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**Research shows consumers are unaware of entitlement to bereavement benefits
Just 14% of UK adults are aware of potential £2,000 tax-free lump sums**

RGA recently commissioned *YouGov* to conduct consumer research regarding the level of awareness of bereavement benefits, available from the State following the death of a spouse. The results confirmed our perception that these benefits are not widely known, and that many potential recipients may be missing out, despite meeting the eligibility criteria.

- '86% of respondents said they were not aware that if someone dies having paid National Insurance contributions, then a spouse may be entitled to receive a one off tax free lump sum payment of £2000'
- '85% of respondents said they were not aware that if someone dies having paid National Insurance contributions, then a spouse may be entitled to receive a taxable weekly benefit for up to 1 year from the date of their death'
- '83% of respondents said they were not aware that if someone dies having paid National Insurance contributions, then their spouse is entitled to receive a taxable weekly benefit for any children they have as long as they are also receiving child benefits'

The life assurance industry has made great strides in recent years in speeding up the death claims process, and introducing procedures that allow policy proceeds to be released to the correct beneficiary as swiftly as possible. However awaiting Grants of Probate or investigating disclosure can mean that it can be some weeks before payment can be made to the beneficiaries. In addition life insurance provision is often insufficient to meet all the financial needs of the bereaved family. Individuals who claim under a life assurance policy may also be entitled to bereavement benefits available from the State that could potentially ease some of the financial strain in the early days following bereavement, and beyond.

However, our survey has affirmed that the existence of these benefits is not common knowledge across the general public.

Simon Grant, claims manager for RGA, said: "These figures confirm our initial fears that these benefits are simply unknown to most members of the general public. The death of a spouse is a life changing event with major emotional, practical and financial consequences. We will continue to work with our clients to advise customers of the existence of these potential benefits as part of the insurance death claim process."

Helen Morris, Technical Claims Manager for Aegon UK, an RGA client, added: “These findings underline why we need to build awareness of this issue. Aegon have developed a factsheet outlining these benefits which we send to life policy claimants. Since we launched this last month we have already received positive feedback from advisers.”

Notes to Editors

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2071 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 13th - 15th March 2012. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).

Bereavement benefits provide financial assistance for people after the loss of a spouse or civil partner, and comprise:

- Bereavement Payment: a tax free lump sum payment of £2,000.
Recipients must be under State Pension Age, and the deceased spouse/partner must have made National Insurance contributions, and was not entitled to a Category A state retirement benefit when they died
- Bereavement Allowance: a taxable weekly benefit of up to £100.70 per week paid for up to 52 weeks from the date of death.
Recipients must be over age 45 but under State Pension Age, with no dependent children, and the deceased spouse/partner must have made National Insurance contributions or died as a result of their job
- Widowed Parents Allowance: a weekly benefit of up to £100.70 a week.
Recipients must be bringing up a child or children under age 19, under State Pension Age, and the deceased spouse/partner must have made National Insurance contributions or died as a result of their job
- Funeral payment: a payment of up to £700.
Recipients eligibility will be subject to means testing, and will depend on the relationship with the person who died

For full details and eligibility criteria see:

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefits/BenefitsTaxCreditsAndOtherSupport/Bereaved/index.htm>

DWP Consultation: Bereavement Benefit for the 21st Century

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/consultations/2011/bereavement-benefit.shtml>

Freud: bereavement benefits must support claimants after loss and offer a supported return to work

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/newsroom/press-releases/2011/dec-2011/dwp141-11.shtml>

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About RGA

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