



Briefing 16 -54     December 2016

## Cemeteries and Crematoria: Trend analysis 2015/16

This briefing provides details on the **performance information available from APSE's performance networks service** looking at performance indicators and current policy issues for councils who deliver cemeteries and crematoria services.

### Key issues

- Management and administration costs have risen which is a truer reflection of previous years increases.
- Income from burial and cremations has continued to rise which is a reflection of increased costs for these services but this has been balanced by many authorities looking to provide affordable funerals to offset the increase in public health funerals whereby all the costs are borne by the local authority.
- The increase in memorial inspections is a welcome sign with Bereavement Managers clearly managing their stock of memorials with public safety in mind.

### Overview

A new APSE performance networks benchmarking model for cemeteries and crematoria services was launched three years ago. The programme for cemeteries and crematoria provides performance indicators for time efficiency, human resources, maintenance, memorial safety, absenteeism and financial performance for the service throughout the UK. This briefing note provides participating authorities with an overview of the 2015-16 service benchmarking data compared to the three previous financial years. The analysis in this report **is based on 'service wide averages' across all family groups** and currently covers returns made by 47 local authorities across the UK.

This new performance report on cemetery and crematorium should help to inform local councils and provide assurance that bereaved families are treated with dignity and respect, through the stringent performance indicators which relate to service quality measures. The report will also ensure that during difficult times for local residents, coping with bereavement, the local authority is providing a good quality and appropriately costed service for its residents through the range of performance indicators. Whilst many matters relating to the service may be outside of the control

of the local authority, such as fees charged by the Clergy or funeral directors, those elements of the service within the scope of the local authority are able to be measured on a UK wide basis to ensure the service is provided effectively, and on an improving basis, using the APSE performance networks data.

## Trend analysis

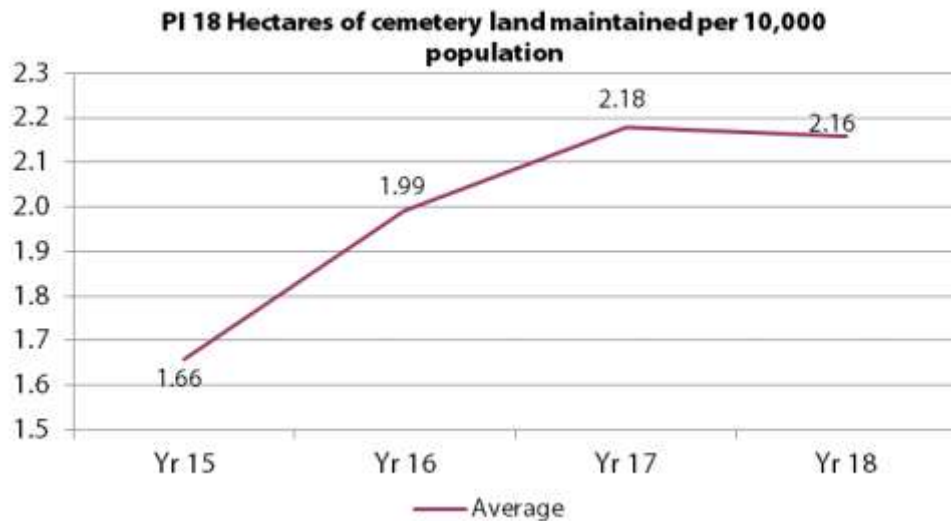
This being the fourth year of the cemeteries and crematoria performance networks scheme, a meaningful trend analysis can now be produced. Key highlighted trends covers from years 15 (2012-13) to year 18 (2015-16).

Particular points of interest are as follows:

