

18 February 2013

Death Certification Reference Group

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Dear Members

Death Certification Reforms: Funding of Medical Examiner Service

I am writing to let you know the outcome of deliberations on all the possible funding options for the new medical examiner service. Anna Soubry, the Minister for Public Health, after full and careful consideration, wrote to the Local Government Association (LGA) on 13 February to confirm that introducing a public fee is clearly the fairest and most viable option. In reaching this decision, Ministers were mindful of the fact that the fee would be set at a level below the fees currently payable for cremation – 70 per cent of cases – and would represent a relatively small increase in the cost of a typical burial. At the same time, the new system will deliver very real benefits both for the bereaved and for the health care system as a whole. This decision will not affect the commitment to centrally fund the one-off additional new burden on local authorities of the set-up costs for local medical examiners' offices.

You are probably aware that the LGA have more recently raised an additional potential financial burden on councils, namely the costs associated with a potential increase in coroners' workload. Work is now underway with the Ministry of Justice, the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Chief Coroner's office to get a better handle on the size of the problem. Meanwhile Ministers are keen not to delay the consultation any longer and we expect to publish the consultation documents, subject to Home Affairs Committee clearance, in March.

Yours Sincerely



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Deputy Head, Public Health Policy & Strategy Unit

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