

CPG for Funerals and Bereavement

7 February 2017

Q1.04

MEETING MINUTES

In attendance:

Fulton MacGregor MSP (Co-convener)	Paul Cuthell
Miles Briggs MSP (Co-convener)	James Blackburn
Mandie Lavin	Jeremy Field
John Birrell	John Williamson
Nigel Lymn Rose	Gerard Boyle
Fraser Sutherland	Ann McMurray
Gordon Swan	Stewart Wilson
Devin Scobie	David Beamer (Secretary)

Item 1: Apologies

Alex Rowley MSP	Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP
Stuart McMillan MSP	Pauline McNeill MSP
Willie Coffey MSP	Mark Hazelwood
Johann Lamont MSP	Rebecca Paterson

Item 2: Approval of the minutes from the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

Item 3: Update

The Secretary stated that the application form to reform the Group had been accepted by the Scottish Parliament.

Item 4: The Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act and its implementation

The Group discussed the Act. It was noted that although the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016 had been passed by the Scottish Parliament, there were still various pieces of secondary legislation which needed to be laid before Parliament before individual sections of the Act could be brought into force.

Mandie Lavin raised the implementation timescale and willingness of the NAFD to support and work with the Scottish Government. Miles Briggs stated that he would try to ascertain timescales.

Item 5: Funeral Poverty / funeral affordability (including Local Authority charges)

A discussion was held on funeral poverty and affordability. The three events held by the Scottish Government last year and the first national conference on funeral poverty on 16 November were examined and welcomed by attendees.

John Birrell highlighted the work of the CAB, the Scottish Working Group on Funeral Poverty (SWGFP) and a funeral pledge on the topic of funeral poverty. The pledge, developed by Marie Curie and CAS, asks local council candidates to sign the pledge to help control the costs of funerals and support the bereaved in their community.

James Blackburn referenced the work of Quaker Social Action and his work on the SWGFP. Miles Briggs discussed the important role that local authorities can play in reducing funeral costs and Fulton MacGregor stated that local authority representation on the Group would be of value. The Secretary agreed to contact COSLA to seek appropriate contacts / representatives.

Item 6: Social Fund Funeral Payments

The Group discussed the devolution of the Social Fund Funeral Payment and the impact that this will have in Scotland. John Birrell welcomed the Scottish Government's new powers and the challenges faced by applicants including the paying of deposits.

The Secretary agreed to contact the civil servants working for Jeane Freeman MSP to seek an update on developments to be reported at the next meeting of the Group.

Item 7: Bereavement Support in Scotland

John Birrell raised the challenges faced by those involved in providing bereavement support including budget cuts for bereavement managers. He stated that interest in bereavement support was increasing in the news but it was not a priority when it comes to funding.

Stewart Wilson highlighted the important role that community organisations played and the number of deaths now occurring in hospices. John Birrell stated that there needs to be better coordination across government and ministers must work together.

The Secretary agreed to liaise with COSLA on their work and partnerships delivering bereavement support.

Item 8: Death Certification reform / capacity constraints

A discussion was held on registrar delays and the difficulty in getting appointments. Concern was expressed about the inability to register on Saturdays. Miles Briggs stated that he would welcome examples of problems faced by bereaved people and, in particular, which areas of the country were most affected.

Item 9: Future Meeting Topics

The size of the mortuary estate was raised by James Blackburn as a potential future topic to be discussed. Miles Briggs stated that this issue could be raised with health boards in due course.

Item 10: AOB

Fulton MacGregor welcomed Golden Charter to the meeting. Gordon Swan stated that he was pleased to attend. A discussion was then held about the future of funeral planning regulation and representation of the sector on the Group.

A funeral director present raised the issue of body release from mortuaries and the need for appropriate covering of the deceased. John Birrell offered to contact the AAPT to raise this matter.