

Local Government on the Frontline

What's in store at the APSE Annual Seminar 2026

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Local government on the frontline: What's in store at the APSE Annual Seminar 2026



A message from APSE Chief Executive, Mo Baines

We are delighted to welcome local government officers, elected members and industry leaders from across the UK to this year's APSE Annual Seminar in Liverpool. The seminar will explore the biggest challenges facing local authorities and examine how councils can successfully navigate the evolving local government landscape.

With expert speakers, interactive discussion sessions and plenty of opportunities to explore Liverpool, we are really looking forward to a fantastic two days of networking, knowledge sharing and collaboration.

The Annual Seminar will also include the APSE Annual General Meeting (AGM), providing an important opportunity for member councils to have their say and help shape the future direction of the Association. We strongly encourage all member authorities to ensure they are represented at this key event in the APSE calendar, with attendance welcomed from both local government officers and elected members.

Local government on the frontline

This year's seminar, *Local Government on the Frontline, Meeting Challenges and Supporting Communities*, will focus on strategies for local authorities to create cleaner, greener and healthier communities.

We will be joined by a range of speakers from across the local government landscape to examine how local councils can navigate financial pressures, local government reorganisation and the increasing demands placed on frontline services.

From chief executives and university professors to council officers and APSE associates, the event will bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise to delegates.

The programme includes:

Chief Executives and Senior Leaders Challenge Panel, offering a discussion into the biggest challenges facing local government across the UK.

Frontline Forums, covering strategic priorities, cleaner communities, future-proofing communities, healthier communities and community infrastructure.

Academic Panel, featuring Professor Steven Griggs and Professor Mark Gregory as they discuss their research on economic growth, devolution and island economies.

Keynote Address, highlighting the power of clear and confident communications from APSE Associate René Power.

Innovation Showcase, with presentations from the APSE Service Awards 2025 winners on their award-winning projects across climate change, catering, housing, greenspaces and more.

Celebrating excellence at the APSE Service Awards

We look forward to celebrating the excellent work taking place in local authority teams across the UK at the APSE Annual Service Awards. The awards cover a wide range of frontline service areas from waste, recycling and highways to parks, renewable energy and housing.

The awards also include the prestigious Council of the Year award which celebrates the local authorities who are achieving excellent results across a wide range of service areas.

Judged by a panel of distinguished sector leaders, the local authorities who are winners and finalists serve as examples of best practice for councils across the UK.

A chance to explore

On Wednesday evening, we are excited to invite delegates to an evening reception at OH ME OH MY, a beautiful former bank in the heart of Liverpool, with impressive views of the city's iconic Three Graces. We will also be joined by the Liverpool Historical Society for a discussion on Liverpool's fascinating past.

On Thursday afternoon, we will be hosting a dedicated networking session, bringing together colleagues from across local government to connect and exchange ideas. Delegates will have the opportunity to tour the iconic Royal Liver Building and gain panoramic views of Liverpool's skyline.

We will also be joined by Neil Barnett, a Research Fellow at Leeds Beckett University, who will be sharing insights into his book, *Local Government and Democracy in Britain*.

Exhibition hub

The Annual Seminar features one of the largest trade exhibitions in local government, bringing together a diverse range of industry exhibitors and suppliers to showcase their products and services. Our exhibition will give delegates the opportunity to meet suppliers face-to-face, discover innovative solutions and explore how new products and services can help support their council's priorities



Join us in Liverpool

This year's Annual Seminar, Local Government on the Frontline, Meeting Challenges and Supporting Communities, is an excellent opportunity for local authority officers, elected members and industry leaders to come together to examine how we can create strategies for safer, cleaner and healthier places for residents to thrive.

Covering a diverse range of service areas and offering strategic insight into some of local government's most pressing challenges, the event will equip councils with the knowledge to lead their authorities into the future.

Scan the QR code to view the programme



APSE ANNUAL SERVICE AWARDS 2026

Thursday 17 September, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Princes Dock, Liverpool



APSE Over Summer: Supporting local government through change, collaboration and innovation



Summer 2026 has been another busy and productive period for APSE, bringing together local authority officers, elected members and industry leaders from across the UK to address some of the greatest challenges facing frontline services.

In response to the local elections in May, APSE supported elected members through the launch of the Councillor's Guide to Frontline Services webinar series. Designed to help councillors better understand key local authority services, the programme covered topics ranging from parks and highways to catering and waste management.

APSE's regional networks gathered at a range of seminars and AGMs across the UK, providing members with the opportunity to shape the future of the network while exploring the specific challenges and opportunities facing their regions.



Creating resilient frontline services in the face of digital, environmental and political transformation has been a key theme of APSE's summer events. From discussing digital solutions in Llandudno and local government reorganisation in London, to exploring sustainable island economies in Glasgow and greener neighbourhoods in Lisburn, members have come together to share ideas, best practice and innovative approaches to tackling local challenges.

APSE has also continued to represent member interests through ongoing engagement with DEFRA, PackUK, MHCLG and the LGA. Regular discussions have focused on key policy developments affecting local authorities, including Simpler Recycling, Extended Producer Responsibility, local government reorganisation and the future delivery of frontline services, ensuring that the experiences and perspectives of APSE members help inform national policy discussions.



Coastal erosion poses a growing environmental, social and economic threat to coastal communities, new APSE report warns



A new report by APSE, 'Coastal Erosion: How local authorities are dealing with increased levels of coastal erosion linked to climate change', reveals the growing impact of rising sea levels and climate change on coastal authorities.

The state of coastal erosion in the UK

With 17% of UK coastlines already impacted by coastal erosion, local authorities in coastal areas are facing increasing pressure to protect communities, homes and vital infrastructure.

The report highlights that in England alone, 520,000 properties are currently at risk of damage from coastal flooding, with the figure projected to rise to one million by 2050. It also notes the tangible impact of coastal flooding on residents, including housing insecurity, negative effects on mental health, and in extreme cases, forced migration.

Barriers faced by local authorities

Despite the escalating risks faced by residents and communities, the report finds that local authorities continue to face significant barriers to protecting coastlines.

These include the high cost of hard engineering solutions, the non-statutory status of Shoreline Management Plans, increasing pressure to meet national planning targets and insufficient long-term funding, all of which limit councils' ability to plan, deliver and maintain effective coastal protection.

