



Press Release

18 January 2018

Increasing delays in probate leaving Irish families exposed to funeral costs of between €2,950 and €7,500 and beyond

Royal London launch new funeral cost pay-out

The record delays in Ireland's probate system are putting financial strain on family members when a loved one passes away. This is the assertion made by protection specialist Royal London following a review of funeral costs, that found that a basic Irish funeral costs approximately €4,000,* but can be a lot more depending on requirements. However, because of lengthy probate delays, families can see themselves unexpectedly having to pay the funeral bill in advance of a life insurance pay-out, where there is no remaining legal policy owner. In light of this, Royal London has launched its Funeral Payment Helping Hand feature.

Colette Houton, Underwriting and Claims Lead at Royal London explained,

*“Only recently, the Court Service confirmed that personal applications to the Dublin probate office face a record breaking 11 month delay before their first appointment, with no certainty as to how long it will take for the actual probate to be granted.***

*“Last year, Royal London embarked on a lobbying campaign in the hope that the Government would do something to improve the probate process in this country. As part of this project we looked at how families throughout the country are being affected by probate delays. We found that 2/3 of people underestimated the costs of a funeral and that 7 in 10 people have no will in place.*** We recently reviewed the funeral costs estimated in Dublin+ and found that key expenses of a typical Irish funeral can cost anywhere between €2,950 and €7,500, although the burial plot alone ranges from €1,400 to €9,000 and upwards.”*

Royal London has reported that, when there is no remaining legal owner of a life assurance policy, payment of the claim must wait until ownership is determined. This is done by means of a grant of probate. This process, managed by the local Probate Office, can take a long time to complete. In such cases, the probate process must be complete before Royal London can pay out the full claim.

Colette spoke of the rationale behind the new feature,

“To lessen the financial burden a funeral can sometimes put on families, before the legalities of a deceased's estate are settled, we will now prepay a portion of the Life Cover to pay for the Funeral Director expenses. This advance payment is aimed at helping to alleviate some of the financial strain which may arise during the probate process and make the claims process easier for loved ones to navigate.”

Royal London's research indicates that, on average, it takes 489 days to receive a grant of probate in Ireland.***

Colette advised how the 'bridging-payment' would work,

“The advance payment feature is simple. Where a claim is delayed due to probate, we will pay an advance payment of a policyholder’s cover, up to the value of €10,000, to cover the Funeral Director costs. This payment can be made to the Funeral Director directly-or to the Executor(s) of the estate. These costs will then be deducted from the lump sum the policy will provide, as soon as a grant of probate has been received.”

The Payment

This advance payment is available to cover costs from Funeral Directors, which can include:

- A coffin
- Burial costs
- Church fees
- Plot
- Death notices
- Services of Funeral Director, E.g. hearse/car
- Cremation

ENDS

Note to the editor

About Royal London:

Royal London is the largest mutual life, pensions and investment company in the UK and Ireland with group funds under management of over €120 billion. Group businesses provide around 9.0 million policies and employ 3,449 people (figures quoted are as at 30 June 2018).

Royal London’s Irish office is based at 47- 49 St Stephen’s Green, Dublin 2.

Sources:

* Irish Times, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/consumer/pricewatch-casts-a-cold-eye-on-the-cost-of-death-1.3010303>

** Courts Service Data:

<http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/takes/dail2017111400067>

*** Royal London Probate Position Report 2017: In an analysis of its claims in 2016 Royal London found: the average time to get probate was 489 days (70 weeks or 16 months).

+ <http://www.fanagans.ie/arranging-a-funeral/funeral-arrangements/confirmation-of-instructions-and-funeral-costs>

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