

Fund to cover children's burial and cremation costs used over 1,000 times

- government fund saved over £500,000 for families
- work continues to increase awareness of the fund to help grieving parents

Parents grieving the tragic loss of a child have used a government fund to cover the costs of their burial or cremation more than 1,000 times since the scheme's inception last July.

The Children's Funeral Fund for England (CFF) provides bereaved parents with valuable practical support at a very difficult time. The scheme aims to reduce the financial burden for families by reimbursing burial and cremation authorities, and funeral directors directly.

Since it launched the fund has awarded over £500,000 to spare families footing the bill and is available regardless of the family's income.

Justice Minister Alex Chalk said:

The loss of a child is an unimaginable tragedy for any parent.

While nothing can ever remove the pain that bereaved families experience, this government is determined to do everything in its power to support them.

I am proud that the scheme has already helped so many, and we continue to increase awareness of the help available during such a distressing time.

Labour MP Carolyn Harris (Swansea East), who tragically lost her own 8-year old son, Martin, campaigned successfully for the introduction of the fund to help bereaved parents.

Ms Harris MP said:

Sharing my family's heartbreak and my son Martin's memory was the one of the hardest things I have ever had to do, but I knew how desperately important a Children's Funeral Fund would be to other bereaved parents.

It saddens me that so many children have died since the fund was established and my heart breaks for all those families whose lives have been so devastatingly torn apart. I only hope that by lifting the financial burden of funeral costs from parents, we have been able to offer a glimmer of light in what will be a very dark place.

Every year in England an estimated 3,800 children die under the age of 18, and there are a further 2,700 stillbirths. The Ministry of Justice wants to help as many people as possible who find themselves in such a devastating circumstance, and continues to improve awareness of the fund.

Nikki Lancaster, who lost their 10 year old son Lennon in 2017, said:

Both myself and my partner gave up work in order to provide round the clock medical care for our son Lennon. It was struggle financially but we made work. In 2017 Lennon sadly died aged 10. We had no savings and all of the benefits we were claiming stopped on the day he died. In the weeks and months after Lennon died we struggled to pay our bills and had to borrow money to pay for Lennon's funeral. It put a huge strain on us during the worst time in our lives.

As the parent of a bereaved child I know what a huge difference this fund will make to families like my own. It may not seem a lot, but it is one less thing to have to worry about during such a distressing time.

Andy Fletcher, Chief Executive of Together for Short Lives said:

It is good news that so many bereaved parents facing the worst circumstances possible have benefited from this support. No family should have to worry about money when they are coming to terms with the death of a child. It is crucial that every family who is eligible for the Child Funeral Fund is given the opportunity to access it.

The only conditions for the scheme are that the child is under 18 at the time of death or is stillborn after the 24th week of pregnancy, that the burial or cremation takes place in England, and that the claim is submitted no later than 6 months after the funeral.

Notes to editors

- The CFF came into force on 23 July 2019.
- Carolyn Harris MP (Swansea East, Labour) led a cross-party campaign for a fund to spare bereaved parents the additional distress of having to meet the cost of their child's funeral at an extremely difficult time. In leading this campaign, she drew on her own personal experience of having to meet the funeral costs of her 8-year old son, Martin, who was killed in 1989.
- Under the fund arrangements, no bereaved family will have to pay the fees charged for a child's cremation or burial or for a number of prescribed associated expenses.
- The fund provides for burial authorities and cremation authorities to apply to Government for the reimbursement of the fees which would

otherwise be charged for the provision of the burial or cremation of an eligible child.

- It also provides for funeral directors to apply for reimbursement of certain associated expenses, including a £300 contribution towards the price of a coffin.
- If the person responsible for organising the burial or cremation chooses not to use a funeral director but makes the funeral arrangements themselves, they will be able to claim directly for the eligible associated expenses (with the burial or cremation fees being reimbursed directly to the provider).
- The only conditions for the scheme are that the child is under 18 at the time of death or is stillborn after the 24th week of pregnancy, that the burial or cremation takes place in England, and the claim is submitted no later than 6 months after the funeral.
- The scheme is not means-tested, and the residency or nationality of the deceased child, or of the person organising the burial or cremation, is not relevant in determining eligibility.
- Both the Welsh Government and the Scottish Government have established schemes, under devolved powers, to make financial support available to providers of burial and cremation for children.