



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

All-Party Parliamentary Group for Funerals and Bereavement

Attendees

Sir John Hayes MP, Fleur Anderson MP, Christian Wakeford MP, Chloe McLellan (Office of Hannah Bardell MP), Lord de Mauley, Terry Tennens (DMAG, SAIF), Paul Allcock (DMAG, SAIF), Alun Tucker (DMAG, FFMA), Richard Barradell (DMAG, APPC), Julie Dunk (DMAG, ICCM), Jon Levett (DMAG, NAFD), Colin Rickman (DMAG, The Cremation Society), Wendy Buchan (DMAG, The Cremation Society), Brendan Day (DMAG, FBCA), Jennifer Bryant-Pearson (JBP), Kieran Bergholcs (JBP), Charlie Souster (JBP)

Apologies

Mark Pawsey MP, Dame Diana Johnson MP, Heather Wheeler MP, Baroness Ludford, Baroness Garden, Robert Goodwill MP, Bob Blackman MP, Sir Edward Leigh MP, Carolyn Harris MP, Baroness McIntosh of Pickering, Grahame Morris MP, Stephen Timms MP, Andrew Rosindell MP, Emma Lewell-Buck MP, Bishop of Coventry, Bishop of Portsmouth

Cross-Departmental Working Group

Sir John Hayes MP has received a response from Lord Wolfson at the Ministry of Justice regarding the formulation of a Cross-Departmental Working Group for the sector. There is general support from within government for a group to be formed, building on the groups formulated in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It was noted that it would take time for this new group to be formed as the government analyses the lessons learned from the pandemic.

The reuse of grave sites

Julie Dunk presented to the meeting that this has been a crisis for 20 years and cemeteries across the UK are running out of space. The UK is currently reliant on the Victorian provision of burial sites and there has been no programme of building since then. As full cemeteries offer no income, it is therefore left to local authorities to maintain them. It is also hard to find land suitable for new cemeteries to be built, particularly in replace of alternative land usages such as new homes. The logical solution would be for graves to be to be used, subject to ethical safeguards. Current legislation allows for graves to be reused in Greater

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London in certain situations but not in the rest of the UK. These can happen in the UK after 75 years and with the consent of the family of the existing grave site.

Fleur Anderson MP asked what the main barriers were for this to occur.

Julie Dunk responded that successive governments have looked at the issue but have not implemented policies to deal with it. Polling has shown that the general public are not against the reuse of graves, but it needs to be done in a co-ordinated approach. The idea of a campaign was raised at this will be discussed at the next APPG meeting.

Submitting Parliamentary debates

Fleur Anderson MP informed the meeting that she is applying for a Westminster Hall debate on the availability and access of child bereavement services and encouraged members to attend should the application be successful.

The idea of an Adjournment debate on the Cross-Departmental Working Group issue but it was agreed that this will be submitted after the Westminster Hall debate on child bereavement.

Annual Report

Jennifer Bryant-Pearson updated the meeting that progress on the annual report was going well and on track with the current timeframes.

i. 'What to do when somebody dies guide'

Once completed, this will be sent out to all Parliamentarians as a guide for their constituents who are experiencing bereavement.

Fleur Anderson MP suggested adding the Good Grief Trust to the list of sources.

Child bereavement roundtable

Members were encouraged to attend the roundtable on child bereavement on Wednesday 26th.

Prepaid funeral plans update

Terry Tennens informed the meeting that the proposed timeframe for prepaid funeral plan regulations (July 2022) is tight and might cause several smaller firms to leave the market as there is not a level playing field. There is also a risk that funeral directors who leave the

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market will be replaced by less experienced intermediaries leading to lower customer satisfaction.

It was also noted that over 50s plans are portrayed as a good product but can be expensive and if one payment is missed the plan is invalidated. Furthermore, there is currently not a level playing field between funeral plan products and insurance markets.

Sir John Hayes MP noted that the legislation needs to be embraced in some form to show that the industry is mature but noted unintended consequences of any regulation needs to be noted.

Paul Allcock added that there are concerns that legislation will drive funeral directors away from selling funeral plans which would weaken the understanding given to clients about what they can expect from funeral plans. SAIF do not want the regulations to be too strict as this would impact smaller funeral directors disproportionately.

It was agreed that Christian Wakeford MP would offer assistance should the Group need it.

Future Covid-19 inquiry

Sir John Hayes MP informed the meeting that it is important to ensure the inquiry considers the funeral and deathcare sector.

Representations will be made to government in the form of a letter.

Jon Levett noted that the Deceased Management Advisory Group have lots of thoughts on this and will be happy to provide evidence and data on the key issues.

DMAG members will be consulted with to create a draft set of ideas ahead of the next APPG meeting.

Sir John Hayes MP ended the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

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