

Springhead Funeral Services Limited
(trading as Springhead Funeral Service)

From: Daniel Turnbull
Senior Director, Markets

17 October 2024

Springhead Funeral Service's breach of the Funerals Market Investigation Order 2021

I am writing to you on behalf of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) concerning Springhead Funeral Service's failure to comply with the [Funerals Market Investigation Order 2021](#) (the Order).

This letter, and the directions given within it pursuant to *Article 13(2) of the Order*, will be published on the CMA's website for transparency.

The Order

The Order introduced a range of new legal obligations on funeral directors to tackle the problems identified by the CMA in its market investigation (the final report of which can be accessed [here](#)). The report identified a number of concerns with the sector, such as the way that information was provided to customers that made it hard for families to compare prices and choose the right funeral director for them. The CMA expects all funeral directors to comply with the Order. On 27 January 2023, the CMA issued [guidance](#) to support funeral directors and crematorium operators in achieving compliance with the Order.

Springhead Funeral Service's engagement with the CMA

On 22 November 2023, the CMA wrote to you to explain that Springhead Funeral Service may have been in breach of *Articles 3 and 4 of the Order*. These related to Springhead Funeral Service's failure to display the required price and commercial information on its website (<https://www.springheadfuneralservice.co.uk/>).

On 1 July 2024, the CMA wrote to you to explain the extent to which the breaches identified in the 22 November 2023 letter had been remedied and listed the outstanding areas that required further action to achieve full compliance with the Order.

On 27 September 2024, the CMA wrote to you to explain that your website referred to the provision of services, such as flower arrangements and transportation options, from third party suppliers, and the prices for these services were not individually displayed on an Additional Options Price List. Springhead Funeral Service did not provide a written response to the CMA's 22 November 2023 and 1 July 2024 letters. Other attempts were made to contact Springhead Funeral Service by phone. However, we acknowledge that some efforts towards compliance were undertaken, including publishing a Standardised Price List on your website.

On 27 September 2024, the CMA informed you of its intention to issue a public letter and listed the outstanding areas that required further action. The CMA also contacted you by phone on 4 October 2024 to offer you the opportunity to ask any questions about how to become compliant and about the intention to issue a public letter.

More than 22 months since the CMA first brought Springhead Funeral Service's breaches to your attention and despite the feedback provided to you on several occasions, you have still not fully remedied the breaches as of the date of this letter

The CMA's concerns

Customers accessing funerals services are often in a vulnerable state and it is important for them to understand how much a funeral costs so they can compare the prices and services offered by different funeral directors. The CMA is concerned that Springhead Funeral Service's ongoing failure to display the required pricing on its website does not afford customers the ability to do so effectively.

It is difficult to know how many consumers were affected by the breaches concerned because we are unable to determine how many consumers have accessed the Springhead Funeral Service website while it has not been compliant with the Order. However, we believe that a notable number of consumers will have been affected, as the breach appears to have been ongoing since at least 1 November 2023, and the business operates from 5 branches, giving it access to a notable number of customers.

The breaches

The CMA found that Springhead Funeral Service was in breach of the following requirements of the Order:

- The **Standardised Price List**, according to *Article 3(1)(a) of the Order*, which must use the exact terms and structure set out in Part A of Schedule 1 to this Order.
- The **Additional Options Price List**, according to *Article 3(1)(b) of the Order*, which is an itemised price list of all the products and services that a funeral director offers to customers that are not included in the Standardised Price List in the section labelled 'Additional Funeral Director Products and Services', some of which may

have traditionally been treated as disbursements. This does not include any products and services provided on request by a customer which are typically not offered by that funeral director to customers on their website or in their branches (e.g. bespoke items).

- **Terms of business**, according to *Article 4 of the Order*, if customers are required to pay a deposit or charges for late payment of sums due.

What you need to do now

The CMA notes that you have taken further steps in the last few weeks to address the above breaches. However, some actions remain outstanding. The CMA now expects you to do the following to achieve full compliance with your legally binding obligations under the Order. Please display on your website an **Additional Options Price List**, according to *Article 3(1)(b) of the Order*, which is an itemised price list of all the products and services that you offer to customers on your websites or in your branches that are not included in the Standardised Price List. This should include price information on services, such as flower arrangements and transportation options, that you offer through third party suppliers. This price information may be displayed as a starting from price or as a range.

CMA assessment and next steps

The CMA is committed to ensuring all funeral directors comply with the Order so that consumers across the United Kingdom are in a position to make informed choices regarding funeral services and products.

The CMA expects you to take the necessary steps to become fully compliant with the outstanding legally binding obligations within three weeks to avoid further enforcement action. The CMA will monitor Springhead Funeral Service's compliance with the Order and reserves the right to take further action if full compliance with the Order is not achieved in a timely manner.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me using the email address below.

Yours sincerely,

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