Calls for statutory powers

The report calls for Shoreline Management Plans to be made statutory, granting greater powers to local authorities and establishing the plans as mandatory, enforceable policies.

This echoes the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Coastal Communities' position and the growing consensus that Shoreline Management Plans must be better integrated into planning decisions.

Greater investment and funding

Although the report recognises the role of government funding, including the £5.2 Billion Capital Programme from the Department for Environment, Agriculture and Rural Affairs, it argues that this does not go far enough.

The report calls for greater investment, particularly for local authority Shoreline Management Plans, and warns that current funding levels are insufficient to meet the scale and ambition set out in the plans. It also argues that financial support for residents affected by coastal erosion should be enhanced, including improved relocation packages and increased compensation.

Mo Baines, APSE Chief Executive, said:

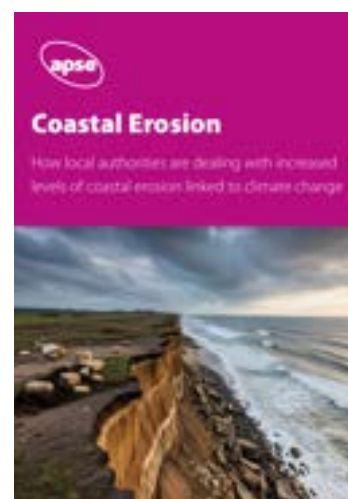
'This report demonstrates that local authorities face significant challenges in protecting coastal areas and communities.'

'Much more could and should be done to accelerate responses to coastal erosion, providing certainty in terms of resources and planning for the future impacts.'

Wayne Priestley, report author, said:

'The issue for many coastal authorities is whether the resources they need to achieve the necessary levels of protection, to protect key sites and infrastructure, will be forthcoming.'

'Frustratingly, whether such a significant national problem as coastal erosion is seen as an urgent matter is questionable.'



Scan the QR code to read the full report





Assets United: The Next Phase

'Assets. United.' was launched by Asset Management Software - Siemens (formerly Brightly software) in 2024. The purpose of the campaign was to help local authorities manage complex networks of asset classes within increasingly challenging budget and resource constraints.

The campaign highlights the interconnected nature of assets and the need for an efficient, integrated, and proactive approach to asset management.

Assets. United. Introduced a clear plan: one partner, one system. One way to manage all assets a council is responsible for.

In 2026, two years on, the campaign has entered a new future-looking phase as Asset Management Software - Siemens focuses on assisting councils to fully manage and unlock the value of their asset data across each unique asset class they manage on a daily basis.

A way to make informed asset decisions

Local councils in the UK are facing a range of challenges, from ageing road networks to rising repair costs, shrinking budgets and growing public frustration – all of which pile pressure on day-to-day operations. Asset managers in local authorities are spending too much time collating data, and are too dependent on spreadsheets and other manual processes. Spending significant time on data collation and analysis leads to delays and ultimately to a reactive model of asset management, with inefficient decision-making, inefficient allocation of resources and, ultimately, lower levels of public confidence.

Asset Management Software - Siemens is building on its original campaign by showing how a unified approach to asset data can transform these workflows. Instead of reacting to failures, councils gain the ability to monitor performance, identify trends and intervene earlier.

The company's Confirm Enterprise Asset Management Software is the new phase of its campaign. What makes Confirm the best asset management system for infrastructure on the market? You get industry-leading mobility, centralisation, and reporting all in a single, cloud-based platform.

Confirm allows its users to manage their assets effectively by identifying priorities and addressing issues before they escalate, and allows the budget to be allocated strategically where they will deliver.

One system for your asset classes

Local councils manage a range of assets, and each asset class presents various challenges, requirements and risks. Confirm therefore allows councils to effectively manage multiple assets, all while being connected to one system.

The asset classes covered include street lighting, bridges, structures, grounds, parks, drainage, blockage and highways.

Looking at highways specifically, a significant amount of Highway Managers' time is spent pulling together information from multiple systems, duplicating work, and manually checking and extracting data just to be confident it's accurate. This makes managing your highway network far more complex, as it becomes slower and increases the risk of errors.

Confirm helps monitor and control assets with preventive maintenance and real-time field data access. Pre-defined dashboards and reports give highway teams a complete view of asset performance and budget impacts.

Moving from reactive to predictive maintenance

With a connected platform, councils gain a clearer view of their assets and can prioritise preventative maintenance to reduce long-term risk. They can build multi-year plans; bring asset classes together, and enable cross-asset trade-offs. This allows them to reduce costs by addressing problems before they arise.

Confirm brings asset data together in one platform, and councils gain the visibility and insight required to manage ageing infrastructure more effectively.

To learn more about Assets. United, visit: <https://www.assetmanagement.siemens.com/en-gb/campaigns/assets-united>

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Confirm from Siemens provides you with a single source of truth for your asset data, helping you quickly access the information you need. It allows you to justify decisions with confidence and stay prepared for audits, inspections and public scrutiny.

Confirm Asset Management Software allows you to prioritise work more effectively, prevent costly failures and move from reactive firefighting to proactive asset management.

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Reflecting on six years of Carbon Literacy in local government

Director of APSE Training, Fiona Sutton-Wilson, shares her experience of becoming a Carbon Literacy Trainer.



When I joined APSE in 2019, I was already aware of the growing Carbon Literacy movement and its potential to influence local government. What struck me most was its ability to engage individuals from a wide variety of professional backgrounds, helping to translate a complex global challenge into meaningful local action.

As a not-for-profit frontline networking membership organisation and local government think tank, the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) was ideally placed to take a lead in rolling out this training to the sector and as the new Head of APSE Training this felt like a real opportunity to make a difference. Working closely with Phil Korbel and Natalia Phipps, from CLP, Phil Brennan and I co-delivered an early version of what then became the first iteration of the Local Authorities toolkit. The course was called Carbon Literacy on the Frontline with first delivery in April 2020.

"Fiona has so much data at her fingertips. She knows much about many things."

Climate Change Projects Officer, Blackburn and Darwin Borough Council

Carbon Literacy was among the first programmes APSE delivered online and, to the best of my knowledge, one of the earliest examples of Carbon Literacy training being delivered virtually. In those early stages, our focus was on local authority officers generally, rather than distinct leadership groups. However, as the climate agenda evolved, so too did the training. New toolkits and learning resources were developed to address the increasingly strategic nature of climate action and support decision-makers in navigating both operational and organisational change.

