

Investing for high standards

The regulatory spotlight continues to shine on the funeral profession. In Scotland, the Burial and Cremation Act 2016 has already paved the way for the introduction of regulation, overseen by the Inspector of Funeral Directors. A draft Code of Practice for funeral directors has already been published and more information on licensing and other measures will follow.

In Westminster, the Government is keeping a close eye on how regulation in Scotland progresses while, at the same time, the Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) full market investigation into the funeral profession has been driven by the ongoing debate over prices, standards and consumer choice in the funeral sector.

It is clear that the Scottish Government and the CMA have the issue of standards of care right at the heart of their respective programmes of work. The need to ensure that funeral homes are operating to high standards - both in terms of their facilities, their equipment and their people - has, perhaps, never been more important.

The profession has responded proactively, both in Scotland and in the rest of the UK, with funeral firms in Scotland investing in their facilities, well ahead of any regulatory requirements, and through the establishment of the Funeral Service Consumer Standards Review (FSCSR) - an independently-chaired organisation made up of representatives from across the industry - that is designed to focus on issues such as transparency of pricing information and how standards are

monitored and measured. The CMA acts as an observer on the FSCSR, indicating its keen interest in its outcome.

While some changes can be planned into major works or investment programmes, some, such as the Scottish Government's recent announcement that firms would be required to provide an accurate combined weight of the deceased person and the coffin, require additional and almost immediate investment.

Fortunately, the profession is supported by a strong supply chain. These suppliers continue to bring important new products to market

that deliver not only improved performance and benefit the user experience, but also actively help NAFD members to give the very best service to families and the loved ones they have lost.

For example, Auden Funeral Supplies is now one of several firms offering a combination unit for weighing a deceased person in their coffin. The ramped designed scales, capable of weighing up to 500kg, are equipped with a fast digital readout and, when coupled with the included fixed bier, provide a safe and accurate method to arrive at the required measurement.



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BRAND NEW MORTUARY FACILITY

Mark Shaw, owner of Mark Shaw Funeral Services in Aberdeen, has always viewed having high back-of-house standards as important and has consistently invested in his business since opening in 2004. It has recently opened a new mortuary facility to complement its two existing funeral homes. The company bought a neighbouring property to its funeral home in the

"Not just that, it also helps our staff through increased parking, office space and better facilities, which are key to our aim of helping create good jobs and working conditions for the best funeral professionals we can employ."

LEASING AS AN OPTION?

Ensuring your funeral homes have the best possible equipment to care for deceased people is a significant investment. For some firms, lease purchase - rather than outright purchase - may prove an ideal option. For those companies, Rose House Funeral Supplies is able to supply all types of products, equipment and services - including mortuary fridges, stretchers, mortuary embalming equipment and stainless steel products - on lease purchase agreements, with 19% tax relief.

Rose House is a family business, run by Martin and Joanne Wilson, and now partners with some of the UK's leading funeral professionals to support their businesses. Their lease purchase option has proved extremely popular as they enable funeral firms to have the equipment they need, while keeping the cash in their business.

Says Martin: "Never have old or outdated funeral equipment. At the end of term, either purchase outright or simply hand back and have new. One hundred per cent of the monthly payments can be claimed back against your business.

"All our equipment is manufactured in the UK to the highest standard and quite often made to measure to customer requirements. Our mortuary fridges, for instance, are bespoke and made to measure, for which we offer a free no obligation site survey to ensure that the best equipment is installed to suit your business premises and business requirements.

"Equipment such as our roll on-roll off weigh scale platforms ensure that your staff know the weight of deceased people before they attempt to lift. Our ranges of portable and gantry hoist systems ensure safe lifting of any size deceased and help to protect your staff from injuries when lifting."

For a free no obligation quotation, details of lease purchase agreements or a copy of its



▲ The new mortuary at Mark Shaw Funeral Services.



city's Kincorth area to house the new mortuary, which offers embalming and bariatric services, and joined the two buildings together.

Mark said the purpose-built facility means they could offer a "better, calmer and more relaxed experience" for their visiting families.

He added: "The significant investment in the new mortuary facility helps take the business to the next stage, helping us help those who need us the most. It is really important that we can offer families a place where they feel they can be at ease during such a difficult time, a place where they know their loved one is being cared for in the best working conditions.

latest catalogue, call Rose House on 01283 819922 or visit www.funeral-supplies.co.uk

INVESTING IN PEOPLE

Like many industries, the funeral profession must continue to invest in its most prized asset - its people. Skills shortages have been widely publicised across many industries, from engineers to chefs to doctors, and the funeral profession is no different. Businesses are generally always happy to invest in training, but they have to have the people to train in the first place.

Braemar Finance, which has been working with funeral directors for many years, said that its latest research highlighted a significant issue for funeral directors in this area, with 76% reporting a problem recruiting staff because of the skills shortage.

According to its data, 50% of funeral directors said that while they have considered investing in training, it won't be enough on its own. A further 24% feel it's too expensive and 8% don't think it's the answer.

Recruiting adequately skilled staff remains a concern, with only 12% of respondents saying they felt "very confident" they would be able

to recruit adequately skilled staff. Thirty-eight per cent were either not very confident, or not confident at all, while the rest remained "somewhat confident".

This is an area in which the NAFD can support members through its range of qualifications and training courses.

Designed to expand the knowledge of funeral sector employees and inspire excellence in their work to care for bereaved families and those that have died, the NAFD's two respected Diploma courses provide comprehensive training for funeral service professionals and are considered the 'gold standard' qualifications for the sector, while the Funeral Service Awareness course (delivered online) offers an introduction to the profession. A range of training workshops and courses support NAFD member firms in developing the experience and strengths of employees, further enhancing knowledge, skills and expertise.

To find out more, contact the NAFD's Education Team, Karen Vanstone and Karen Burton, on 0121 711 1343.

KEY CONTACTS

NAFD supplier members providing essential tools, equipment and furnishings for the funeral profession, include:

Auden Funeral Supplies

www.audenfs.com

Chemsol

www.chemsol-limited.com

Clarke and Strong

www.clarkeandstrong.com

The Dodge Company Ltd

www.dodge-uk.com

Hygeco Lear

<https://www.hygecogroup.com>

Rose House Funeral Supplies

<http://www.funeral-supplies.co.uk>

The Mortuary Lift Company

www.mortuarylift.com

