

## **Funeral Conciliation Case Studies Bulletin One: 5<sup>th</sup> October 2007**

### ***Case Study One:***

The customer (C) complained that the funeral cortege had become separated before arrival at his home, such that the cortege was late and the funeral rushed and bungled.

The Funeral Director (F) apologised for the delay, citing roadworks, and agreed to reduce C's invoice and write a suitable letter of apology.

### ***Case Study Two:***

C's main complaints were that (1) she had not been informed that her husband's body had not been stored at the funeral director's locally but moved some 20 miles and (2) that she had not been able to recover shirt T-shirt which she had specifically requested.

F agreed with her concerns, agreed to pay her compensation and issue a written apology to C and her family.

### ***Case Study Three:***

C complained that F had (1) placed the incorrect time of service for the funeral in the Evening Gazette (2) left an incorrect phone number on C's voicemail, and (3) not informed C of a 24 hour period required for special music to be played at the funeral service. C also complained that F were in breach of their duties by filing their report on the case 7 weeks late.

F agreed with C's concerns and paid an agreed amount to him as well as writing an apology to C and his family.

### ***Case Study Four:***

C claimed that F had misrepresented the difference between a tablet and a headstone that she required for her mother's grave, and that F had overcharged her for additional services. F acknowledged that there had been a misunderstanding about definitions, said that price rises had been only inflationary, and agreed to provide the headstone for a price very close to that originally agreed.

The dispute was resolved amicably by both sides.

### ***Case Study Five:***

C complained that her partner's ashes had not been given to her after the cremation but given to her partner's daughter against his wishes. She therefore declined to pay the funeral directors' fees.

F acknowledged their mistake and agreed to write a letter of apology to C. C and F reached agreement over the level of fees to be paid.

**Case Study Six:**

C complained (1) that F had not left sufficient time to come to the funeral, causing a late start and condensed funeral service (2) that F had provided a people carrier instead of a traditional hearse and (3) that not all the flowers were brought in to the chapel for the funeral service.

F said that (1) the cortege had set out particularly early given the inclement weather but had nevertheless got stuck in traffic (2) that the service provided was a non-traditional one and that hearses were not typically deployed for this type of service and (3) that all flowers that were normally taken into the service were taken on this occasion.

The case settled with F providing a discount on the funeral fee and offering a verbal apology.

**Case Study Seven:**

C complained that F had (1) placed the incorrect time of service for the funeral in the Evening Gazette (2) left an incorrect phone number on C's voicemail, and (3) not informed C of a 24 hour period required for special music to be played at the funeral service. C also complained that F were in breach of their duties by filing their report on the case 7 weeks late.

F agreed with C's concerns and paid an agreed amount to him as well as writing an apology to C and his family.

**Case Study Eight:**

C raised issues about (1) lack of written quotation prior to the funeral (2) coffin appearing to be 'off-the-shelf' despite requiring one made to order (3) overcharging by F with respect to attending to arrangements for funeral and sub-contracting of labour, (4) overcharging for storage charges of the deceased.

F replied that (1) a written confirmation was offered by phone, but declined (2) the coffin was made to measure and was large because several items in addition to the body were placed in it, (3) that considerable time was spent advising C about arrangements for the funeral and on disbursements which were made despite the funeral being cancelled at 24 hours' notice and (4) reducing charges for the deceased who was still stored with F.

There was little meeting of the minds between C and F. F reduced his fees considerably. The dispute settled after more than 5 hours of phone mediation and conciliation, which included agreeing on arrangements for ongoing storage and future transfer of the body.

**Case Study Nine:**

C believed that his daughter was buried without her rings which have not been returned to him. C was looking for compensation for a) the rings, b) distress being felt and c) distress for the accusation that someone from the family had taken the rings.

F believed that the deceased was buried with her rings. F also advise that when it became apparent that the family were accusing F, the representative stated that he could not believe that his staff would steal the rings as in the same light, he wouldn't think that any visitors would either.

Following conciliation, F agreed to credit the outstanding funeral costs in full (circa £2,600) so that there was nothing outstanding to pay.

**Case Study Ten:**

C's claim arose because the date on the coffin was incorrect. This was only realised as it was being lowered into the grave causing distress to those who noticed. C requested that F waive the balance of their fee, this being £1,843.00.

F acknowledged the error and apologised in writing. Before the conciliation, they had offered the cost of the casket (£585.00) plus £100 as compensation. All other services performed by F were performed as per the agreed Funeral Arrangements and without complaint.

Following discussions over the phone which failed to resolve the differences, the Conciliator recommended that F should a) deduct in full the cost of the coffin (£585.00) and b) reduce their charges for "Professional Funeral Services" from £695.00 to £347.50, this being a 50% reduction. This recommendation resulted in an outstanding final total payable of £910.50 (£1,843.00 – (£585.00 + £347.50)).