

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL
Wednesday, 13 November 2019

1. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR HANNAFORD
Re: Children's Burial Fund

Families grieving the loss of a child through death or stillbirth are to be given up to £2,000 to help cover funeral costs, under a new government scheme.

Every year an estimated 4,350 children die under the age of 18 and grieving parents can face thousands in council fees for burial or cremation costs. There is also considerable variation in charges, with some councils waiving fees altogether.

The Children's Funeral Fund (CFF) aims to bring an end to this and provide families with the support they need. The scheme aims to reduce the financial burden for families by reimbursing burial authorities, cremation authorities and funeral directors directly.

The fund will be available regardless of the family's income and will also include a contribution of £300 towards the cost of a coffin. Under the scheme, parents will no longer have to meet the costs of burials or cremations. Fees will be waived by all local authorities and met instead by government funding.

The intervention brings England in line with Wales and follows a cross-party campaign by bereaved parents to remove fees for funerals for those under the age of 18.

Can the Cabinet Member please inform what work the Council is doing with other key stakeholders to publicise and promote this scheme to help and support families that we have as clients?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR MCINNES

Like you Councillor Hannaford, I welcome the Government's introduction of the Children's Funeral Fund. Any opportunity to relieve the burden on tragically bereaved families is to be welcomed.

You will be aware that health colleagues, in primary care and in hospitals are the professionals most likely to encounter families at times of bereavement; and they have the greatest experience of supporting families through death and dying. I am also mindful that at times of great distress, families are likely to turn to professionals they know well, for example staff in their school or child care setting.

The Devon Children and Families Partnership has been working hard to further strengthen its communications capacity. The role of the Council's communications team must be acknowledged here. We are using the partnership website and the partnership's complex network of single and multi-agency systems and groups to ensure all key partners know about the Children's Funeral Fund and can support families to access the fund in the event of a tragic bereavement.

2. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR HANNAFORD
Re: Jack and Jill Childcare Investigation

Can the Cabinet Member please advise if any children and families in the Devon County Council area effected are by the ongoing investigation?

And if so, we are working with other key partners to make sure that they are getting the necessary help, support, advice etc?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR MCINNES

The Council is not aware of any families (involved with the County Council) being part of this investigation. However, the investigation is at an early stage. The police and wider services within the area are notifying families, whilst maintaining sensitivity to both the investigation and the family involved. The County Council have offered their help and assistance and I understand that we will be kept informed.

If the situation changes and we are made aware of families affected by this investigation, then of course the Council would provide any support and advice, working with partners as necessary.