The development and delivery of Carbon Literacy has been a learning journey in itself. Given the breadth and complexity of the subject matter, there were occasions when participants posed questions that extended beyond my own expertise. I was fortunate to draw upon the extensive knowledge of Phil Brennan and the APSE Energy team, while continuing to broaden my own understanding through ongoing study and professional development. Over time, this enabled me to progress from co-delivering courses to leading sessions independently, while also supporting and mentoring new Carbon Literacy trainers.

"Be prepared to learn as the course is full of information."

Principal Ops Manager, Walsall Council

APSE's commitment to climate action has always been rooted in the principles of local municipalism and the delivery of high-quality public services. Consequently, Carbon Literacy aligned naturally with our organisational values. The programme demonstrates not only the environmental benefits of reducing emissions, but also the wider social and economic benefits that climate action can deliver for communities.

Over the last six years I have delivered Carbon Literacy to more than 100 local authorities, working across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, to officers, senior leaders and Elected Members.

APSE has been instrumental in the local government Carbon Literacy journey. When the initial toolkit was released in 2021, APSE developed a train-the-trainer course, Carbon Literacy Trainer, specifically for Carbon Literacy, to extend the proposition further. This course was based on APSE's popular general Train-the-Trainer masterclass but was geared specifically for those who were looking to deliver Carbon Literacy training as part of the toolkit roll-out model.

There have been many tangible outcomes from APSE's training – cycle lanes and cycle schemes, community heat networks, route optimisation, policy change, authorities gaining CLO status and investing in EV infrastructure in addition to more operational day-to-day pledges relating to travel and consumption.

When I first started delivering Carbon Literacy, the public narrative about climate change was still fairly specialist. However, the marketing of EVs, alongside global extreme weather events, and Conference of Parties (COP) events making headline news, has led to increased public discourse. This summer has been the hottest on record and there is general consensus that we are already feeling the mounting effects of climate change.

Climate change remains one of the defining challenges of our time, but Carbon Literacy continues to be a powerful tool for driving meaningful action. Despite a career spanning more than three decades in learning and development, including Qualified Teacher Status and Chartered Fellowship of the CIPD, becoming a certified Carbon Literacy Trainer remains one of the achievements of which I am most proud.

Working in partnership with The Carbon Literacy Project, APSE continues to support local authorities in translating complex climate issues into practical action. While significant progress has been made since those early conversations in 2019, there is still much work ahead. However, the experience of the past six years demonstrates that when people are given the knowledge, confidence and support to act, meaningful change is possible.



Scan the QR code to explore our Training Courses



Walsall Council's award-winning bereavement service transformation

Walsall Council's Bereavement Services has undergone a remarkable transformation over the past three years, culminating in winning **Best Service Team: Cemetery and Crematorium Service at the APSE Service Awards 2025**.

Once a largely unseen council service operating in a challenging and increasingly competitive market, the team has successfully repositioned itself as a commercially aware service that now stands shoulder-to-shoulder with private sector providers.

Emerging from the pandemic, the service faced a stark reality. Traditional local authority models of delivery were no longer sustainable in a local market that had become increasingly commercialised. The opening of a new private crematorium less than 200 metres from Walsall's boundary in 2022 led to an immediate reduction of over 30% in cremation income, exposing the vulnerability of a service that had previously assumed such competition would have little impact. At the same time, years of underinvestment and limited commercial awareness across management and staff threatened the long-term future of the service.

A change in leadership proved to be the catalyst for reform. A comprehensive service review was undertaken, examining everything from staffing structures and operational processes to presentation standards. Decisions were deliberately framed through a commercial lens while remaining firmly rooted in public service values. Extensive consultation was carried out with funeral directors, community groups and the wider public, ensuring that change was informed by those who used and relied upon the service most.

Central to the transformation was staff engagement. Previously, many employees felt disconnected from the bigger picture with limited understanding of budgets, performance targets or the commercial realities of the service. That changed with the introduction of a new strategic business plan, which provided a clear sense of direction and defined how every role contributed to the service's future sustainability. Staff were actively involved in shaping change and supported to move away from the long-standing mindset of "we've always done it this way".

Despite having no access to capital investment, the service delivered significant improvements through innovation. The reopening of the reception at Streetly Crematorium, following the relocation of administrative staff, re-established a visible point of contact for families and stakeholders. This not only improved customer experience but also led to increased memorial sales as staff were able to spend time understanding families' needs.

Professional presentation became a priority. A service-wide uniform, name badges and consistent branding across crematorium and cemetery sites reinforced the message that Bereavement Services is a professional, high-quality operation. Grounds maintenance standards were dramatically improved, with an FBCA inspection noting that the sites "look like a private sector organisation rather than a local authority facility". Attention to



detail, from redesigned road layouts to carefully edged grass and seasonal planting, sent a signal to families about the care afforded to their loved ones.

One standout example of the team's commitment was the refurbishment of the chapel exit garden at Streetly Crematorium. Faced with contractor quotes of £17,000, staff instead delivered the project themselves over a weekend, moving nine tonnes of slate by hand and transforming the space for a total cost of £3,500. The result was not only a revitalised garden but also a powerful demonstration of teamwork, pride and ownership.

Operationally, one of the most significant changes was the decision to bring grounds staff directly into the Bereavement Services team, ending a service level agreement with a separate council department. Staff were regraded, retrained and redefined as Cemetery Operatives, with investment in professional development and technology, including tablets providing live access to booking and management systems.

This move bucked a national trend towards outsourcing and has delivered measurable improvements in site standards, staff morale and customer satisfaction. The initiative was recognised nationally when it won APSE's Innovation Award for Cemeteries and Crematoria in 2024.

Internally, the service has also worked hard to raise its profile within the council. Through proactive communications, senior leader engagement and well-publicised events, Bereavement Services has articulated its value to the community. Managers and elected members now have a clearer understanding of the complexity and professionalism involved in modern bereavement provision, particularly following the introduction of the Medical Examiner system.

The impact of these changes has been profound. Complaints have reduced significantly, decision-making is faster, and staff feel supported. Training, apprenticeships, flexible working and access to corporate development opportunities have reconnected the team to the wider organisation. This has helped foster a culture of pride and ambition.

Looking ahead, the service is focused firmly on the future. Plans include new memorial gardens, chapel refurbishments, long-term burial space provision and policy modernisation, including electronic burial registers. Most importantly, Bereavement Services now has a shared sense of purpose and direction.



All APSE members have access to our dedicated **Cemeteries and Crematoria Network**. Join us for webinars, events, briefings, research and knowledge sharing to support your service.



The CDS Group offers unrivalled expertise in designing, planning and developing projects related to bereavement.

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From first contact, we listen to your requirements and ideas with an open mind so we can advise on the best approach to meet your needs.
- 1 Preparation & Briefing**
We record your aspirations in a brief and complete feasibility studies, ensuring the site can meet your needs.
- 2 Concept Design**
With a positive feasibility outcome, we develop concept design ideas to meet the Client Design Brief and budget. We find ways to minimise energy use, saving money and promoting sustainability.
- 3 Detailed Design**
At this Stage, we coordinate all architectural, engineering and specialist consultant information to formulate the planning application submission.
- 4 Technical Design**
The technical intricacies are worked into your beautiful architectural and engineering designs to finalise the tender pack. CDS will manage a specialist consultancy team to produce this pack and guide you through the tender process to find the right contractor.
- 5 Construction**
This is when you see your plans materialise with construction on site. CDS will oversee the building works to ensure the delivery of the scheme to the highest standard, as per the brief, and minimise environmental impact as we go.
- 6 Handover**
The contract is concluded and CDS can support you through to formal opening of the site.
- 7 Use**
After handover, we continue to ensure the development operates as intended and is efficiently maintained.

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How Dundee's MVV Energy from Waste Facility contributes to a more sustainable future



Baldovie has a long history of managing waste in the Dundee and Angus area. In the 1970s, the site operated an incinerator with no energy recovery. However, as thinking around waste management developed during the 1990s, plans were created for a new Energy from Waste (EFW) facility. The aim was not only to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill, but also to recover energy from waste and contribute to a more sustainable future.

Boiler Lines 1 and 2 were commissioned in early 2000. Together, they were designed to process and divert up to 120,000 tonnes of waste from landfill each year. This represented a significant step forward in waste management for the local area, providing a reliable alternative to landfill while also allowing energy to be recovered from non-recyclable waste.

In 2013, furnace upgrades and improvements to the boiler and waste-feed systems further enhanced the facility's operational performance and efficiency. These improvements allowed the site to generate electricity for the National Grid, supplying power to thousands of homes and demonstrating the potential for waste to become a valuable source of energy.

As Lines 1 and 2 approached 20 years of service, their closure was anticipated. In November 2017, MVV Environment, a German company specialising in energy from waste, began a 25-year partnership with Dundee City Council and Angus Council to manage the councils' non-recyclable waste.

SEPA approved MVV Environment Baldovie's application in November 2020 to vary its environmental permit. This allowed the existing facility to continue operating in parallel with the construction and commissioning of a new third line.

Line 3 was developed alongside the two legacy lines and began burning waste in January 2022. The new facility was designed to be highly efficient

and, when all three lines were operating, the site had the capacity to process up to 220,000 tonnes of non-recyclable waste each year. With MVV's continued investment and the expertise of the operations and maintenance team, Lines 1 and 2 continued operating for a further six years beyond the point at which their closure had originally been anticipated. They closed in June 2026, marking the end of more than 25 years of service from the original Energy from Waste facility.

Today, MVV Environment Baldovie operates its highly efficient Line 3. The facility can divert approximately 110,000 tonnes of waste from landfill each year and produces around 10 megawatts of electricity for the National Grid. This is enough electricity to supply approximately one-third of the homes in Dundee.

MVV supports the waste hierarchy and encourages the community to reduce, reuse and recycle. Through its community programme, the company focuses on local supplier development, employment and skills activities, environmental awareness and sponsorship.

The facility welcomes members of the community, nurseries, primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities to visit and learn more about how waste is managed and energy is recovered.

Its outreach activities aim to inspire the next generation by providing opportunities to learn about waste minimisation, the waste hierarchy, the circular economy and STEM careers. Through these activities, MVV hopes to inspire young people to consider the skills and careers that can help create a more sustainable future.

All APSE members have access to our dedicated **Recycling, Waste and Street Cleansing Network, offering webinars, events, briefings and research to support your service.**

Smaller plots are now mainstream as councils respond to allotment demand, new APSE survey

APSE's latest Allotment Services State of the Market report examines how local authorities are adapting to financial pressures, changing demands and community expectations.

Local councils have adopted smaller allotment plots as the new norm to help respond to sustained demand, according to APSE's State of the Market 2026 survey.

Key findings include:

- 93% of authorities offer smaller plots, with 77% having reduced plot sizes within the past five years.
- A third of authorities reported over 1,000 people on waiting lists for an allotment plot.
- 85% of authorities reported funding constraints as a major barrier to increasing allotment provision, while 80% reported a lack of suitable land.
- 47% of councils provide raised beds and 41% provide accessible paths to improve access for people with disabilities.
- Sustainability is now firmly embedded
- 89% use water-saving measures, 67% support organic cultivation and 65% have adopted pollinator-friendly planting, indicating that these approaches are now embedded in mainstream allotment management.
- Financial pressures continue
- 61% of councils reported subsidising allotment services, a decline from 70% in 2024, which suggests a move towards cost neutrality.



Matt Ellis, APSE Principal Advisor for Parks and Grounds Maintenance and author of the report, said:

"This year's findings show how councils are continuing to respond to changing expectations, tight budgets and growing demand. A standout trend is the move towards smaller plots, helping more people access allotments while keeping services sustainable."

The survey highlights the innovative and practical ways councils are adapting to support their communities and make the most of available space."

The full report provides a detailed picture of allotment management, costs, waiting lists and council strategies across the UK. You can access it [here](#).



Scan the QR code to read the full report



Let's talk about weeds

**Take part in our
Glyphosate and Integrated
Weed Management Survey**

Estimated time: 7 - 9 minutes

Scan the QR code to
complete the survey



apse



FBCA Funeral Sector Review

The past few months have underlined both the responsibility carried by our sector and the value of working together to strengthen it.

Following the sentencing of Robert Bush in July, there has understandably been renewed public attention on standards across funeral, burial and cremation services. For me, the important question now is how we continue demonstrating, through our actions, the professionalism that families should experience at every stage of bereavement. Standards cannot simply be words on a page; they must be visible in everyday practice.

Our Inspection program that sees every member independently reviewed in person and measured against our extensive framework is just one example of how you can demonstrate to the public that you are meeting and in fact exceeding the mandatory minimum requirements within our profession.

Investing in training for your team is another perfect example of exceeding the public's expectations, our refresher training is now only £500 plus VAT for up to four candidates regardless of their original qualification. Its also the only independently accredited course as it carries CPD points following completion.

Change is happening in many parts of our sector and one obvious area is the implementation of the revised Process Guidance Note PG5/2(25). The transition represents a significant programme of environmental and operational change.

Existing crematoria permits are to be reviewed within two years of the guidance being published, with existing sites required to meet the new standards by December 2029.

The Environment Agency's continuing engagement with regulators and operators is therefore important in turning technical requirements into consistent practice. At CBCE, its representatives focused specifically on implementation, regulatory timescales and consistent interpretation.

Our own work on standards is moving forward too. The launch of the new Codes of Practice is an important development for the FBCA. They provide an opportunity not merely to describe good practice, but to reinforce a culture in which continuous improvement, accountability and care sit at the heart of service delivery. This builds on the Federation's longstanding role in supporting members through guidance, training, inspection and compliance.

June's CBCE in Southampton brought these themes together particularly well. Held from 23-25 June in partnership with the Cremation Society, the conference combined professional development, discussion of environmental responsibilities and the exchange of ideas across our profession. What struck me most was the willingness to share experience openly and look collectively at what comes next.

There will always be new challenges, whether regulatory, environmental, technological or societal. Our task at the FBCA is to help members meet them confidently while keeping one constant at the centre of everything we do: providing services worthy of the trust placed in us by bereaved families and communities.

Mike Birkinshaw
CEO & Secretary



Refresher Training

Making Refresher Training More Accessible

The FBCA has reduced the cost of its on-site Refresher Training to make continued learning and professional development more accessible to members.

As the UK's only Trade Association for Cemetery, Crematoria and modern funerary methods, operating as not for profit, our objective is to ensure high-quality learning remains sustainable, relevant and accessible to the sector.

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For more information

To discuss Refresher Training for your service, contact Liam Bennett, Training & Development Manager.

✉ training@fbca.org.uk ☎ 07395358839

The rising tide of group litigation: Navigating growing risks for Scotland's public sector



Seema Kennedy, Executive Director at Fair Civil Justice, outlines the impact of Scotland's 'opt-out' model for local government leaders.

Across the UK, collective litigation is surging. With over 700 million class members involved in recent claims - and the vast majority of growth occurring in just the last three years. The litigation landscape is shifting rapidly. Yet, collective litigation remains a peripheral concern on many public sector risk registers. In Scotland, low levels of public awareness and policymaker scrutiny suggest this may be the calm before the storm.

The Scottish Civil Justice Council (SCJC) is currently evaluating an extension of Scotland's group proceedings to include an "opt-out" model. Unlike the existing "opt-in" framework, where individuals must actively sign up to a claim, an opt-out model automatically includes potentially millions of eligible people unless they explicitly choose to withdraw.

Already possible across the UK, through its availability for cases in the Competition Court, there has been an explosion in claims, with every single person in the UK now party to ten mass claims, probably without even knowing about it. Internationally, opt-out is widespread in the USA, where mass litigation has become a rich harvest for third party litigation funders.

For Scottish local government leaders, introducing opt-out would represent a fundamental shift in legal exposure. In fact, for the whole public sector this is a massively important development, and a substantial risk.

The legislation is already in place. The Civil Litigation (Expenses and Group Proceedings) (Scotland) Act 2018 allows for group proceedings and the SCJC is considering changing the current framework to enable opt-out. Once the SCJC consideration and consultation is complete, it could quickly progress through the Scottish Parliament. Unless there is vocal protest, there will be limited scrutiny as a Scottish Statutory Instrument - with an anticipated approval turnaround of only 40 days.

The areas of potential exposure for public bodies are vast. Data protection is perhaps the most immediate concern. Local authorities hold sensitive information ranging from social care records to housing details. A single systemic failure or cyberattack could trigger a claim on behalf of thousands, or millions.

Consider the scale of the numbers involved: the Court of Session is currently examining group proceedings related to a cyberattack on EasyJet with potential liabilities estimated at £18bn. In the public sector, where budgets are already under immense pressure, the liability associated with opt-out litigation could quickly become an existential threat to local authorities.

The risk extends far beyond data. Employment practices, health and safety, and infrastructure services are all vulnerable. Imagine a scenario where group proceedings are brought against a council for vehicle damage caused by widespread potholes - thousands of claimants could be included automatically without their express approval. Legal liabilities that were once manageable on a case-by-case basis could multiply exponentially overnight.

Similarly, region-wide defects in housing stock or systemic issues in transport services could become targets for the mass litigation funders, often international hedge funds. The scope for these claims is as broad as the services the public sector provides.

The impact of these proceedings would reach far beyond financial compensation levels. Councils face the depletion and diversion of hard-pressed legal resources, the diversion of senior officer time, and significant reputational risks. Furthermore, there is a growing concern that such claims often serve the interests of unregulated third-party litigation funders more than the claimants themselves, who usually receive only nominal returns from massive settlements.

The SCJC is expected to launch a further consultation, providing a critical window for public bodies to intervene. Fair Civil Justice is actively campaigning for the adoption of alternative dispute resolution methods that better serve the needs of consumers who have suffered loss, and which better protect the interests of both the public and the public sector.

We invite you to join our campaign and ensure your voice is heard in the upcoming consultation.

To discuss how opt-out proceedings might affect your organisation and to explore mitigation strategies, contact Fair Civil Justice today.

Visit www.fairciviljustice.org to play your part in protecting local government across Scotland.



Get in touch with Louise Melville, Principal Policy Lead for Scotland, to learn how APSE can best support your council.

Protecting the people who keep our roads moving



Richard Harris, Account Director (Place) at Staffordshire County Council, sheds light on the abuse faced by highways and road workers.

Highways and road workers play a vital role in keeping our communities moving. Every day, they work alongside live traffic to maintain roads, repair defects, manage incidents and deliver improvements. Yet the risks they face do not come only from the road itself. Increasingly, workers are experiencing abuse, intimidation and dangerous behaviour from members of the public.

