

# Edinburgh has highest burial costs in Scotland



The Scottish Government began discussion of the cost of paying for a funeral earlier today in a series of three events which will culminate in the national conference on funeral poverty on 16 November in Edinburgh.

Discussions with funeral directors, local authorities charities and other interested bodies will hope to find ways of supporting people to plan ahead for their funeral and develop affordable options.

Citizens Advice Scotland has just published its report called The Cost of Saying Goodbye 2016 on burial and cremation costs across the country, and this finds an 8% increase in burial costs and an 11% increase in cremation costs in the last year. The most expensive place to be buried is Edinburgh and the least expensive is the Western Isles.

CAS spokesman Fraser Sutherland said : “When someone dies you have to pay your Local Authority for burial costs like the internment and the lair (grave), as well as other costs like funeral directors and flowers. For the last three years we have contacted all 32 Councils in Scotland to find out the prices they charge for these services. Since last year we have seen an overall 8% rise in burial costs, and that there are still huge disparities between the prices set by different councils.

“For example the burial costs in Edinburgh are £1,200 higher than in West Lothian, a neighbouring local authority, and the cost difference between the most expensive location, Edinburgh, and the cheapest location, Western Isles, is £1,552. Costs levied by local authorities can increase for a

number of reasons, some have made substantial investment in new crematorium or graveyards while others have looked to reduce current subsidies as a result of tighter budgets.”

Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities, Angela Constance, who has led today’s discussions, said:

“For families who are mourning the loss of a loved one to be faced with mounting debt and distress because of the cost of paying for a funeral is completely unacceptable and I’m determined to address it.

“This national conference will bring together the funeral industry, local authorities and charities to discuss how we can address the rising, and disproportionately different costs which are incurred in different parts of the country.

“We know funeral directors want the best for their customers and as a government we want to raise awareness of funeral planning. Therefore it’s important we make sure all parts of the industry work together to give people a realistic choice when they are making difficult decisions about the funeral of a loved one.”

Funeral payments, which are part of the Regulated Social Fund, are among the social security powers to be devolved to Scotland which the Scottish Government is currently consulting on.

Minister for Social Security Jeane Freeman said: “Our new powers over funeral payments, gives us the opportunity to set up a benefit which is simpler to understand, fairer and more streamlined.

“We have already committed to processing applications within 10 working days, allowing people to make better informed decisions when they are planning a funeral and relieving the stress and anxiety current long delays can cause. This will

also create more certainty for funeral directors, allowing them to give appropriate advice and potentially eliminating the need to take a deposit from those who make a successful application.

“I would encourage anyone with an interest to take part in the consultation we are running now so they can help shape our fairer, more dignified approach to social security.”



Miles Briggs  
Conservative MSP

Miles Briggs, Scottish Conservative & Unionist MSP for Lothian, is expressing his concern. The findings from Citizens Advice Scotland show the city is the most expensive council area for a basic burial at £2,253.00 which is above the Scottish average of £1,373.31.

Miles said: “High burial costs are an increasing worry for constituents in Edinburgh and it concerning that Edinburgh is the most expensive area in Scotland for a basic burial.

“ On top of the costs of burial there are of course additional expenses, including from undertakers’ fees, and it is no wonder that Citizens Advice Scotland has seen a steep rise in the number of people contacting it who are struggling with funeral costs.

“ The UK government’s funeral payment loan scheme can be an important source of support for many on low income and I will be questioning the Scottish Government to see what it is doing to help the increasing number of people facing funeral poverty in Scotland.”

The report is reproduced here



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