



Rated by Experts

Leading the market in  
clarity and transparency



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## Overview

Our product ratings use a set of 'red line' criteria to calculate an underlying score for each product, which translates to a star rating.

Products can achieve between one and five stars. The more comprehensive the product, the more likely it is to be rated highly.

To achieve a five-star rating, products must meet all of our red line criteria. We focus on core product features, and don't give extra marks for unnecessary features or optional extras.

Our current red line criteria are contained in the following pages.

We do not consider price when calculating these ratings.

## Red line 1 – guarantee or £3600 allowance for burials and £1300 for cremations

### **Cremation**

For cremation funerals, there must be a disbursement allowance of at least £1,300. This disbursement allowance must be intended to cover doctors' fees, minister's fees and the cost of the cremation.

Disbursement allowances must rise in line with a funeral inflation index – for example, as specified by Sunlife's Cost of Dying report.

Alternatively, these costs should be fully guaranteed.

### **Burial**

For burial funerals, there must be a disbursement allowance of at least £3,600. This disbursement allowance must be intended to cover the minister's fees and the interment cost.

Disbursement allowances must rise in line with a funeral inflation index – for example, as specified by Sunlife's Cost of Dying report.

Alternatively, these costs should be fully guaranteed.

## Red line 2 – No shortfall risk if moving home

Plans must allow customers to move home without taking on the potential risk of a shortfall – for example when moving to a more expensive location.

Without regional pricing, this cost must be factored in by providers.

## Red line 3 – Collection of the deceased

Plans must provide a 24-hour service for the collection of the deceased.

A death can be an extremely distressing occurrence, and consumers should be able to have the deceased collected at any time. 'Office hours' collection routines may add considerably to next of kin's distress.

73% of plans offer a 24-hour service for the collection of the deceased. The rest of the market only offers collection during office hours.

## Red line 4 – Visitation in the chapel of rest

Plans must allow family and friends to see the deceased at any reasonable time with appointment. A significant number of plans only offer this service during normal office hours – and some plans don't include access to the chapel of rest at all. This is not a reference to direct cremation plans.

Funeral providers should therefore be flexible to their requirements and allow visitation of the deceased at any reasonable time.

## Red line 5 – Quality of the coffin

Plans must provide a coffin with a veneer or wood effect. Consumers will have an expectation of the quality of the coffin, and to gain five stars in our ratings, a plan must supply a coffin which is above basic or simple quality.

## Red line 6 – Funeral occurrence

Plans must allow funerals to take place on any normal weekday during working hours.

We do accept that there are extra costs involved in holding a funeral outside of normal working days and hours, and we don't expect plans to cover these. Nearly nine out of ten (90%) plans allow the funerals to take place on any normal weekday during working hours.

Some companies offer more affordable plans which restrict the time of day a funeral may be held. If the customer actively chooses one of these plans, that is fine – but more comprehensive plans shouldn't limit the times at which a funeral can be held during normal working hours.

## Red line 7 – Cooling-off period

Plans must include a 30-day cooling-off period during which customers may cancel their plan and receive a full refund.

The FCA's Insurance Conduct of Business Sourcebook (ICOBS) requires all pure protection insurance policies to include a 30-day cooling off period. As funeral plans pay out on death, to our interpretation they would be considered to be a pure protection product if regulated by the FCA.

The most common cooling-off period within the industry is 30 days.

### Red line 8 – Cancellation fee

Cancellation fees must be £250 or less, including any non-refundable deposit.

The median cancellation fee for the industry is £249.

We understand that marketing acquisition costs in the funeral planning marketplace are relatively high, but there comes a point where cancellation fees become so high they appear to penalise customers.

### Red line 9 – 24-hour helpline

Customers and next of kin must have access to a 24-hour telephone helpline. This number could be maintained by plan providers or individual funeral directors.

A 24-hour helpline is required in order for the body to be collected at any time and to provide peace of mind to consumers.

### Red line 10 – Provision of a hearse

Plans must provide a hearse.

This is a minimum requirement in order for the deceased to be transported to the place of service.

### Red line 11 – Provision of pallbearers

Plans must provide at least four pallbearers.

This is in order for the coffin to be moved without the requirement of family or friends.

### Red line 12 – Transfer radius

Plans must include transportation of the deceased to anywhere within mainland Great Britain. Plans vary in their offering, starting from 20 miles to not having a limit.

### Red line 13 – Is the deposit refundable?

Any deposit paid must be refundable. Non-refundable deposits act as barriers to exit.

### Red line 14 – Is the cost of the funeral covered if one dies before completing payments?

The cost of the funeral must be covered by the provider if the plan holder dies before they have fully paid for their plan.

## Contact Fairer Finance

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