

Report to: **Mansfield and District Joint Crematorium Committee**

Date: Monday 14th September 2026 (10.00 am)

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Report Summary	
Type of report	Open Report
Report Title	Children's Funeral Fund
Purpose of Report	This report provides a strategic update on the Children's Funeral Fund, the use of reclaimed cremation funds to support children's bereavement provision, and the implementation of the Charity Engagement Strategy attached at Appendix 1, including a proposed monthly social media campaign to increase awareness of local charitable support.
Recommendations	1. That the committee notes the Children's Funeral Fund position, the strategic use of reclaimed cremation funds, and the implementation of the Charity Engagement Strategy attached at Appendix 1.

1.0 Background

Funeral services for children under the age of 18 are free at the point of sale, for bereaved parents. Crematorium and burial authority operators can claim back any costs associated with a child funeral service from the Government Child Funeral Fund. Reclaimed funds are in line with current fees and charges.

- 1.1 To improve bereavement service provision for the parents of deceased children and children who experience bereavement, in September 2023 the committee approved that reclaimed funds can be repurposed to improve children's bereavement services at the crematorium and within the wider community, on an ongoing basis, rather than being utilised as income. This approach provides an opportunity to move beyond one-off financial contributions and deliver a more strategic, visible and measurable programme of support for local charities and bereaved families. A Charity Engagement Strategy was developed and is attached at Appendix 1. This report sets out the previous 12

months activity, the 2026 cremation claim information, the anticipated spend for 2026/27, and the proposed social media activity to support delivery of the strategy.

2.0 Proposal/Options Considered and Reasons for Recommendations

2.1 Funds Claimed Back

Funds were first claimed in June 2022 and in that time the following funds have been received:

Year	No of Funerals	Total Claim Value
2022	15	£3,427.50
2023	21	£4,888.50
2024	24	£5,743.50
2025	5	£1,255.00
2026	12	£3,132.00
Total	77	£18,446.50
Spend		£13,293.33
Remaining		£5,153.17

The 2026 cremation claims total £3,132.00 across 12 cremations.

- 2.2 The value per child cremation is made up of the cremation fee and the medical referee fee. The medical referee authorises the cremation to take place, following inspection of medical records.

2.3 Services provided by Children's Bereavement Centre

- 2.4 The Children's Bereavement Centre are a charity that provide support to bereaved children across Mansfield, Ashfield and Newark and Sherwood.

- 2.5 In 2025 the committee paid to the charity to support 15 children with 121 counselling sessions within Mansfield, Ashfield and Newark and Sherwood.

- 2.6 Increased waiting lists and a surge in demand for services has impacted on the charity's ability to be able to support all of those in need and in May 2026 the committee approved a further payment of £9000 to increase the support provided by the committee to overcome the charities challenges.

- 2.7 This increased funding will support a further 45 children to receive 121 counselling, split between the authority areas, with each council area receiving support for 15 children per area. While the payment has been made the impact is yet to be seen due to the programme length for 121 counselling, however a representative from the charity will provide an impact update to members during the meeting in September.

- 2.8 The Charity Engagement Strategy presented to member in February 26 can be seen in appendix 1 and provides the framework for ensuring that future support is targeted, transparent and aligned to identified local need. This will help the committee demonstrate how reclaimed cremation funds, partnership activity and wider awareness work are being used to benefit bereaved children, young people and families across

Mansfield, Ashfield and Newark and Sherwood. It will also help to demonstrate that best value is being achieved for public money.

2.9 Charity Engagement Strategy

3.0 The Charity Engagement Strategy was developed to build meaningful, ethical and sustainable relationships with charities that enhance emotional, practical and social support for bereaved families before, during and after the funeral service. The strategy identifies priority charity categories, engagement pillars, actions and measures of success, including partnership development, enhanced family support resources, staff training, community events, communication and awareness, and ethical governance.

3.1 Actions identified for months 1-3 have been completed as seen in the action plan update below. These actions will support the crematorium to become a recognised community hub for bereavement wellness.

Timeframe	Action	Progression
1 – 3 Months	Conduct partner-mapping exercise	Completed and utilised within bereavement support booklet and signposting process
	Meet 3–5 priority charities	Met with the following and identified their key priorities to support social media campaign: • The Emily Harris Foundation • John Eastwood Hospice • Age UK • The Children's Bereavement Centre
	Create draft bereavement support booklet	Completed and updated with charity information. Awaiting printing
	Agree internal signposting process	Completed and to be rolled out to staff to enable collating of data

3.2 To strengthen the communication and awareness pillar of the strategy, officers will introduce a monthly social media campaign titled “Charity Spotlight”. Each month, the crematorium will highlight a local charity, explain the support it provides, share appropriate signposting information, and raise awareness of how residents, partners and community organisations can engage with or support that charity. This activity directly supports the strategy’s aim of increasing awareness of support and ensuring families know where and how to access additional help.

- 3.3 The impact for local charities will include increased visibility, improved public understanding of available support, stronger referral and signposting routes, and greater opportunity to engage with residents who may benefit from their services.
- 3.4 For smaller charities, the campaign may help broaden reach, support volunteer or fundraising activity, and strengthen relationships with the crematorium, partner authorities and the voluntary sector. This will support the strategy's wider objectives of strengthening community trust, enhance support services and improve access to bereavement resources.
- 3.5 The strategy will also support better governance by enabling officers to report back on engagement activity, including the number of charities promoted, type of support provided, examples of community benefit, and any emerging themes in local bereavement or family support needs. This will provide members with a clearer line of sight between reclaimed funds, promotional activity and measurable community outcomes.

3.6 Next Steps

- 3.7 The below table identifies the next steps in the engagement action plan

Timeframe	Action	Progression/Comments
3-6 months	Launch staff training with first charity partner	Charity to be selected in line with need
	Publish online bereavement resource hub	In line with website enhancements and increased social media presence – support required from IT
	Establish referral pathways	Linked to signposting process
	Host first charity-partnered community support event	Consideration to be made in line with available space and key themes – opportunity for Christmas children's craft event.
	Promote support services through social channels	Key themes identified through initial consultation with charities
	Gather first round of feedback from families & staff	

- 3.8 In addition to the engagement action plan and social media campaign to promote charity engagement activity is being developed with colleagues from each authority area to promote the work being carried out with the Children's Bereavement Centre, John Eastwood Hospice and Beamond House.

- 3.9 Any further recommendations on future funding and the spend for 2027 will be presented to the committee once the charity spotlight activity has been carried out and feedback sought from the charities and the impact of the intervention from the campaign.

4.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendation's officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding and Sustainability, and where appropriate they have referred to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Appendix 1 – Charity Engagement Strategy