

Complaints Procedure

In the first instance, any complaint must be brought to the attention of your chosen Funeral Director. It may well be that rectification of the matter, if that is possible, together with a sincere apology is all that is required to put you at ease with the situation.

If however, you consider the situation to be of a more serious nature, then your complaint setting out all the facts, should be put in writing to your Funeral Director as soon as possible. Under the Code of Practice, the Funeral Director has a duty to acknowledge, investigate and respond in detail to your complaint as quickly and as practically possible.

Experience shows that usually the Funeral Director treats the matter with the utmost seriousness and provides a solution acceptable to the client.

If however, you are not satisfied at any stage with the response you receive from the Funeral Director or if you believe the matter needs to be more formally investigated then you can either:

a) Refer your complaint to the Chairman of the Society's Standards Committee or

b) Direct to the Independent Funeral Directors Arbitration Scheme.

All such referrals should be made within 3 months of the funeral taking place, but in exceptional circumstances complaints will be accepted up to 12 months after the event.

The procedures involved in both of these options are set out below, but depending on the alternative you choose you should address all correspondence to either the Chairman of the Standards Committee or the Independent Funeral Directors Arbitration Scheme c/o SAIF Business Centre, 3 Bullfields, Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire, CM21 9DB.

a) Referring Complaints to the Chairman of the Society's Standards Committee.

This option should be chosen when:

You still wish to come to an amicable resolution of your complaint with the Funeral Director but feel the Society should have the opportunity to investigate the matter and propose an acceptable solution, while also taking appropriate action to prevent any repetition of the problem. Normally, the Chairman and the members of the Standards Committee will try to recommend a solution acceptable to both parties while also taking suitable corrective action, if required, in relation to the Funeral Director. If however, you are not satisfied at any stage either with the way your complaint is being handled or with the proposed solution which of course you are not bound to accept, you can require that the matter be transferred to the Independent Funeral Directors Arbitration Scheme. Also, the Chairman of the Standards Committee can request such a transfer if it is felt that the matter is beyond their authority.

b) Referring Complaints to the Independent Funeral Directors Arbitration Scheme.

The Independent Funeral Directors Arbitration Scheme consists of two stages, conciliation and arbitration. The first stage, which consists of an informal process of conciliation, can be bypassed if one or both of the parties expressly opt to proceed directly to arbitration.

If the parties do not settle the dispute within six weeks of the Conciliator's appointment, the dispute may be referred to arbitration. If at any stage the Conciliator considers conciliation inappropriate the matter may be referred to arbitration under the rules of the scheme.

The award of the arbitrator will be generally final and legally binding on both parties. If however, either Party considers the Award is one that no reasonable Arbitrator should have reached on the basis of the documents presented, any payment ordered should still be made, but they may write requesting that the matter be referred to review.

An application for Review by the Appellant will only be considered if:

- The Institute receives it within 21 days of the date that the Award was dispatched to the Parties by the Institute.
- It is accompanied by a copy of the Arbitrator's Award together with a statement setting out the reasons why the Award is one that no reasonable arbitrator should have reached on the basis of the documents presented.
- A fee, known as the 'Review Fee', is sent with the respective paperwork to 'IDRS Ltd.' For current day fee, contact SAIF office.

In Conclusion

There is no direct cost to you, the complainant, in relation to either of the above referral processes apart from the review process.

Once the Review Procedure has been completed, no further steps can be taken by any Party under these Rules. Any Party considering the possibility of an appeal to the courts, if indeed such an appeal is legally possible, is strongly advised to seek legal advice.

A complete copy of the Independent Funeral Directors Arbitration scheme rules, is available free of charge from the Society at the address referred to above.

Should you have any further questions or concerns, please do contact us at the SAIF Business Centre:

Tel no: (01279) 726777 **Fax no:** (01279) 726300

E-mail Address: info@saif.org.uk

The National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors

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