## Interpretation of data

### Maintained cemetery land

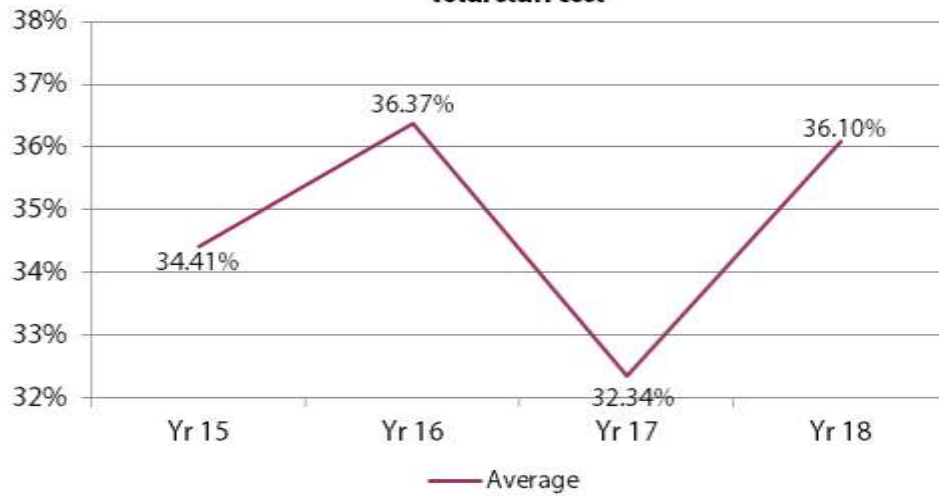
Year 17 showed a 25.37% increase in maintained cemetery land which in some part can be explained by more burial land being acquired and made available to augment that of aging and full cemeteries nationwide. However, Year 18 has shown a slight fall which is possibly of reflection of the growing trend to allow some burial land to grow wild in older cemetery areas in order to promote biodiversity, often such areas are given to volunteers to maintain.



### Costs

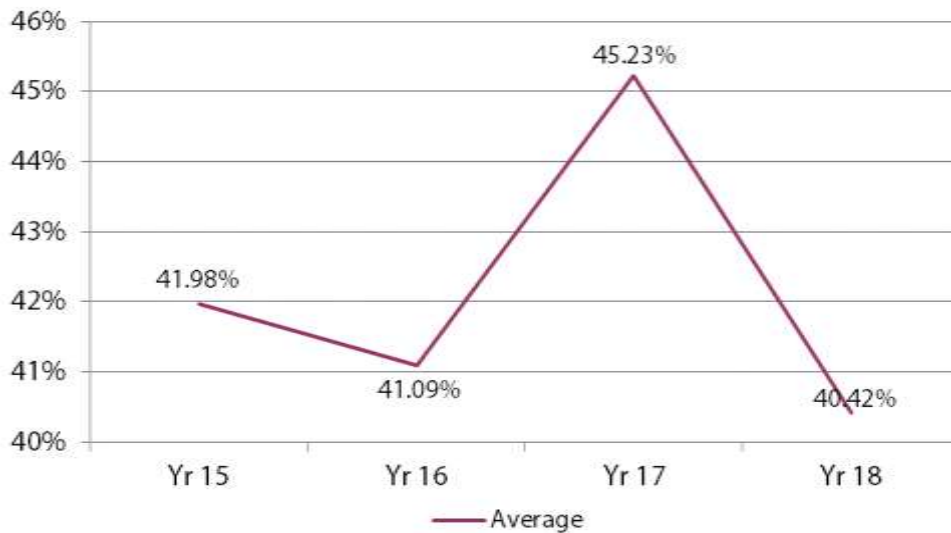
Year 17 saw a 3.75% drop in the management and admin staff costs percentage to total staff costs and a 1.75% reduction since year 15 which it is believed indicated a move towards directing resources to front-line activities. However Year 18 has shown a rise in costs of 11.6% in the proportion of total costs being attributed to staffing compared to year 17 (2014-15). This increase returns the rising cost of staff in line with the general trend which has been occurring since Year 15 (2012-13).

**PI 06b Management and admin staff costs as a percentage of total staff cost**



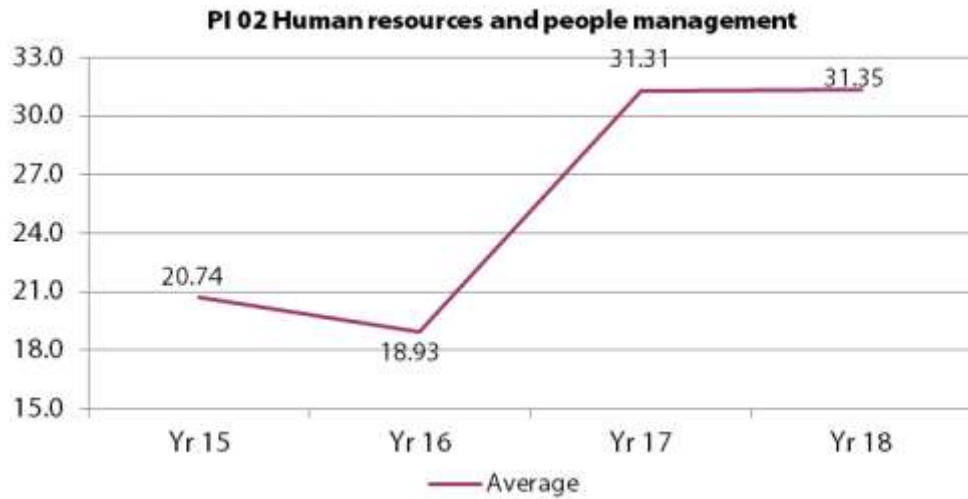
Year 17 saw a surprising 4.32% increase in the proportion of total costs being attributed to staffing since year 15. This may have been a result of reducing costs against other budget heads or greater investment in employees. However, Year 18 has seen staffing costs fall to their lowest level since Year 15 and reflects the reduction in staffing numbers which many local authorities are having to make as savings need to be met.

