

# Postcode lottery can make dying

By John Bingham  
SOCIAL AFFAIRS EDITOR

A FUNERAL can come with a dramatically different price tag depending on where you live, a study has found.

Research has exposed wide variations - as extreme as differences in house prices - between funeral and burial costs in different postcodes.

In some areas, the average cost of a basic funeral and burial can more than double within 30 miles. The study by

Royal London, the pension provider, found evidence of bereaved people cutting back spending on flowers, the wake or cars to temper the impact of funeral inflation.

One of Britain's biggest national funeral chains, Co-operative Funeralcare, admitted it charged different rates in different areas.

Overall, the average cost of a basic funeral including cremation or burial has jumped by 4 per cent - or £140 - in the last year to stand at £3,702.

Although the typical cost of a basic burial - averaging £4,110 - is still higher than cremation - which averages at £3,294 - the cost of being cremated rose more quickly in the last year.

But the study - which drew on polling, a survey of prices from a sample of crematoria and cemeteries, and analysis by price comparison site yourfuneralchoice.com - pointed to dramatic variations between different areas.

Beckenham in Kent emerged as the most expensive place to die, with basic

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## Jehovah's Witness bible court rule 'could protect paedophiles'

◆ An Old Testament rule requiring at least two witnesses to convict someone of a serious crime could be allowing child abuse in the Jehovah's Witness Church to go unpunished, lawyers and victims have claimed.

A passage in Deuteronomy insisting that a single witness is not enough to substantiate an allegation is cited in child abuse procedures in the Church in which accusers can appear before elders with their alleged abuser.

The same passage in Deuteronomy 19 advocates punishment based on the principle of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth".

Nick French, 43, who was abused by his stepfather, Gary Moscrop, between the ages of seven and 13, is leading calls for a change in the law, demanding mandatory reporting of abuse allegations. Mr French, who presented a petition to Downing Street calling for the change, said he was "totally shunned" by members of the Jehovah's Witness community when he reported the abuse as an adult.

"When there are institutions that have rules that protect paedophiles, then something really needs to be done about that," he said.

A Jehovah's Witness spokesman said child abuse was a crime that occurred "in all sectors of society".

"Any suggestion that Jehovah's Witnesses cover up child abuse is absolutely false.



## Gay escort blackmailed married man

◆ A gay escort has been jailed for 32 months after blackmailing a married businessman who hired him for sex, by threatening to tell his wife of their secret liaison.

Crown Court heard Walker extorted almost £5,000 from the 49-year-old man before he went to police.

Prosecutor David Lampitt said the victim had contacted Walker via a gay

## West Ham duo avoided pl

◆ The chairmen of West Ham United football club have said they were fortunate not to be on the aircraft that crashed in Chigwell in Essex on Saturday, killing both of its crew.

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