For councils, tackling this issue is about more than protecting employees and contractors. It is also about protecting public money and ensuring that increasingly stretched highways budgets are used where they are needed most.

Abuse can take many forms, from shouting, threatening behaviour and offensive gestures to deliberate speeding, dangerous overtaking and vehicles being driven through work areas. Even incidents that may seem minor can have a significant impact on workers, particularly when they happen repeatedly. No one should have to accept abuse as simply "part of the job".

Councils can take practical steps to reduce the harm faced by highways teams. Clear, consistent traffic management and well-designed work zones can help separate workers from moving vehicles and make it easier for drivers to understand what is expected of them. Appropriate signage, speed restrictions and enforcement can also help reduce risk.

Technology also has an increasingly important role to play. Body-worn cameras can provide workers with a means of recording incidents of abuse, threats and dangerous behaviour, while vehicle-mounted cameras can capture what happens around highway vehicles and work sites. Crucially, this footage can provide police with objective evidence when an incident is reported, helping to identify vehicles, drivers and the circumstances surrounding an offence.

Evidence matters. Too often, incidents can come down to one person's word against another, making enforcement difficult. Good-quality camera footage can help bridge that gap and give the police the evidence they need to investigate and, where appropriate, prosecute. It can also act as a deterrent, sending a clear message that abusive and dangerous behaviour is being recorded and may have consequences.

When driver behaviour deteriorates, councils and contractors can also be forced to introduce additional measures to protect their staff. This can mean more extensive traffic management, additional signage and intelligent barriers, longer working periods, extra personnel or the need for workers to be accompanied by security or supervised. These measures are essential where there is a genuine safety risk, but they come at a cost.

That cost ultimately falls on the public purse. Every additional member of staff, traffic management measure or hour spent managing an unsafe working environment is money that cannot be spent elsewhere. Preventing abuse and dangerous behaviour should therefore be seen as an investment in both workforce safety and value for money. Staffordshire County Council has recognised the importance of

changing public attitudes as well as improving the physical safety of roadworks. Through social media and education campaigns, the council has sought to remind road users that the people working behind cones and signs are colleagues, parents, friends and members of the local community.

The message is simple: slow down, give workers space and treat them with respect.

Social media can be particularly powerful in making the issue visible. Sharing real experiences from highways workers can help the public understand the pressures they face and challenge the perception that delays or roadworks justify aggressive behaviour. Campaigns can also reach drivers before they encounter roadworks, reinforcing safer behaviours and explaining why temporary traffic management is necessary.



Education should begin early, too. Engaging with schools and young people provides an opportunity to build positive attitudes towards road safety and the people who maintain our highways.

There is no single solution to the abuse of road workers. Councils need a combination of safer infrastructure, effective enforcement, camera technology, workforce support, public education and strong communications.

Most importantly, the issue needs to remain visible. Highways workers should be able to do their jobs without fear of being threatened, abused or put in danger — and councils should not have to divert scarce public money to compensate for behaviour that could be prevented.

The roads belong to all of us. So does the responsibility to keep the people who maintain them safe.

Richard Harris recently joined us at the Plants, Trees and Automobiles: Greenspace and Highways Forum in Tamworth to highlight the issue of highways worker abuse. View the slides on our website.

Recycle Week is back for 2026, helping the nation to recycle

Recycle Now, the UK's national recycling campaign, is launching the nation's biggest recycling moment this September.

Local authorities, local governments, and public services of all kinds are invited to join Recycle Week, inspiring the nation to recycle more of the right things, and help keep valuable resources in circulation. Recycle Week officially takes place from 14-20 September, but partners are invited to get involved from 7-27 September at whichever moment suits them best.

The Recycle Week toolkit is FREE and available now to download: Recycle Week 2026 | WRAP - The Waste and Resources Action

Programme Packed with ready-to-use assets for use across a variety of communications channels, it's easy to support Recycle Week and help shift people's recycling behaviours. The toolkit has been designed with local authorities and public services in mind, with tips on how to engage communities.

Our objectives for Recycle Week

WRAP's latest research shows that the UK public are struggling to feel that their recycling efforts are worthwhile. This is for a number of reasons, including enduring narratives about recycling being shipped abroad for processing, and recyclable materials being incinerated, amongst other factors.

Recycle Now are tackling this head on, with our Rescue Me! Recycle, campaign characters. For this year's campaign, we have developed the story and personality of each of our campaign characters, focusing on what they can become when they're recycled.

We are showing the value of recycling aerosols by telling the story of Deo, a deodorant can who can be recycled into part of a train.

The insights behind the campaign

We know that the UK public are struggling to believe that their recycling efforts are worthwhile. WRAP's research shows that there are a number of factors driving these beliefs. For some, historic media coverage about recycling being shipped abroad, and in some cases without confirmation that it has been correctly processed and hasn't just been dumped or incinerated illegally, as spread doubt.

For others, a lack of communication about the journey their recycling goes on once it's collected has left them wondering whether it has any real impact. WRAP's research suggests that when people feel like their recycling is not worthwhile, they are more likely to contaminate their recycling, or miss items from it.

Recycle Week 2026 has been planned to tackle these beliefs, using additional behaviour change and audience insights.



Bringing recyclables to life to show their value

Our 'Rescue Me, Recycle!' campaign concept, returning for Recycle Week this year, features a cast of characters representing many of the most commonly missed recyclable items.

The line-up this year consists of

- **Ally the aluminium foil**, who can be recycled into part of a train
- **Deo the aerosol**, who can be recycled into part of a bike
- **Minty the toothpaste tube**, who can be recycled into another toothpaste or cosmetic tube
- **Neil the banana peel**, who can be recycled to generate electricity and fertiliser
- **Rolly the toilet roll tube**, who can be recycled into an egg box or a notebook
- **Shampers the shampoo bottle**, who can be recycled into a plastic garden chair
- **Spritz the perfume bottle**, who can be recycled into a bottle of fizz
- **Trigger the cleaning spray bottle**, who can be recycled into another cleaning spray bottle
- **Yogi the yoghurt pot**, who can be recycled into a plastic crate

Each character has their own personality, and hopes for the future - but can only achieve their dreams if they are recycled. What's more, we're showing people the positive impact of recycling these items into something new - keeping valuable materials in circulation, and saving valuable energy.

Reaching the nation

Public services and local authorities play a vital role in helping Recycle Now to change people's behaviour, and help them recycle more of the right things, more often. By using the Recycle Week assets, providing local context and specific recycling information for households, people get the right information they need to recycle better.

