

CPG for Funerals and Bereavement

Wednesday 26 June 2013

Minutes

Item 1: Attendance and Apologies

Those in attendance:

Stuart McMillan MSP
Bob Doris MSP
John Birrell
Dom Maguire
Gerard Boyle
Alan Slater
Simon Fisher
Graeme Brown
Paul Cuthell
James Blackburn
Alan Fraser
Raymond Pratt (DAYNA)
David Beamer (Secretary)

Apologies were received from:

Nanette Milne MSP
Fiona McLeod MSP
Malcolm Chisholm MSP
Nigel Lymn Rose

Item 2: Approval of Minutes from the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

Item 3: Non-MSP membership applications

A discussion was held about two non-MSP applications to join the Group.

The applications came from the Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care (founder of the Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief alliance), and the Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Charity (SANDS).

The Group agreed to accept these applicants and the Secretary was asked to make contact with the new members to inform them of the Group's decision and the date of the next meeting.

Item 4: Bob Doris MSP constituent issue on repatriation

Bob Doris MSP introduced a constituent of his, Raymond Pratt, from DAYNA – a charity developed out of a desire to help those who suffer from inadequate systems in place. In particular, it offers help and support to those who have lost loved-ones abroad.

Mr Pratt outlined a number of cases where DAYNA provided support on repatriation issues. Alan Slater stated that the NAFD provided a repatriation helpline for its members to assist with some of the issues that DAYNA encountered. Other issues discussed included arrangements for meeting bodies at the point of entry and travel insurance coverage.

Members of the Group offered to assist Mr Pratt if he had any further questions.

Item 5: CBCS Activity and Funding for 2013 – 14; Update

Alan Fraser provided an update to the Group on the work of CBCS and the funding challenges that it now faced.

Mr Fraser stated that calls were up 10 per cent and volunteers were up 5 per cent. However, uncertainty over funding for CBCS and other voluntary organisations in Scotland existed. The charity wished for less uncertainty.

John Birrell outlined research on the cost to health services as a result of bereavement and offered to pass on details to the Secretary who would circulate the research to Group members.

Item 6: Infant Cremation Commission

A discussion was held on the announcement in April 2013 of the creation of an independent Commission to examine the policies, practice and legislation related to the cremation of infants in Scotland.

The Rt Hon Lord Bonomy, Chair of the Infant Cremation Commission, had announced the remit and membership of the Commission in May and two non-MSP members of the Group, John Birrell and James Blackburn, were members of the Commission. It was agreed to discuss the work of the Commission in further detail at the next meeting.

Item 7: Death Certification

The Group examined latest developments on the new process of independent reviews of Medical Certificates of Death (MCCDs) whereby registrars will refer a random sample of deaths (excluding deaths which are referred to the Procurator Fiscal) to the newly created post of Medical Reviewer (MR) who will review the quality and accuracy of the MCCDs.

Due to the complexity of this issue, it was agreed to put death certification on the agenda of the next meeting.

Item 8: Funeral Poverty / Social Fund funeral payments

A short discussion was held on the suitability of funeral payments from the Social fund and research from the Centre for Death and Society at the University of Bath on funeral poverty.

John Birrell stated that he had attended a roundtable in Scotland where the issue had been discussed. Dom Maguire highlighted the levels of debt now incurred by funeral directors in Scotland and the pressures funeral directors faced in offering unsecured credit.

Item 9: Date of next meeting

To be confirmed.

Item 10: AOB

Alan Fraser stated that he was likely to be standing down from the Group and would provide further details in due course of his successor at CBCS.