



Craig Whittaker MP

CALDER VALLEY

www.craigwhittakermp.co.uk

Response to Children's Funeral Fund (EDM 775) – March 2017

Thank you for contacting me about the costs of children's funerals.

I agree that this is an incredibly important issue, and as you say, the death of a child is always a tragedy for which families cannot plan.

I understand that a number of local authorities already choose to waive fees for children's funerals. I hope all local authorities would carefully consider their policy in this area. As democratically elected organisations, however, they are independent of central Government and are responsible for managing their budgets in line with local priorities.

There is a role that central government can play, which is why the Department for Work and Pensions operates the Social Fund Funeral Payment scheme that you mention. This continues to provide valuable help for people in receipt of a qualifying benefit. With an average award in 2015-16 of £1,410, the scheme is making a real contribution to the funeral costs of those who need it. Indeed, the average award has increased by 27 per cent since 2006.

The scheme meets the full necessary costs of a cremation or burial. Other costs, such as the coffin, and church and funeral directors' fees, are limited to a maximum scheme payment of £700. There is, however, no restriction on the type of funeral expenses that can be claimed under this category.

I am pleased that a Minister is restarting a round table group with the funeral industry and bereavement charities, because it is important that the Government has a better understanding of how the industry works, and what more can be done to help. I will be following the progress of these discussions carefully.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP