

Press release: CMA investigates funerals sector

The Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) market study will examine whether the information provided by funeral directors on prices and services is clear enough for people to be able to choose the best option for them.

It will also look at how prices have changed over time and the factors that affect them.

The average cost of a funeral was nearly £3,800 in 2017 – not counting extras that can add another £2000 to the total bill. Affordability and debt can therefore be a real concern to many people, with those on the lowest incomes potentially spending up to one third of their annual income on a funeral.

The rising level of cremation fees will be considered as part of the review, with cremations now estimated to account for around 75% of all funerals.

In parallel to the CMA's market study, HM Treasury is launching a separate [Call for Evidence](#) on regulation in the pre-paid funerals sector. The CMA therefore does not intend to examine the pre-paid sector within its market study.

Daniel Gordon, Senior Director of Markets at the CMA, said:

People can understandably be very emotionally vulnerable when planning a funeral. We therefore think it is important that – at what can be a particularly challenging time – the process is made as easy as possible.

As part of this study, we want to ensure that people can at least receive clear information on prices and the services making up a funeral, and that people get a fair deal on the cremation fees charged.

Views are welcome on any of the issues raised in the [statement of scope](#) by the 28 June.

An interim report, presenting initial findings and views on potential remedies, will be published in 6 months, ahead of the final report in a year's time.

If it finds issues of particular concern, the CMA could take further action, such as opening consumer or competition enforcement cases or launching a full market investigation.

Notes to Editors

1. The CMA is the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries and enforcing competition and consumer law.
2. Market studies may lead to a range of outcomes, including:
 - clean bill of health
 - actions which improve the quality and accessibility of information to consumers
 - taking consumer or competition law enforcement action
 - making recommendations to the government to change regulations or public policy
 - encouraging businesses in the market to self-regulate
 - making a reference for a more in-depth (phase 2) market investigation, or
 - accepting formal undertakings in lieu of a reference
3. The UK funerals market is estimated to be worth over £2 billion a year. The CMA estimates that there are around 5,000 funeral director branches and 294 crematoria currently in operation in the UK. 106 crematoria are privately operated and the remainder are owned and operated by local authorities.
4. [The Royal London National Funeral Cost Index 2017](#) reports that the average cost of a funeral in 2017 was £3,784.