Together, we can show that recycling is simple, worth doing, and has real positive impacts for communities and our environment.





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Basildon Council's fleet management transformation

James Hendry, Assistant Director, Environmental Services, Climate and Open Spaces at Basildon Borough Council, shares how they successfully transformed their fleet management model.

I was pleased to have been able to join colleagues from across the APSE network to tell the story of how Basildon Council transformed its fleet management arrangements from a traditional in-house model facing significant challenges into an award-winning partnership delivering compliance, operational resilience, environmental benefits and social value.

Environmental Services represents many of the Council's most visible front-line functions and is responsible for delivering critical services to residents every day. Over recent years local authorities have faced increasing pressures from legislative changes, shifting political priorities, climate commitments and significant financial constraints. These factors created the need to review how fleet services were managed and how greater value could be achieved from the Council's vehicle assets.

Before 2011, Basildon Council operated a fully in-house fleet management service. A Transport Manager was responsible for managing operator licence compliance, workshop operations, vehicle procurement and a range of associated activities. Whilst this model had worked historically, a number of challenges had emerged over time.

The workforce was ageing, succession planning was limited, workshop performance was not consistently meeting expectations and fleet management arrangements were not always supporting operational effectiveness. Perhaps most importantly, there were concerns about maintaining full compliance with increasingly complex regulatory requirements. The service was also delivering limited wider community benefits or social value outcomes.

Recognising the need for change, the Council undertook a competitive procurement exercise in 2010-11 using a competitive dialogue process. This approach was particularly important because it allowed the Council to engage with potential providers to explore innovative solutions and develop a model capable of addressing long-term operational challenges.



The resulting contract commenced in May 2011 on a seven-plus-seven-year basis, creating a long-term strategic partnership. More recently the arrangement has been extended until 2028 to provide continuity whilst preparations are made for Local Government Reorganisation and future service design considerations.

Success has been achieved through the development of a genuine partnership model rather than a traditional client-contractor relationship. Strong contract management arrangements, co-location of operational teams and transport management functions, robust reporting requirements and clear performance standards have created a framework that supports service delivery while protecting the Council's operator licence responsibilities.

The partnership model has also provided flexibility. The waste and transport sectors continue to experience rapid change driven by environmental legislation, recycling reforms and changing public expectations. Having a trusted partner has enabled the Council to

respond quickly to emerging challenges, test new ideas and adapt operations as national policy develops.

The results of this approach have been significant. The Council has achieved substantial improvements in compliance, safety and operational performance. The partnership has fostered innovation and created an environment where future opportunities can be identified and implemented proactively. Investment has been made in workshop infrastructure, ensuring facilities are fit for the future and capable of supporting increasingly sophisticated vehicle technology.

One of the most notable achievements highlighted is the introduction of the UK's first fully electric fleet dedicated to food waste collection services. Working closely with its fleet management partner, the Council invested in seven electric collection vehicles and depot charging infrastructure. The service launched successfully in October 2022 and now delivers environmental benefits alongside statutory service requirements.

The environmental impact has been substantial, with annual carbon savings of approximately 42 tonnes of CO2 equivalent. These

achievements have gained national and international recognition, with the fleet team winning awards for Fleet Team of the Year and Most Innovative Fleet Management Strategy at the Fleet Vision International Awards in 2026.

Successful fleet transformation is not simply about vehicles and technology. Supporting drivers through change is essential. Basildon's approach focused on early engagement, regular feedback, clear communication, involvement of staff in service design and ongoing training.

Beyond operational performance, the contract has delivered wider social value benefits through apprenticeships, support for charitable initiatives, work with schools and investment in staff development.

Looking ahead, there are challenges and opportunities presented by Local Government Reorganisation and the current contract end date of May 2028. Strong partnerships, effective contract management and a willingness to embrace change can deliver better outcomes for residents, employees and the environment alike.



Basildon
Borough Council

James Hendry recently joined us at our recent **Fleet, Transport and Vehicle Maintenance** webinar in July to share his fleet transformation journey.

View the slides on our website.

apse seminars

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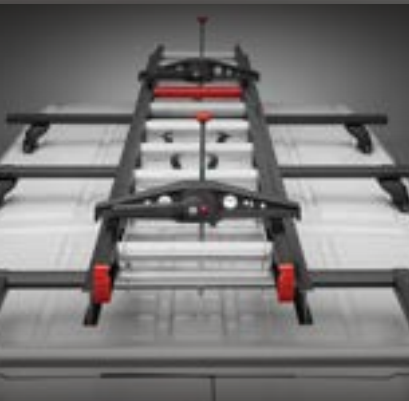


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Harnessing Data for Climate Action Across the Public Sector Estates



Public sector estates from schools and hospitals to council offices and universities account for a significant share of the UK's ageing, energy-intensive building stock. Estate managers have access to more data than ever but turning it into measurable carbon reduction remains difficult.

The priority is not simply collecting more information. It is building a clear, defensible evidence base that helps teams decide where to act first, make a case for investment, and track progress over time.

The Scale of the Challenge

Public sector estates are vast and varied. Automation of data capture is therefore a key priority for data owners. Multi-academy trusts, local authorities and health bodies operate buildings with different ages, uses and energy demands. A Victorian school, a modern FE college, and an acute hospital cannot be treated as equivalent.

That variation makes blanket sustainability programmes risky. Without site-level evidence, organisations can spend scarce capital on the most visible problem rather than the intervention that will deliver the greatest carbon, cost, or comfort benefit.

Why "More Data" Isn't the Same as "Better Decisions"

Most estate teams are not short of information. Energy bills, half-hourly meter readings, Display Energy Certificate ratings, condition surveys and asset registers all exist, but often sit in different systems, owned by different teams and covering different time periods.

When energy data sits with facilities, cost data with finance, and condition data with capital projects, nobody has a single view of performance. Decisions can then default to assumptions, historic priorities, or projects with budget already attached. Getting the basics right consistently is more valuable than collecting a wider range of indicators poorly.

What this means in Practice

SustainIQ's work with the Education Authority Northern Ireland (EA) through the "Capturing Our Carbon Capital" project shows this in practice. EA is responsible for more than 341,000 pupils across over 1,100 schools, over 60,000 further education students, around 40,000 employees, youth services, daily transport for more than 90,000 people and a fleet of 817 buses. Capturing Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions at that scale meant joining data from buildings, procurement, transport, and suppliers.

