

PE1280/B



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

London SW1A 2AH

*Minister for Europe*

Your reference: Petition PE1280

Frank McAveety MSP  
Convener of the Committee  
Public Petitions Committee  
TG.01, The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

29/3/10

Dear Mr McAveety

Thank you for your letter of 11 February regarding the petition by Dr Kenneth Faulds and Julie Love calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Executive to give the same level of protection to the families of people from Scotland who die abroad, as is currently in place for people from England. And to do so by amending the Fatal Accidents and Sudden Deaths Inquiry (Scotland) Act 1976 to require the holding of a fatal accident inquiry when a person from Scotland dies abroad. You asked for information that might be of interest to you in relation to the role of consular services.

The role of local consular services does not differ when a person who dies abroad is from Scotland. We treat all British nationals the same. When we are aware of the death of any British national abroad we will try to contact their next of kin as soon as possible. If the next of kin is in the UK we will ask the UK police to inform them. If they are overseas, our staff will try to contact them. We can provide information about funeral options and on returning bodies and belongings to the UK. We can provide a list of local and international funeral directors. While we cannot pay expenses, we can help transfer money from the UK to pay any necessary costs. We can advise families how to register a death and put them in touch with other organisations that offer help and support.


We can also provide our publication 'Guide for bereaved families' <http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/2855621/bereaved-families> which brings together information that may be useful to families and friends of British nationals who die overseas. In this guide, there is specific reference (page 6) to different procedures in Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man in the role of the coroner. There is also reference (page 10) to authority needed for cremations in Scotland of a British National who dies abroad.

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In the FCO publication 'Support for British nationals abroad', page 21, (<http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/2855621/english-summary>), there is a specific reference to inquests in England and Wales. Since 1983, following an Appeal Court decision in the case of Helen Smith, coroners have been required to hold an inquest when they are informed that a body of a person who died overseas is lying in their district and the circumstances of the death are such that an inquest would have been held if the death had occurred in England and Wales. This is essentially where there is violent or unnatural death overseas.

Different procedures for investigating deaths apply in each part of the UK.

I trust you find this information helpful.

Yours  


CHRIS BRYANT