

NAFD

WELCOMES

CHILDREN'S FUNERAL FUND

The NAFD has welcomed the implementation of the Children's Funeral Fund, which became available to families from 23 July 2019.

– BUT WILL PUSH FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Responding to the launch, the Association was pleased to see that it goes further than, perhaps, expected by providing up to £300 towards the cost of a coffin - one that is lined, fitted ready for burial or cremation.

NAFD Past President Jeremy Field, who has represented the Association at Ministry of Justice meetings, said: "The new Fund should, at least, mean that bereaved parents of a child of more than 24 weeks' gestation and 18 years or less won't have to pay burial or cremation fees or a funeral director's fee (where the funeral director's policy is to charge, which we know is rare). The spirit of the Fund is that the fees will be recovered directly from government and parents won't receive an invoice for a funeral at all.

"The Ministry of Justice hopes that, where funeral directors currently provide the necessary elements of a child's funeral (including a coffin

of particular specification) free of charge, they won't be moved to change their policy as a result of the new Fund. The Fund is designed in such a way that, should parents choose to arrange a more elaborate bespoke funeral, they will receive some support towards the cost to a reasonable level.

"However, it is disappointing that they've not considered the fee for an officiant (either secular or religious) to lead the funeral service as a "necessary" cost. It is also disappointing that the new Fund is not aligned with those already in operation in Wales and Scotland, and that there is no news about a scheme for Northern Ireland. The NAFD intends to lobby the Welsh and Scottish Governments to ask them to add a contribution to the cost of a coffin to their respective schemes, and will press for news about provision for Northern Ireland families too."



THE NEW FUND SHOULD, AT LEAST, MEAN THAT BEREAVED PARENTS OF A CHILD OF MORE THAN 24 WEEKS' GESTATION AND 18 YEARS OR LESS WON'T HAVE TO PAY BURIAL OR CREMATION FEES OR A FUNERAL DIRECTOR'S FEE.



HOW THE FUND WILL WORK

The fund became available on 23 July 2019. The NAFD circulated detailed briefing notes and forms to members on 19 July. In brief, the scheme will operate as follows.

1. Eligibility

- The Fund is available for the funerals of all children who die before their 18th birthday, and stillborn babies that are born after the 24th week of pregnancy.
- "Funeral" is defined as a burial or cremation or, in the case where there is no body, the erecting of a memorial and this must take place on or after 23 July 2019.
- The funeral must take place in England.
- There is no residency or affordability test.

2. Eligible payments

The fund covers:-

- a. the cost of a coffin and associated fees up to £300;
- b. the cost of removal of an implantable medical device. This is not capped if removed by a registered medical practitioner, but capped at £20 if removed by others;
- c. the fees levied for the completion of cremation certification (awaiting confirmation, but assumption is that this means Forms 4 and 5);
- d. the fee levied by a private gravedigger when not provided by/included in the cemetery or churchyard fee;
- e. the cost of removing and re-fixing a headstone or kerbing;
- f. the price of an appropriate receptacle for cremated remains where the receptacle in which they are returned from the crematorium is unsuitable.

3. Eligible cremation/burial fees

- a. Crematorium fee including any fees for scattering or burial of the ashes.
- b. Storage of the ashes in a columbarium, or similar, until the date on which the deceased person would have achieved the age of 18.
- c. Cemetery fee, including rights of interment - there is no restriction preventing the use of an adult grave or a cemetery out of area.
- d. The fees levied for the purchase of the exclusive right of burial.*

*The clarification given at a meeting with the Ministry of Justice was that, although this states "until the point where the deceased, if alive, would have ceased to be of qualifying age," this will be taken to mean that, if graves are only available for 99 years, then it is necessary to purchase for 99 years to achieve the age of 18 but, in a cemetery where there is a choice - for example of buying a grave for 30, 50 or 75 years - then the Government will only pay for 30 years.

4. How to claim

The fees noted in point 2 above should be claimed directly online or by mail. In the case where the family are using a funeral director, the claim should be made by the funeral director, otherwise directly by the family.

An invoice is required showing the normal prices and addressed to the family, but a deduction may be shown on the face of that invoice for the amount being claimed from the Children's Funeral Fund which will very often leave the net invoice presented to the family as nil.

The items in point 3 above will be claimed directly by the burial authority, churchyard or crematorium.

Children's Funeral Fund claim forms can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/claim-for-costs-of-a-childs-funeral-childrens-funeral-fund-for-england>