Through EcoSense a new product designed on the back of the pilot project with the Education Authority NI, SustainIQ automated the collection of data from IoT LoRaWAN sensors, invoice and energy portal data, QR codes for school land-use data, bus telematics and supplier data capture; significantly reducing administrative workload for data owners. Trials across 12 diverse schools were combined with wider estate data to create a holistic emissions view.

Identifying Where to Act First

Once data is collected consistently, estate teams can move from assumption to prioritisation. Baseline measurement establishes what

each site consumes, emits and costs. Benchmarking then shows which buildings are outliers and where interventions are most likely to deliver measurable benefit.

This changes the conversation with senior leadership. Instead of presenting a long list of projects, estate managers can show where the greatest carbon reduction per pound is available, where quick wins exist, and where larger capital works need a stronger business case.

Balancing the Books (and the Boilers)

Budget pressure means sustainability programmes must be financially credible. Data translates environmental goals into operational and financial terms: a heating system running outside optimal parameters is not only a carbon issue, but a cost issue. LED replacement, solar PV, controls upgrades, and fabric improvements can be assessed against consumption, payback and emissions impact.

In the Education Authority project, the resulting dashboard supported robust carbon calculations for Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions and gave school-level performance insight. That evidence helped the organisation secure funding for automated metering, LED lighting replacements, and solar panels for participating schools.

Collaboration as a Force Multiplier

Individual sites can make progress alone, but the largest gains come when data flows across organisational boundaries. Facilities, finance, procurement, and leadership need the same evidence base, so supplier impacts, energy use, cost and risk can be compared clearly.

For EA, SustainIQ created automated data flows and a bespoke reporting dashboard that reduced manual reporting effort and supported

regulatory requirements under Northern Ireland climate legislation. The approach also created a repeatable model for other public bodies facing similar issues.

Turning Evidence into Accountability

Good intentions are not the same as measurable progress. Consistent, verifiable data allows teams to compare performance before and after an intervention, adjust for weather or occupancy where relevant, and demonstrate impact to boards, regulators and communities.

This matters because public sector reporting expectations are becoming more demanding. Organisations need evidence that stands up to scrutiny, not just activity logs or estimated savings. The quality of the data determines the quality of the decisions and the credibility of any climate action plan.

From Insight to Ongoing Improvement

The most important shift is treating sustainability data as a continuous operational tool, not a periodic audit exercise. Ongoing monitoring shows whether interventions perform as expected, whether performance is drifting and where new opportunities are emerging as estate use, tariffs and regulations change.

The Northern Ireland Education Authority won the Best Public/Private Partnership Working Initiative with Sustain IQ at the APSE Annual Service Awards 2025.

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How Cheshire East Council's Whole Housing Approach strategy supports victim-survivors of domestic abuse



In 2021, Cheshire East Council launched its ambitious Whole Housing Approach (WHA) Strategy, setting out a clear vision for integrating housing and domestic abuse services to improve safety, stability and choice for victim-survivors of domestic abuse and their children.

While Cheshire East already had a strong domestic abuse support offer, including a dedicated 24/7 Front Door service, a specialist High Risk IDVA team and well-established partnerships with local safe accommodation providers, we recognised an important gap. Traditionally, the response to domestic abuse often involved moving victims away from their homes.

Through the Whole Housing Approach, we wanted to expand choice by creating opportunities for survivors to remain safely in their own homes wherever possible, reducing disruption and helping families maintain their support networks, routines and sense of security.

The Whole Housing Approach places the needs of victim-survivors at the centre of every decision. To embed this model, we worked closely with Housing colleagues to increase understanding of domestic abuse and its impact. We also partnered with local 'by and for' organisations to strengthen awareness of intersectionality and the additional barriers some individuals face when seeking support.

One of the most effective elements of the approach has been the use of the Sanctuary Scheme and flexible funding to help sustain tenancies and improve housing outcomes. This funding can be tailored to individual circumstances. For families wishing to remain in their homes, it can be used to install enhanced security measures and safety improvements. Where a move is the safest option, it can cover essential costs such as rent deposits, arrears, moving expenses and household items, helping families establish stability more quickly and begin rebuilding their lives.

A key lesson from our journey has been that successful housing outcomes cannot be achieved through housing solutions alone.

The Whole Housing Approach works best when agencies come together to understand the unique needs of each family, balancing risk, safety and personal choice.

Rather than focusing solely on finding the next available property, the approach creates space for informed decision-making and long-term support.

Strong leadership and partnership working have been central to our success. Strategic oversight ensured a coordinated approach across services, while close operational collaboration strengthened day-to-day practice. A dedicated Housing IDVA was embedded within the domestic abuse team, and a domestic abuse caseworker was based within Housing. This integrated model improved communication, enhanced specialist knowledge and enabled more effective responses to risk and safeguarding concerns.



Dedicated champions within both teams have also played a vital role, delivering training, building confidence and promoting a shared commitment to survivor-centred practice. Their work has helped develop a culture where housing and domestic abuse professionals work together to achieve better outcomes for families.

Another important aspect of the model has been the inclusion of perpetrator management.

Supporting victim-survivors to remain safely in their homes is only possible when there are effective pathways for addressing the behaviour and accommodation needs of those causing harm.

Working alongside our safe accommodation provider, specialist support and behaviour-change interventions were introduced, alongside housing pathways that enabled perpetrators to access alternative accommodation where appropriate. Flexible funding has also been used to remove practical barriers to relocation, helping to safeguard victims and their children.

Our journey has not always been straightforward. Like any significant system change, it has required ongoing learning, adaptation and collaboration. Listening to people with lived experience, housing professionals, 'by and for' organisations and strategic partners has been essential in shaping and strengthening our approach.

A major milestone came in 2025, when Cheshire East achieved DAHA Platinum Accreditation, recognising the commitment, dedication and hard work of colleagues across housing and domestic abuse services. While we are incredibly proud of this achievement, we see it as another step in our journey rather than the final destination.

As we look ahead, our focus remains on maintaining high standards, continuing to innovate and ensuring that victim-survivors remain at the heart of everything we do.

By keeping a domestic abuse lens at the centre of our work and supporting people to make informed choices about their future, we can continue to improve outcomes for families across Cheshire East.

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