



Standards and Quality

NEW MODEL FOR NAFD INSPECTIONS REVEALED

In late July 2020, the National Association of Funeral Directors commissioned Natalie McKail - the former Inspector of Funeral Directors in Scotland and Independent Chair of the Funeral Services Consumer Standards Review (FSCSR) Working Groups - to carry out an independent review of the Standards and Quality activity within the Association.

Following a six-month examination of the existing framework, a new two-stage approach has been proposed – which will involve members in self-assessing standards in their own businesses as well as rigorous inspections by Standards and Quality Managers (SQMs), priorities for which will be based on a risk assessment of the track record of each funeral home.

Natalie was supported by a working group comprising Senior Standards and Quality Manager, Nigel Cooper, and the late Mark Cowan, SQM, to take forward the review. The aims of the review were to:-

- reassure the public that measures for standards, quality and transparency are applied consistently across all businesses;
- make best use of collective resources, targeting areas of highest risk or detriment;
- support firms to achieve compliance with the NAFD/IFSO Funeral Directors' Code;
- develop a clear and transparent framework to support compliance;
- to develop an approach which is proportionate to risk; and

- create a framework which takes account of external models of good practice and is flexible and responsive to future statutory requirements.

Said Natalie: “The environment within which we undertook this review is a complex one. We not only considered the current inspections framework in our investigations, but we also sought to understand the likely requirements following the Competition and Markets Authority’s recommendations to Government and the work of the Inspectors for Burial, Cremation and Funeral Directors in Scotland. The needs of consumers were also uppermost in the minds of the team – ensuring that the new framework will deliver not only the highest possible standards in the sector but will also provide bereaved families with the reassurance that their loved ones are being properly and well cared for at all times.

“In due course, the inspections regime will move into the new Independent Funeral Standards Organisation (IFSO) and so it was also important that this future transition was built into the new framework.”

In a report to NAFD Chief Executive Jon Levett, Ms McKail and the working group recommended a new four-element, two-stage framework for Standards, Quality and Transparency.

In Stage 1, this will include:-

- self-assessment;
- desk-based evidence and online channels evaluation (checking member websites, complaint analysis, etc);
- physical on-site inspections with written reports;
- focused mystery shopping on targeted activities.





A risk-based inspection programme with an incentive for compliance will be introduced in Stage 2 - informed by the findings from stage 1 – as will publication of reports for consumers to read, to assist them in choosing a funeral home and further build consumer confidence in standards of care.

It will also be important that it is absolutely clear how compliance with the Funeral Director Code fits in with the new inspections framework, using practical examples of how compliance can be achieved – to ensure that funeral firms can feel confident that they know what is expected of them and can reach out to the NAFD quality standards team to support them if they have questions.

The proposed new inspections framework will now be reviewed by the NAFD Management, ahead of its acceptance and a full and detailed launch to members in the Spring.

Chief Executive Jon Levett said: “I would like to thank Natalie and Nigel for their work on this – and note that his work on this is an incredibly positive part of Mark’s legacy.

“The Working Group has proposed a clear structure that will support funeral firms in achieving not only those core standards of care and transparency that will be required of them by statutory regulators – but they can also work to achieve a higher level of quality standards that help them to showcase to consumers why they should be a funeral home of choice in their local area.”

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