meeting on 13 November.