

Inspector of Burial, Cremation, and Funeral Directors

Annual Report

December 2020 – December 2021

January 2022

Introduction

1. This report has been compiled by Professor Gordon Findlater, Inspector of Burial, Cremation and Funeral Directors for the purpose of providing Scottish Ministers with a resume of duties undertaken.
2. In accordance with the requirement of section 93 of the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016 ('the 2016 Act'), this report covers the period December 2020 to December 2021.
3. This report provides a brief background of the work undertaken by the Inspector and gives a brief summary of enquiries/complaints dealt with during this period.
4. Professor Findlater was appointed to the post on 7 December 2021 on a part time basis in accordance with the requirement of Section 89 of the 2016 Act.
5. Professor Findlater also holds the post HM Inspector of Anatomy. He has held that post since August 2018.

Duties Undertaken

6. The reporting period remained significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, in-person inspections of funeral directors, crematoriums and burial authorities were not occurring for much of this time.
7. Further, much of the reporting period was dedicated to training for the Inspector. This mainly involved shadowing the activities of the Senior Inspector and also by taking part in virtual meetings with members of the sector.
8. Additionally, along with the Senior Inspector, the Inspector carried out four introductory visits to funeral directors' businesses of different sizes primarily to observe and learn how each functioned. These were very helpful visits, giving an insight into how each delivered a service to a very high standard but each in a different way. These introductory visits have been very useful in developing the Inspector's understanding of good practice. This learning will continue to be useful when it comes to carrying out formal inspections in the future.
9. Beyond training efforts, the Inspector also commenced practical duties. Since being appointed, the inspection of only one crematorium took place – in this instance the Inspector shadowed an inspection carried out by the Senior Inspector.
10. Throughout the reporting period the Inspector attended regular virtual meetings of the Additional Deaths Oversight Group (ADOG), National Mass Fatalities Working Group (NMFG) and the Scottish Bereavement Bench marking Group (SBBG).

11. Additionally, during the reporting period, the Inspector met with members of the Scottish Government Burial and Cremation Team, the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities (FBCA), the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM), the National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD) and the National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF Scotland).
12. These were valuable learning experiences giving an in-depth insight into how the funeral industry functions from the registering of a death to the cremation or burial of the deceased and during a particularly difficult time.

Enquiries and Complaints

13. During the reporting period, the majority of complaints were dealt with by the Senior Inspector who shared them with the Inspector for training purposes and for comment.
14. Complaints dealt with specifically by the Inspector:
 - A funeral director charging for full funeral costs inappropriately as that service had not been rendered.
 - A funeral director not releasing a body to another funeral director until outstanding charges for storage of the body had been paid.
 - Lack of staff provided by a funeral director for the dignified handling of a body during a funeral service.
15. All these complaints were dealt with to the satisfaction of the complainants.

Additional Duties

16. In addition to the above, further activities undertaken by the Inspector included:
 - Taking part in the production of a [podcast](#) by Golden Charter which is now available to the public.
 - Attending the online Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) complaints investigation skills course.
 - Virtual meetings with both the previous Minister for Public Health and Sport (Mairi Gougeon, MSP) and current Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport (Maree Todd, MSP).

Conclusion

17. There is no doubt that the pandemic has seriously impacted on the ability of both the Inspector and Senior Inspector to carry out their duties particularly with respect to inspections of crematoriums. It is anticipated however that this will change as restrictions are eased.

18. The future is still uncertain but with the Scottish Government Funeral Director draft Code of Practice currently undergoing revision, there is no doubt that the funeral trade in Scotland will be in a much better place in the future than it has been in the past.
19. The Inspector would like to express his grateful thanks for all the help and assistance he received throughout the year from the Scottish Government Burial and Cremation Team.

Gordon Findlater
Inspector of Burial, Cremation and Funeral Directors

5 January 2022



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