

Dear Sirs

I have been a funeral director for nearly 50 years and have seen many changes within the funeral sector. I hold the diploma in funeral directing and I am also a qualified embalmer being a member of the British Institute of Embalmers. I with my brother in law and our family operate the business of Bristol Funeral Directors which include Thomas Davis, E C Alderwick & Son, Cottons & Sons, Bristol South Funeral Services and Heaven on Earth bespoke funerals. I welcome the study into funeral practice by the CMA and would offer any assistance I could give. In response to your request I supply the following as I see the funeral sector at present.

- a) Funeral prices have generally increased not only through operating costs, wages and general upkeep of equipment necessary for funerals and maintenance of funeral premises but also the escalating costs of third party fees associated with the funeral. Whilst we aim to keep funeral costs affordable the price hike by larger multiple groups to enhance dividend payments to their shareholders have generally tarnished all that provide funeral service to the public.
- b) Prices for funeral costs are determined by company policy. One would need to take into account general standards, quality of staff, premises and vehicles.
- c) As a fourth generation funeral provider families prefer of service because of reputation, fairness of pricing and our showing compassion and understanding of individual needs.
- d) Funeral Directors generally operate within their own community because we are Bristol based we tend to in compass the city and surrounding country area. So as mentioned reputation, the fact that perhaps their family have used the same funeral director for generations is a natural choice. Fairness of pricing and choice of type of funeral offered to the individual. There are generally a number of publications available to families at hospitals and institutions with information about local funeral directors, sadly because of acquisitions by larger companies a family believing they may be using an independent family concern find themselves contracting with a national chain because the family name is still being used.
- e) We make families fully aware of our pricing structure and options available to them at the time of the arrangement or indeed if purchasing a prepaid funeral plan. A price list is available for individuals to compare with other funeral companies in the area.
- f) This question is difficult to answer simply because there are no constraints of those wishing to operate a funeral business. Whilst we as members of NAFD conform to a code of practise there are others unfortunately who operate unregulated to which the families are unaware.
- g) Websites are playing an important part with choice of funeral service. Families can attend the funeral director perhaps with knowledge gained from the website and with some understanding of the type of funeral they require from the funeral director.
- h) The industry codes of practise are only as good as those who see fit to comply with them. Whilst companies who are members of trade organisations are monitored by compliance officers I believe there are a number of companies that are members just to display the logo of that particular organisation to give clients some confidence in their choice, therefore I do not see that codes are effective in general.

- i) Funeral Directors compete to attract customers through their reputation and recommendation of others who have used the service. There is of course advertising through various publications and radio and TV. We has a company have used TV advertising and found it very effective.
- j) Funeral Directors entering a new local area may find themselves up against the locality of their premises, residents may find it uncomfortable to have such an office near to them. There is of course local authority requirements to consider with regard to public health etc. We do find the larger groups open premises to have a presence in a particular area to compete with established companies.

If I can be of further assistance certainly within the Bristol area I would be willing to help further with your study,

Yours Faithfully

Derek G Gunnigham  
Dip FD. MBIE.

**Derek Gunningham**  
Director

[www.bristolfunerals.co.uk](http://www.bristolfunerals.co.uk)

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