

CPG for Funerals and Bereavement

13 November 2019

Conference Room B

Meeting Minutes

In Attendance:

Mark Isherwood AM (Chair)	James Tovey (SAIF Charter)	Morgan Harris (NAFD)
Russell George AM	Terry Tennens (SAIF)	David Beamer (Secretary)
Janette Bourne (Cruse)	Gordon Swan (Golden	Amir Alsisi (White Rose /
Gwyneth Sweatman (Marie Curie)	Charter)	Acceptance)
Jon Levett (NAFD)	Philip Blatchly (NAFD)	Emma Kneebone (2 Wish Upon A Star)

Item 1: Apologies

Darren Millar AM	Patrick McGlinchey (Golden	Cary's Moseley (EBCPCW)
Janet Finch-Saunders AM	Charter)	Tony Curtis (Dreams & Wishes)
Paul Davies AM	Kate Edwards (NAFD)	Lorraine Barrett (Humanist
Neil Hamilton AM	Gemma O'Driscoll (Past	Celebrant)
Kim Bird (About the Funeral)	President, SAIF)	Wendy Hobbs (Dreams & Wishes)
Nigel Lymn Rose (NAFD)	Martin Birch (Cardiff City	Jean Letton (BASW)
	Council)	Sarah Hughes (Maggies Centre)

Item 2: Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

Item 3: Election of Officers

The following officers were elected:

Mark Isherwood AM (Chair)
David Beamer (Secretary)

Item 4: Update

The Secretary circulated response letters from the following:

- John Glen MP (HM Treasury) – regarding pre-paid funeral plans
- Martin Coleman (CMA) – regarding the funerals market investigation

The Secretary stated that the Chief Coroner's office had informed him that they would need to contact Oxfordshire County Council to get information prior to responding to a letter from the Chair.

The Group discussed the response from John Glen and a request was made for further information on the impact of the Treasury's plan on small businesses. It was agreed that the Chair would write a letter to the relevant HM Treasury Minister after the General Election.

Item 5: Bereavement support relating to baby loss and miscarriage

Russell George AM had asked for this item to be included on the agenda.

A discussion was held on the work of Sands - the stillbirth and neonatal death charity. Sands is part of the National Stillbirth Working Group in Wales, chaired by Professor Jean White (Chief Nursing Officer for Wales), which is now a permanent subgroup of Maternity Network Wales.

Janette Bourne stated that Cruse works closely with Sands. Emma Kneebone stated that 2 Wish Upon A Star were unfortunately unable to support miscarriage or still-birth bereavements.

Item 6: Bereavement Services Review

The Chair thanked Cruse Cymru, Marie Curie and 2 Wish Upon A Star for their input into correspondence sent to Vaughan Gething AM on the review. The Cross Party Group for Hospices and Palliative Care also provided a submission on bereavement care to the Funerals and Bereavement Group and this was enclosed with the letter to Mr Gething.

It was agreed that the Group would await the publication of the Final Report and make further representations; it would also be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

Russell George AM stated that he would seek to table a question on the review.

It was also agreed to send a copy of the letter sent to Vaughan Gething AM to Public Health Wales.

Item 7: Funeral Service Consumer Standards Review (FSCSR) update

Morgan Harris circulated an updated document on the Funeral Service Consumer Standards Review. He discussed the paper and outlined the complexity of the issues the review was examining and the need for greater consultation.

A discussion was held on the composition of the Review's Working Groups. Morgan Harris stated that bereavement charities were welcome to participate in the FSCSR and should contact him to be added to the email contact list for the Review.

At the next meeting of the Group, it was agreed to discuss progress with the FSCSR. Prior to that, the Chair asked Morgan Harris to alert the Secretary to any key developments so that they could be circulated to Group members.

Item 8: Social Fund / Funeral Affordability

The Group discussed the 5 November 2019 announcement from the Department of Work and Pensions that from spring 2020, the maximum amount families can claim to help meet costs for expenses such as a coffin, flowers and funeral directors' fees will rise by 43 per cent, from £700 to £1,000.

Jon Levett welcomed the announcement but stated that £1,000 was still insufficient and there was no plan to increase the cap in line with inflation every year.

It was agreed that the Chair would write to the DWP Minister following the election welcoming the announcement but restating the need to increase the capped element each year in line with inflation. The Chair also agreed to write to the Chair of the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee outlining the recent announcement from DWP and the Group's view on the size of the cap and the need to index link.

Item 9: MRI Scanners

It was agreed to seek a speaker to attend the next meeting of the Group to discuss this issue in more detail. The Secretary was asked to liaise with Ahmed Alsisi who raised this issue on 10 July 2019.

Item 10: AOB

Gwyneth Sweatman updated the Group on the work of Marie Curie and its recent advertising campaign that encourages the UK to open up about death.

Item 11: Date of next meeting

It was agreed to arrange 3 meetings in 2020. The Secretary would notify Group members of the dates for the coming year.