



Mrs Samantha Hodges
Secretary to Jacks Dream Charity
24 Wishing Tree Road North
St Leonard's On Sea
East Sussex
TN38 9QA
07456453195

FTAO- The Lady Mayor and Battle Town Council

Dear Madam & Colleagues,

My name is Samantha Hodges and I am the Secretary to Jacks Dream Charity based in Bexhill on Sea. I am the proud mother to 9 children 3 of whom are alive today, this is not to shock or upset you, but to allow you to understand why as a baby loss charity we all come together to support each other.

We are a charity that provides financial assistance towards headstones and memorial plaques for families who have lost a baby or child up to the age of 18 years old.

It has been brought to the charities attention that Battle cemetery has regulations in place, that currently only allow two items per grave and that this has only recently been upped from one item to two in June 2020, to allow both parents of a child to place an item. From the research that we have done Battle cemetery is one of the only Cemeteries that has such a low limit on items for children's graves.

Jacks dream charity is in support with Miss Reeves, not just for her son James's resting place but for other children who will be buried there. This two-item limit needs to be increased. We are not asking you to remove your regulations or policies that are in place, but to identify with parents who have lost a child and what a Childs forever sleeping place actually means to parents who have lost a child.

Losing a child at any age be it during pregnancy or after is a devastating loss. It is so awful that there is no name for a parent who has lost a child. Losing a child effects every millisecond of your day, from what if I did this, too I wonder who and what they would be like now. What parent would they look like and what subjects would they like at school. The grieving never stops and there is no time limit to grief. Being able to acknowledge and find a way to heal takes time, and if we do not allow this process to take place it can have severe consequences leading to depression, suicidal thoughts, anxiety, families splitting up. This may sound irrational to some, unfortunately this is what happens after the death of a child.

Every parent that visits their child's grave should be allowed within reason to place more than two items on their child's resting place. I understand that Battle council allow for special days like birthdays, Christmas etc. but to a parent everyday they visit is a special day, as it is the only time, that they feel not only closer to their child but it is the last and only place they can visit to be with them. We don't have the luxury of being able to treat our lost children each week or month with outings and family time. So, when we do visit, we want to be able to care for their resting place and make it perfect.

Trying to understand what it is like to lose a child at any age is not comprehensible to someone who has not been through it, and I am grateful and thankful that you have not been. What we are asking is that you take into account the mental and physical pain that is being caused by the two-item limit.

You are currently only allowing a mother and father to place an item on a child's grave. You are not taking into account other families who have lost a child that have siblings that want to place something small. I have never had to tell my children they cannot take something to put on their sister's grave as it has never been an issue. But if I did the mental consequences of that would be awful as it is not allowing them to grieve or celebrate their sibling.

In the case of Miss Reeves, she tends to James's forever bed, it is not unkept or untidy and all the items that are on James's forever bed are all things that he has touched or played with. Making them special items as they are what he used to love playing with.

From the charities view point the two-item limit needs to be upped to a minimum of 5 small to medium items. This allows all families not just Miss Reeves to be able to place items on their child's resting place. It allows them to Express their grief but to also try and celebrate the life they could have had.

So i ask you all to look deep, don't try to put yourselves in our shoes but to try and have a little understanding of how we as parents who have lost children deal with our grief.

Kind regards

Mrs Samantha Hodges

Secretary Jack Dream Charity

Charity no: 11577771