



INDEPENDENT

Bereaved parents spared funeral costs as Government scraps child burial fees in England

Labour MP Carolyn Harris pushed for change after needing a loan to bury her eight-year-old son

- [Lizzy Buchan](#) Political Correspondent , Sunday 1 April 2018



Labour MP Carolyn Harris has been campaigning to scrap child funeral fees after losing her son (PA)

Bereaved parents will no longer have to pay exorbitant funeral costs for their children after [Theresa May](#) backed a campaign by a Labour MP who needed a loan to pay for her eight-year-old son's funeral.

Carolyn Harris, who has been pressing the government to act, broke down in tears when [she told MPs about the grief and suicidal thoughts she endured after her son Martin was killed in a car accident in 1989](#), and how she had to rely on the generosity of friends and a bank loan to pay for his burial.

The prime minister hailed her “dignity and strength” as she announced the establishment of a Children’s Funeral Fund, which will waive the costs of burials and cremations for the families of some 4,300 children who die each year in England.



- [Read more : Labour MP delivers heartbreaking speech on the death of her son](#)

Ms Harris said: “I celebrated last year when the Welsh government gave me the Children’s Funeral Fund, I’ve celebrated when every local authority right across this country has done this.

“But at last after so much pressure and so much time, families right across the UK can know that if they’re ever in that terrible, terrible position when they lose a child, that there will now be a pot of money available to make sure that child has a dignified and respectful funeral.”

Announcing the change, Ms May paid tribute to parents “overwhelmed by such harrowing loss” and said fees would be waived by all local authorities across England, bringing it in line with Wales.

“No parent should ever have to endure the unbearable loss of a child – a loss that no amount of time will ever truly heal,” she said. “That is why I have asked for the Children’s Funeral Fund to be set up in England. For Carolyn, in memory of her son Martin, and in support of all those parents overwhelmed by such harrowing loss.”

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn also welcomed the move as a “simple piece of dignity for bereaved families across the country” and hailed Ms Harris for keeping up the pressure on the government.

Speaking during a debate in 2016, Ms Harris said: “On June 5, 1989, my little world blacked over and nothing was to be the same again. My eight-year-old son Martin – a bright, beautiful and wonderful little boy – stepped out onto the road and was tragically knocked down.

“Much of what happened over the following weeks was, and still is, a blur. The pain is so acute and the sensation incomprehensible and the tragedy seems almost surreal.

“At times I felt I was floating above the room while all this grief was dwelling and I was not really part of what was going on. It was a dream – I wished.”

She told MPs she had contemplated suicide and described how financial matters were a deep worry for her.

“When the undertaker was explaining to me what the plans for my little boy’s funeral were, I just wanted to hold my little boy, not bury him. I remember the day the bill arrived and that fear in my stomach as to how I would pay it,” she said.