



Department
for Work &
Pensions

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Rt Hon George Howarth MP

Our ref: POS(6)10077/496

7 March 2017

Dear George,

As you may know, your email of 13 February to the Chancellor of the Exchequer has been passed to this Department. You wrote on behalf of a number of constituents regarding the creation of a Children's Funeral Fund. I am replying as the Minister for Welfare Delivery.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) helps eligible claimants on certain income related benefits with the costs of arranging a funeral. It is not responsible for and does not regulate the funeral industry. We are engaging with the industry to encourage the offer of low cost alternatives.

We recognise that arranging a funeral for a child is a very difficult experience and that the financial pressures of paying funeral expenses can add to the distress. It is for that reason that the DWP operates the Social Fund Funeral Expenses Payments scheme, which makes a significant contribution towards the cost of a simple, respectful funeral for parents in receipt of certain income-based benefits or tax credits.

The scheme meets the necessary costs of a burial or cremation including: the purchase of a grave; necessary burial or cremation fees; the cost of any medical references or the removal of active implanted medical devices for cremations; reasonable costs if a body has to be moved for more than fifty miles; and travel costs for the applicant to arrange and attend the funeral. In addition, the scheme also meets other funeral costs up to a maximum of £700.

We know that in many cases, other funeral costs exceed £700. We have therefore made interest-free Social Fund Budgeting Loans available for funeral costs in addition to the Funeral Expenses Payment.

The provision we offer is targeted at those on qualifying benefits, as we need to ensure that we have a system that is fair for tax payers, while supporting the most vulnerable with these costs.

We are continuing to work closely with the funeral industry and others as set out in the Government's response to the Work and Pension Select Committee's report on support for the bereaved. We are committed to providing the most effective support possible, and we are improving communications and guidance to help bereaved people understand the eligibility criteria and apply for Funeral Expenses Payments.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Caroline', is centered on the page.

Caroline Nokes MP

Minister for Welfare Delivery