

## Annex B

### Position of Scottish S A I F on Registration/ Licensing of the Funeral Sector in Scotland

The current work classification for a person engaged in providing a funeral service to the bereaved is an unskilled worker. This therefore allows any person with no knowledge or skills in caring for the emotional needs of the bereaved; caring for the deceased; H & S; and the laws concerning the legal disposal of a dead human body, to establish and describe themselves as a funeral director.

The public assume a person operating as a funeral director is trained and competent in the skills necessary to provide such a service and would be surprised and very concerned to know that this is not always the case.

This work classification, which allows for the current situation may have been acceptable many years ago where the services provided by an undertaker extended to no more than the supply of a coffin and transport to the local cemetery. The other requirements, laying out the deceased, opening the grave, the wake etc. were arranged and carried out by others.

Funeral director's additional services started to develop after the war and the last thirty years have seen an acceleration in the services and products provided. In addition, the individual has had to develop their skills and knowledge in many areas. Numeracy and literacy, knowledge of legal procedures, client care skills, presentation skills, H & S knowledge, management skills, complaints handling, interpersonal skills, administration and organisational skills are just some of those now attributed to the role of the funeral director. It is therefore clear that a competent funeral director is no longer an unskilled worker but a highly skilled and knowledgeable individual closer to the description of a professional. If such a work classification was attributed to the role the public would be assured their chosen funeral director was trained and competent to an established level.

Major milestones which may mark an occupation being identified as a profession include:

1. An occupation becomes a full-time occupation
2. The establishment of a training school
3. The establishment of a university school
4. the establishment of a local association
5. the establishment of a national association of professional ethics
6. the establishment of government licensing laws

A profession arises when any trade or occupation transforms itself through *"the development of formal qualifications based upon education, apprenticeship, and examinations, the emergence of regulatory bodies with powers to admit and discipline members, and some degree of monopoly rights."*

The funeral sector already meets the first five of the above milestones and all that may be required for the formation of the sector as a profession is the establishment of Government licensing laws.

It is therefore the position of Scottish SAIF that we support the introduction of a Government Registration and Licensing requirement for the funeral sector. We believe this will immediately stop the unregulated start-up by un-skilled, un-qualified and un-desirable entrants simply taking advantage of a vulnerable public. It will also ensure the people of Scotland have a properly regulated funeral sector providing a high level of professional service.

To achieve this, we would propose three types of Registration/License:

1. Company registration
2. Individual trainee/apprenticeship registration
3. Individual Professional Funeral Director Licence

It is not our intention to put punitive barriers or unachievable standards in the way of persons wishing to enter the funeral sector either as an employee or business owner. However, the current unregulated situation whereby just anyone can operate as a funeral director must be addressed.

The bereaved find themselves in a very vulnerable position following the death of a loved one. Whether through a lack of knowledge or understanding or simply through a need to do what they consider right by the deceased, wrong choices and decisions can be made which may have long term implications, not only financially but also emotionally. It is therefore important that they are guided by trained and qualified individuals who are also judged to be ethical and transparent in all their dealings. Only by efficient and effective Government regulation can the public be properly protected.

We have considered some of the conditions that may be applied to the above types of registration/licence and the management of any scheme and if required will be happy to explore these at our meeting.