**PI 05 All staff costs as a percentage of total cost**



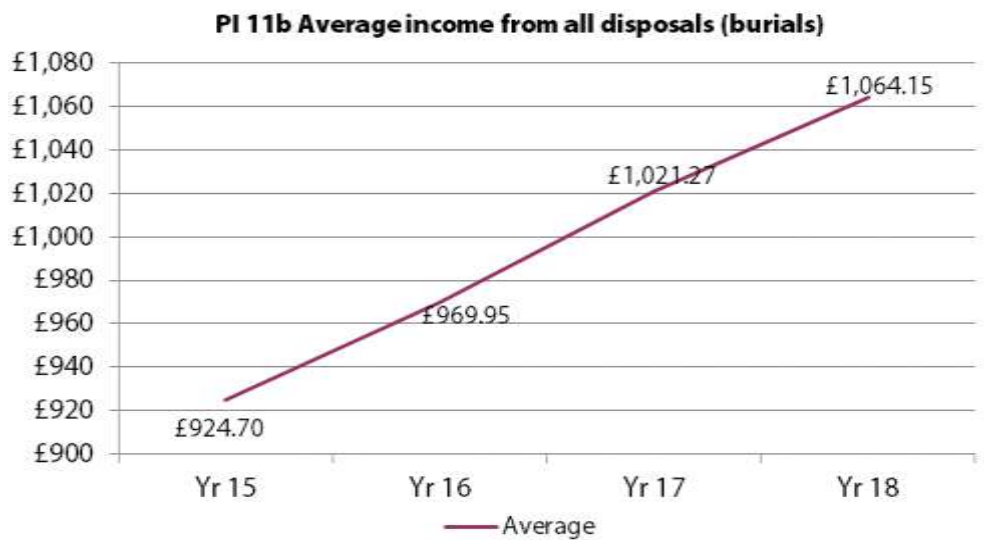
#### Human resources and people management

A 45% rise in the human resources and people management score in Year 17 showed a stronger performance on the management of people in the sector. This rise has continued slightly in Year 18 which confirms the commitment to staff development is a continuing trend.

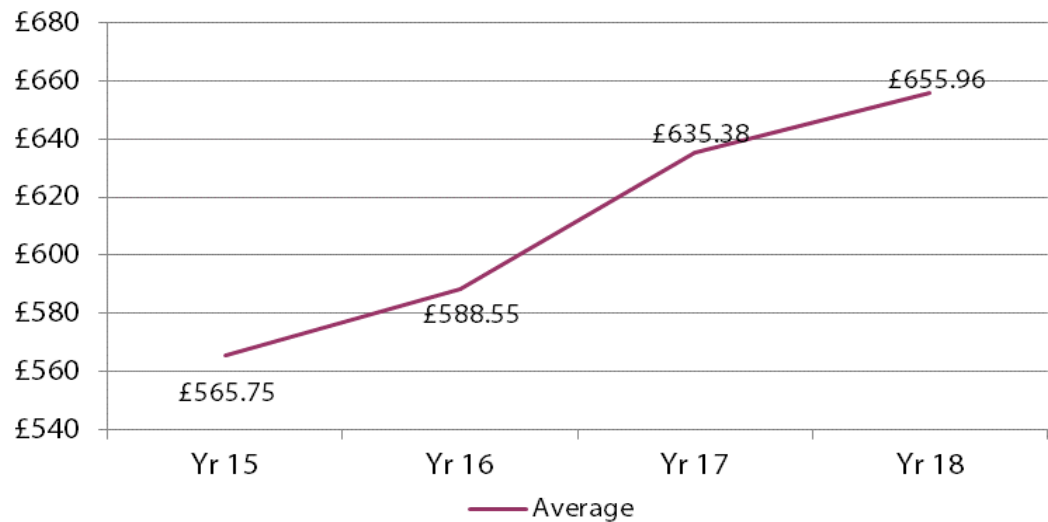


Income from all disposals

Burial income has risen over 15% since year 15 which confirms the additional fee levels being applied to cover losses. The 15.9% increase since year 15 of income from cremations reflects a significant upward surge in cremation fees in that time.



