

GOVERNMENT CREATES FUND TO COVER CHILD BURIAL AND CREMATION FEES

NAFD GIVES A WARM BUT CAUTIOUS WELCOME
TO THE CHILDREN'S FUNERAL FUND

On 31 March 2018, the Prime Minister announced the creation of a Funeral Fund for grieving parents.

Under the Fund, 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 Government has yet to provide specific detail on what will be covered or how the Fund will work in practice.

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.

In the announcement, the Prime Minister praised Labour's Swansea East MP, Carolyn Harris, for her campaigning for the fund:-

"I have been incredibly moved by the dignity and strength of campaigners like Carolyn Harris, who lost her own son Martin when he was just eight years old. Carolyn has passionately argued for a Children's Funeral Fund to spare grieving families the burden of meeting funeral costs

"In the darkest moment of any parent's life there is little light - but there can be support. That is why I have asked for the Children's Funeral Fund to be set up in England. For Carolyn, in memory of her son Martin, and in support of all those parents overwhelmed by such harrowing loss."

Although always extremely pleased to learn of any new Government support for bereaved people, the NAFD has given the news a cautious welcome, as it certainly raises a number of fundamental questions. Alison Crake, NAFD President, said: "At a surface level, news of any additional Government support for grieving parents is, of course, to be welcomed.

"However, from the information currently released, the NAFD is concerned that the new Children's Funeral Fund has been created simply to pay councils back, in full, for waiving burial and cremation fees. We would like to know if the Fund will extend to covering the burial and cremation costs for families who would

prefer a church, private or woodland-based funeral for their child, and whether it will also cover other costs such as the coffin, headstone, minister or celebrant, funeral director and doctors' fees.

"The NAFD is also concerned that the announcement of the Fund's creation was made in the same week that massive reductions in bereavement benefits for the parents of bereaved children came into effect, saving the Government around £100 million - in effect, giving with one hand whilst taking with another.

"Coupled with our ongoing concerns about the eligibility criteria applied to the Social Fund funeral payment, which was missed by the Government in its recent consultation, there are many questions to be answered as to how fairly the Government is applying support to those who have lost a loved one and we will be pressing the Government to answer these questions in the weeks to come."

As *Funeral Director Monthly* went to print, information about exactly how the Fund will work was still yet to be made available. The NAFD will keep members updated as soon as guidelines are published.