

CPG for Funerals and Bereavement

5 March 2014

Meeting Minutes

In Attendance:

Stuart McMillan MSP
Nanette Milne MSP
Nigel Don MSP
James Blackburn
Alan Slater
Gerard Boyle

John Birrell
Graeme Brown
Ann McMurray
Paul Cuthell
Nick Britten
David Beamer (Secretary)

Item 1: Apologies

Fiona McLeod MSP
Bob Doris MSP
Malcolm Chisholm MSP
Nigel Lymn Rose
Mark Hazelwood
Brian Gegan

Item 2: Approval of Minutes from the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

Item 3: Update

An update was provided in the agenda items.

Item 4: Death Certification developments

A discussion was held on the new death certification system to be introduced in Scotland. John Birrell stated that the hope was that implementation would be earlier than April 2015. Graeme Browne outlined developments with the MCCD form and the wording used. John Birrell outlined how an electronic form would assist in reducing delays.

The Group examined the role of local authorities and the additional burdens they would face. The Secretary agreed to seek to understand COSLA's involvement in the policy making process.

Item 5: Retained Ashes

A discussion was held about the lack of progress in resolving the issue of retained ashes in Scotland. It was agreed to await the outcome of the Infant Cremation Commission before sending a letter to the Scottish Government to explore introducing an arrangement similar to that introduced in England and Wales.

Item 6: Mortonhall Investigation

The Group noted the statement issued on 20 February 2014 regarding the progress of the Mortonhall Investigation and looked forward to the upcoming publication of the report that was due in the near future.

Item 7: Infant Cremation Commission

John Birrell provided an update on the work of the Commission. He outlined that the Commission would report after the Mortonhall Investigation had reported.

Item 8: Funeral Poverty / Social Fund Support

A discussion was held on funeral poverty and the support provided by the Social Fund to pay for a simple funeral.

Concern was expressed by Gerry Boyle on the need to provide bank details to DWP on a case by case basis rather than the details being held on file due to data protection reasons. Alan Slater stated that budgeting loans had failed to provide the support envisaged when they were first introduced.

Item 9: Date of future meetings

The Secretary agreed to identify dates after 18 September until summer 2015.

Item 10: AOB

John Birrell raised a number of matters: the spare room subsidy and the effect on the bereaved that are impacted by the subsidy (he referred to a Guardian article on the issue); advertisements about cheap funerals; the work of the Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief coalition; Cruse had successfully developed an e-learning tool; and the Scottish Grief and Bereavement Hub would be publishing a directory of Children's bereavement organisations.

Gerry Boyle provided background information on the cheap funerals raised by John Birrell and what was offered.