



FUNERAL COMPANIES STILL FAILING VULNERABLE CUSTOMERS

Funeral providers are still failing to provide clear information about costs, despite UK watchdogs urging transparency in the sector.

In 2018 the Competition and Markets Authority uncovered how some firms encourage the bereaved to spend more on funeral services than they needed to, and it told funeral directors to make their prices clearer, particularly online.

From **16 September**, funeral directors will be obliged to publish a full list of fees on their website and give clear advice about any additional charges that might apply.

But recently consumer campaigners Which? investigated the websites of 112 funeral directors – and found that a quarter of them still are not displaying their prices.

And in January, the sale and administration of pre-paid funeral plans was brought within the remit of the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), once again bringing the industry under the spotlight.

Now Pure Cremation, a pioneer in direct cremation – where the deceased is collected, cared for, and then cremated without a service or mourners present – is urging the funeral industry to be open about costs so consumers can make a considered decision with as much information as possible.

Pure has been transparent about its prices since it first launched in 2015 and is calling for others to follow their lead.

Pure Cremation co-founder Catherine Powell said: “Funeral professionals like to describe themselves as caregivers, but both the CMA and Treasury investigations have shown that too many put profit before the needs of their vulnerable customers.”

Pure has already secured authorisation to sell FCA-regulated products and has made a host of other steps, including appointing a Compliance Officer, to continually assess how fair and clear its offering is.

She added “Pure Cremation has proven that there is no need to resort to high-pressure sales tactics if you have a good product and a customer-centred approach. Our pre-paid plans are described and priced clearly, plus they are fully guaranteed with nothing more to pay at the time of death, and our staff are trained to listen carefully to the customer and make an honest assessment of whether our service will meet their needs or not - all key factors in Pure’s success and our very low cancellation rate.”