

Product Development and Innovation Group

The purpose of the Product Development and Innovation Group is to support the development of innovative, emerging product ideas and help their passage to acceptance and adoption within the funeral director network.

✓ **Channelling funeral director insight into product development and positioning**

This year the group created a standing agenda item for each representative on the group to feed back on their perceptions of customer trends within their business' local markets, to allow at-need consumer buying behaviour and changing requirements to inform Golden Charter's thinking on product development.

- Discussions informed the decision to retire the Basic Plus funeral plan.
- Feedback on customers' levels of price sensitivity was provided and the group reviewed and discussed the appropriateness promoting direct to cremation funeral plans, ultimately making a recommendation to the company that, given the prominence of Dignity's simplicity brand in the media, and subject to the appropriate positioning and education, these plans should be promoted more proactively.
- Following discussions on greater price consciousness, a resulting action to develop a tool which funeral directors can use to inform customers about areas where they should challenge competitors on, to move negotiations away from price and to have conversations which are more focused on quality and service was also agreed.

✓ **Understanding the role of cultural distinctions**

This year the group contributed to thinking on how Golden Charter address cultural and religious distinctions within the funeral plan product offering.

- These conversations triggered an action, to consider how plans are marketed, in terms of the language and imagery, to appeal to different cultural groups.
- Informed by discussions at this group the matter of cultural distinctions was also raised within regulatory consultations and debates. Specifically, SAIFCharter fed in the point that the impact of religious belief may influence the importance placed on the speed of a funeral and the ability of funeral directors to meet such requirements may restrict families' choice and potentially drive up their costs.

✓ **Understanding and appealing to key markets**

This year the group were provided with insight on consumer groups who contribute a significant volume of funeral plan enquiries but where fewer follow through to buy a plan, with members advising on how Golden Charter products may be developed or positioned differently to appeal to these key markets.

- Advice has fed in to thinking how best to position funeral plan products and messaging to target these key consumer segments.