

27th April 2021



Dear Sir/Madam

Having read your final report of your Funeral Market Investigation, we feel the need to voice our dismay at some of your suppositions and decisions.

The British Institute of Embalmers

We are concerned that as Funeral Directors will have to submit a price for the CMA Standardised Pricelist, of which embalming is not an item, they will be trying to keep the price down to be competitive.

Part B:13 simply says "care of the deceased person prior to the funeral in appropriate facilities".

Part B:14 Allows viewing.

Embalming has for over 50 years been an integral part of the Funeral offering to families within the UK. We are concerned that this omission will result in an increase of funerals without embalming. This means increased viewing of unembalmed deceased persons and therefore a great loss in service to both the deceased and the bereaved. This may also pose a risk for the employment of embalmers within the UK.

We must stress the importance and benefit of embalming and that it is imperative that it be included as a standard item to ensure that funeral directors have to submit a price for embalming.

We are disappointed that you feel it appropriate for care of the deceased person prior to the funeral to be included in your standard price list and yet embalming is excluded. Care and preparation of the deceased within the funeral profession in the UK has many meanings and can be anything from placing a gown on a deceased, to indeed washing the deceased and dressing in own clothes. What it never means is embalming.

Embalming is a service to the dead for the benefit of the living and indeed should be offered to every family as a choice and is one that is taken up by many families.

There are 3 main reasons for embalming:

1. Presentation

To restore a restful appearance to provide benefit and a positive memory picture to the bereaved. This is recognised to have beneficial effects on all humans as part of the normal grieving process. Not every deceased dies peacefully in bed and some may have suffered severe trauma which can be restored by a skilled and qualified embalmer.

2. Preservation

Over the last 30 years many families increasingly do not live in close proximity to each other. People move for many reasons. Employment and education being 2 of the main reasons. This along with the delay between death and final disposition due to the necessary legalities does mean that a deceased may be in the care of the funeral director anything from 1 week to 3 weeks dependant on location in the country. Embalming allows families the time required to allow all of this to happen.

3. Sanitation

When someone dies the natural processes of decay can be slowed down by embalming allowing families the time they need to spend with their deceased loved one. Also, the causative organisms that may have resulted in their death, continue to be harmful and embalming can go some way to reducing this and ensuring a safer environment for family members and friends who wish to visit the deceased.

This has certainly been highlighted during the pandemic. Our members have been able to embalm Covid 19 deceased and this has given great comfort to many families who have been afforded the ability to see their loved ones in the Chapel of Rest.

Many deceased who die in the UK are repatriated by air to their homeland for final disposition and as well as a Free From Infection certificate, there is a requirement for them to have an Embalming Certificate signed by one of our members.

It is imperative that embalming, a service that has been integral to a funeral in the UK for many years, be included in your standard list. To fail to do this would reduce a basic but important and beneficial service offered to the bereaved.

We do however agree that it should never be a hidden service as has been with some funeral directors who choose to include it in their professional services element. It should always be shown separately and with specific permission given by the family.

We urge you to allow families to make the choice they deserve and not to exclude them from this option. We were somewhat surprised that an order of service sheet be included in a standard funeral but not embalming, when in fact there are just as many families select embalming as there are select service sheets.

Our embalmers are fully trained and qualified, having studied all aspects of anatomy, chemistry, disease aetiology and practical embalming over a 3 year course. Not all Funeral Directors are qualified embalmers, by any means. Those who are not will employ the services of a qualified embalmer to serve the needs of their families.

We do hope you will take note of our concerns and will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Yours faithfully

Karen Caney FBIE.
National General Secretary of The British Institute of Embalmers.