

## **Northampton Network Meeting – 11/09/18 – Northampton**

Present – South Northants (SN), East Northants (EN), Northampton (N), Daventry (D)

Dave Lockwood & Katie Watson - Finders

Apologies – Walsall

Brief notes of conversation

N – Benefits, there is a problem with payment from welfare fund, they assist Individuals to complete forms but will pay for Funeral if DWP find out they refuse to pay, can be a long gap between claim and payment. Used to pay Council direct but will no longer do this.

D – Have had to be tougher with criteria, had funerals where lots of relatives have turned up but not contributed.

EN – Had to deal with funerals where there are family, one in particular where there was a family feud.

Do you claim costs?

N – Claim reasonable costs, can have problems with Banks and reclaiming monies as they all have different procedures. Lack of consistency.

D – Nationwide will give balance details

N – Have issues with Santander and getting access to funds, paying funerals. Then there can be issues with equity release on a property.

General conversation about the merger of Northampton councils – No one is sure what is going to happen.

Amount of funerals per year –

EN – 1-5

S – 5

D – 5-6

N – 20-40

N – deal with 10-20 enquiries as well, manage to advise people.

DL – spoke about Quaker Society Down to Earth Campaign. They can assist where the person has no money to pay for a funeral and give advice. Hospital do their cases.

EN – they will do funerals when someone dies at Kettering GH in A&E, Hosp do it otherwise.

N – Case where the person died in a shop, taken to hospital but as they did not die in Hosp Council had to do funeral.

N – Issue with the coroner's office not telling them about a client and going direct to the undertakers instead.

EN – Kettering coroners generally try and dig into case.

N – Northampton coroners don't seem to have time. They get why they try and 'teflon' cases off.

D – Spoke about repatriation issues and the problems it can cause

KW – what type of funerals do you undertake

D – They Bury as they have sufficient space, into a common/public grave, though they have finally just been given a discount to use the local crem.

Rest of councils all encourage Cremation first but they take into account any known wishes of the deceased.

KW – How do you deal with timescales, for instance religious requirements?

N – Only ever dealt with one Muslim funeral, rest never had to deal with one.

DL – Have you seen the ICCM guidance on PHA Funerals?

N – Yes and taken note of it.

EN – Yes also

N – Because of time pressures they are no longer able to "hold hands" – Feels that DWP need to be clearer and that Funeral Directors need to be flexible in cases.

EN – Allow family to hold a service

N – Will also do that

D – Mainly burials, so words said around the grave as the casket is lowered. Family can pay for a service but they always bury in an unmarked grave.

SN – Always cremate and the undertaker will say a few words.

DL – What do you do about clearing properties?

N – Only if deceased had funds.

SN – always take pics but don't use a clearing company.

EN – always search in pairs and take pictures of property.

D – Rarely get properties but lots of care home deaths, they are able to sell items officially on Ebay as the Council has an account.

SN – Use the services of an auctioneer if necessary.

N – Housing properties then HA or Council will store goods for 3 months, they will recycle white goods.

EN – Never needed to use an auctioneer.

N – If food in property and its non perishable they pass on to food banks.

SN – have used an auctioneer to value – take away goods and then sell – covered costs.

DL – what about internal scrutiny

D – Have difficulty in getting things through sometimes.

General discussion on storage

N – Where could we store items?

SN – Have scrutiny issues, have to use 3 companies.

D – Have lots of large care homes with end of life units so they spend a lot of time helping them.

DL – spoke about T'sol not doing their due diligence on cases, advertising without checking for probate/wills

N – Depends on Coroners, what digging they do

General discussion about FOI's and the issues they cause:

EN – advertise on their website

N – Yes, they also put their cases on website

D – Unsure if they do

SN – advertise

DL – How do you interpret Public Health Act

N – Do everything reasonably expected of them.

EN – Fundamental duty is to carry out the funeral.

Registering Deaths:

EN – Never had an issue, go to Kettering and do it there.

D – Booking online causes issues, given time limit to register a death.

SN – no issues

Next meeting – 6 months in either Daventry or Thrapstone.