

CPG for Funerals and Bereavement

11 June 2014

Meeting Minutes

In Attendance:

Stuart McMillan MSP
Fiona McLeod MSP
Paul Cuthell
James Blackburn
Alan Slater

Graeme Brown
Gerard Boyle
Ann McMurray
Dom Maguire
David Beamer (Secretary)

Item 1: Apologies

Nanette Milne MSP
Bob Doris MSP
Malcolm Chisholm MSP
John Birrell
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

The new death certification system to be introduced in Scotland was discussed. Graeme Brown highlighted the short timescales involved.

The National Advisory Group was due to meet again on 3 July 2014 and matters, such as the definition of “preservation”, needed to be addressed.

At the next meeting, it was agreed to examine any outstanding matters and decide if the Group needed to correspond with other stakeholders including the BMA and COSLA.

Item 5: Mortonhall Investigation

The Group examined the recommendations contained in the Mortonhall Investigation Report that was published on 30 April 2014. Stuart McMillan encouraged Group members to review the statement to the Scottish Parliament by Alex Neil MSP.

Alan Slater outlined the NAFD's response. Ann McMurray welcomed the report and stated that SANDS would be issuing a response on Mortonhall and the Infant Cremation Commission after Lord Bonomy reports.

Item 6: Infant Cremation Commission

The Group was informed by James Blackburn of the Commission's progress and the significant amount of work that had been undertaken by the Commission.

It was agreed to examine the Commission's findings at the next meeting and to write, if necessary, to Lord Bonomy.

Item 7: Retained Ashes

Following a short discussion, it was agreed to examine retained ashes in Scotland at the next meeting following the publication of the Infant Cremation Commission report. Alan Slater noted that the matter had been resolved in England and Wales due to the progress achieved in Scotland but expressed concern that change in Scotland had stalled.

Item 8: Funeral Poverty / Social Fund Support

Graeme Brown outlined the views of the Church of Scotland on funeral poverty. Concern was expressed about the large increases in local authority fees and the impact that this was having.

A discussion was held on what steps could be taken in the Scottish Parliament to highlight rising local authority charges. It was agreed that the Group would discuss the use of a parliamentary motion at our next meeting.

Item 9: Date of future meetings

The date of the next meeting would be confirmed in due course.

Item 10: AOB

Stuart McMillan outlined his plans to visit funeral homes over the summer and Fiona McLeod stated that it was worth all MSPs visiting their local funeral director.