**PI 11c Average income from all disposals (cremations)**



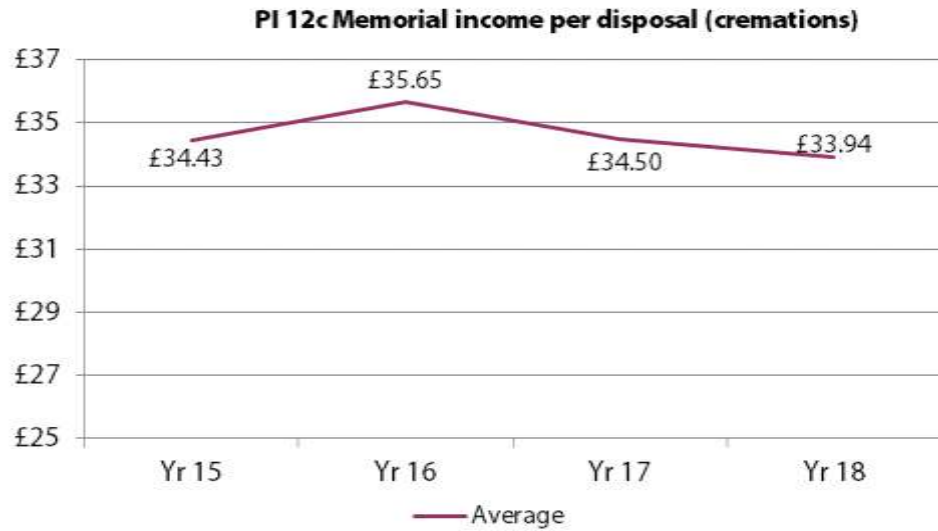
#### Memorial income per disposal

The 25.49% downward shift in memorial income per burial up to Year 17, possibly reflected a choice to use disposable income on other items of expenditure. However Year 18 has shown a significant increase in income which may be a result of a wider choice of memorialisation as Bereavement Services look to increase income to offset budget savings requirements.

Memorial income in crematoria has dropped by 5 % since year 16, potentially as a direct result of more careful spending on optional memorials by the bereaved.

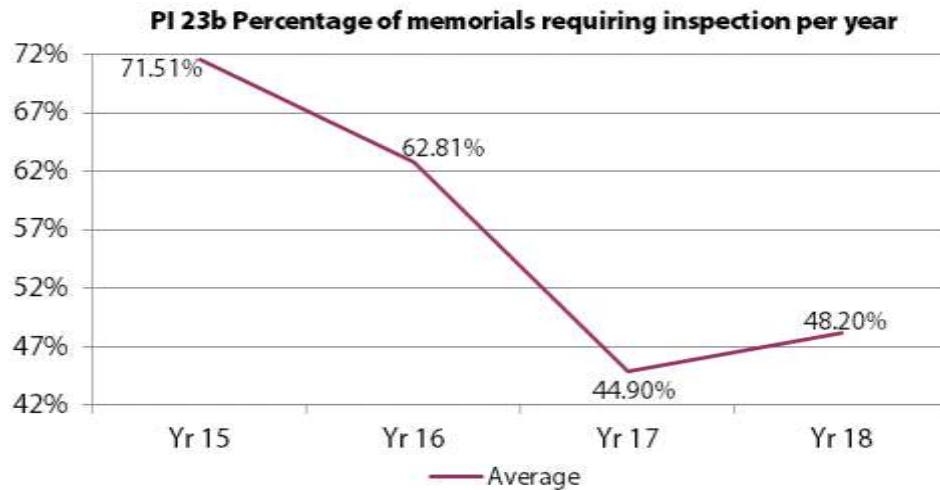
**PI 12b Memorial income per disposal (burials)**





### Safety inspections

The first three years of data showed a less zealous approach being taken to memorial safety inspections, however Year 18 has seen a significant increase in memorial inspections as perhaps concerns over health and safety are rising but also many quality awards are now requiring memorial safety inspections to be carried out on a regular basis.



## Get involved

APSE hosts a Cemeteries and Crematoria Advisory Group where councils are able to share best practice, ideas and innovation in the cemeteries and crematoria sector. The meetings also regular host discussions on the latest performance benchmarking information within the sector.

To get involved in the group you can register online using [this link](#) or email Wayne Priestley [wpriestley@apse.org.uk](mailto:wpriestley@apse.org.uk)

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