

I am contacting you in regard online pricing requirements by funeral companies.

I am a director of a small independent funeral company located in Shropshire. I believe that the table below is the format that may be used to impose the costs being put online.

STANDARDISED PRICE LIST

All funeral directors are legally required to publish this Price List for a standardised set of products and services, to help you think through your options and make choices, and to let you compare prices between different funeral directors.

ATTENDED FUNERAL (funeral director's charges only)	£xxxx
This is a funeral where family and friends have a ceremony, event or service for the deceased person at the same time as their burial or cremation.	
Taking care of all necessary legal and administrative arrangements	£xxx
Collecting and transporting the deceased person from the place of death (normally within 15 miles of the funeral director's branch premises) into the funeral director's care	£xxx
Care of the deceased person before the funeral in appropriate facilities. The deceased person will be kept at [both] the funeral director's branch premises [and other premises]	£xxx
Providing a coffin suitable for burial or cremation – this will be made from [insert description of the coffin]	£xxx
Viewing of the deceased person for family and friends, by appointment with the funeral director (optional service)	£xxx
At a date and time you agree with the funeral director, taking the deceased person direct to your choice of cemetery or crematorium (which can be up to 20 miles from the funeral director's branch premises) in a hearse or other appropriate vehicle – this will be using [insert description of vehicle style and make]	£xxx
UNATTENDED FUNERAL (if offered)	
This is a funeral where family and friends choose to have a ceremony, event or service for the deceased person at a later date and not at the same time as their burial or cremation.	
Burial (funeral director's charges only)	£xxxx
Cremation (funeral director's charges plus cremation fee)	£xxxx
FEES YOU MUST PAY	
For an Attended or Unattended burial Funeral, the burial fee . ¹	£xxxx
In this local area, the typical cost of the burial fee is:	to £xxxx
For a new grave, you will also need to buy the plot; for an existing grave with a memorial in place, you will also need to pay a removal/replacement fee. In addition, the cemetery may charge a number of other fees.	
For an Attended cremation Funeral, the cremation fee . ²	£xxxx
In this local area, the typical cost of a cremation is:	to £xxxx
ADDITIONAL FUNERAL DIRECTOR PRODUCTS AND SERVICES	
This funeral director can supply a range of optional, additional products and services, or they can arrange (on your behalf) for a third party to supply them. These include:	
Out-of-hours collection of the deceased's body	£xx
Additional transfers of the deceased's body (e.g. to their home)	£xx
Additional viewing(s)/out-of-hours viewing(s)	£xx
Specific religious or cultural requirements	Price on request
Funeral officiant (minister, celebrant etc.)	£xx
Pallbearers	£xx
The funeral director can give you a full list of what they can supply. They are likely to charge for these additional products and services, so you may choose to take care of some arrangements without their involvement, or you can use a different supplier.	

¹ This fee (which is sometimes called the interment or internment fee) is the charge made for digging a new grave, or for reopening and closing an existing grave.

² In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, you may also need to pay a Medical Referee (doctor's) Fee.

I strongly feel that this is a 'one size fits all' approach and in fact it will not suit the needs of anyone.

It represents that the items on the list can be picked or removed from a funeral. They simply can't.

Prices and requirements will vary from funeral to funeral and from area to area.

We always speak to our families about costs advise them accordingly (with their interests at heart) and then once we know exactly what they require from us we provide a penny perfect written estimate broken down into our fees and the disbursements required for the funeral to take place without any hidden costs at all. Then once a funeral has taken place our invoice is presented in a matching format.

We have done much research over the years to make sure that the service and option that are offered to our families are of a quality which is good enough that we will put our reputation to. If, through regulation or price shopping, we are put into a situation where a family can source a coffin, for instance, cheaper of the internet and insist on using that coffin, if there was a failure of that coffin during the funeral service, then the people attending that service are going to assume that we provided that inferior coffin and our reputation that has taken years to build will be damaged.

Currently we do not have many people who ask about costs before we are instructed. But always go through all costs without any obligation.

In my experience most members of the public do not realise what is involved in arranging and undertaking a funeral (and during our arrangement interviews many of them they say exactly that), therefore they will not be able to properly choose from a 'shopping list of options' and will inevitably end up with a funeral that will not do justice to their loved one or provide them with the comfort and healing that a properly arranged and executed funeral should do. Funeral directors will be forced into a situation where members of the public will need to be corrected due to their lack of knowledge and experience which will have the potential to further upset already bereaved people.

All long established funeral companies operate in their local community in a way and at a price that the families who use them are happy with. No funeral company operates in a monopoly situation in their local area so all families have a choice over which funeral company to use. Most families will use the same company over and over again because they are happy with the service that they have received in the past. But they will not if they feel that a funeral didn't go well or that they were unfairly treated in any way.

The proposed kind of price publishing will be of massive disadvantage to small independent companies and be of massive advantage of the big national companies, as they are able to spread their fixed overheads over hundreds of funerals and therefore they are more profitable and currently more expensive. I am sure that most of the industry representatives that have assisted with this regulation process and proposals will have been connected with either medium sized or very large funeral companies. Once a spiral of undercutting prices starts, which is almost inevitable, there will only be big companies left, then families will have been robbed of choice.

I feel a much better system to regulate the funeral industry would be to introduce a compulsory licence which is obtained through qualifications and not subscriptions. Also have a system of inspection, either by way of physical visits or some form of compulsory satisfaction survey so that the consumer has the opportunity to be protected from poor service and high costs but small independent companies are not put at risk from having to publish business sensitive information that could be of advantage to their competitors but of no real use to their clients.

All of the small independent funeral directors that I am in contact with (as we meet at crematoria and other venues) are happy that the industry should be regulated but none of them seem to think that the current proposals are the correct way forward. We want our industry to retain the professional reputation that we have, but we do not want small companies to be undermined and put out of business. The vast majority of our clients prioritise personal service and care over everything else.