Edition One

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CEMETERIES AND CREMATORIA

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Editorial

People, policy, peace

As local authority cemeteries and crematoria services across the UK navigate unprecedented financial and operational challenges, APSE are bringing together local government bereavement professionals to share knowledge, best practice and practical guidance.

Join us in Leeds on Thursday 19 November for the P**eople, policy, peace: Delivering compassionate local authority bereavement services Seminar**, where we will explore support for vulnerable families, protecting bereavement records, embedding sustainable practices, navigating funeral poverty and managing public expectations.



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Sector News is published by
Association for Public Service Excellence
3rd Floor, Trafford House, Chester Road
Manchester, M32 0RS

t: 0161 772 1810
e: enquiries@apse.org.uk **w:** www.apse.org.uk

Antrim and Newtownabbey Council's Award-Winning Cemetery and Crematoria Team

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council was awarded the Best Service Team: Cemeteries and Crematoria award at the APSE Service Awards 2026, recognising its commitment to providing compassionate care to bereaved families.

Building on its success as the winner of the Best Service Team in 2024, the Council has introduced innovative solutions, invested in continuous staff development and strengthened community engagement to ensure the service can successfully meet the needs of local residents.

In 2023, in response to the steadily declining burial space and low cremation rates in Northern Ireland, the Council invested £5 million in a modern, state-of-the-art crematorium to encourage greater uptake of cremation and provide a dignified alternative to traditional burial.

Since opening, the facility has reduced waiting times between death and funeral, shortened travel distances for families and enhanced the overall experience for mourners through high-quality, thoughtfully designed facilities.

Demand for the service has continued to grow, with cremation numbers rising year on year, demonstrating both increased acceptance and the vital role the facility now plays within the community.

The service is guided by a culture of continuous improvement with a strong emphasis placed on learning, innovation and staff engagement, enabling the team to identify opportunities for enhancement and implement meaningful change. In addition to working closely with the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management, the service has implemented a structured training programme to ensure consistent understanding and application of new procedures.

Strong relationships with local communities, faith groups, funeral directors and professional partners are also central to the service's success. By actively seeking feedback and undertaking regular consultation activities, the team gains valuable insight into local needs and expectations, helping to shape decisions and deliver ongoing improvements for residents.

The Council's commitment to bereavement support extends beyond the provision of cemetery and crematoria services. Working closely with local charity Fresh Minds Education, the Council supported the Bamber Puppy initiative which provides bereaved children with emotional comfort, reassurance and gentle guidance as they navigate their grief journey. Since 2023, the Council has donated a total of £65,100 to local organisations, demonstrating their commitment to making a tangible difference to the local community.

In addition to providing compassionate care to bereaved families, the team has successfully enhanced biodiversity across all operational sites. Last year, the Council successfully achieved Green Flag status for 32 sites across the borough, representing one of the highest totals awarded to a single local authority.

More than one million native wildflower seeds are sown across the Borough each year, with several cemetery sites now featuring established wildflower meadows that have received positive feedback from the public. In 2022, the Council launched their One Million Tree initiative in partnership with the Woodland Trust and other stakeholders. The scheme has already delivered 315,595 native trees, improving biodiversity, enhancing site appearance and delivering efficiency savings through reduced grass cutting.

The Council is committed to working closely with communities, faith groups and experts to develop sustainable, inclusive burial provision that meets Sheffield's future needs.



A whole-system approach to modernising bereavement services across Southampton

SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL

APSE Cemeteries and Crematoria Innovation Award 2026 finalist, Southampton City Council, has delivered a coordinated service-wide approach to modernise and transform their bereavement services across Southampton Crematorium and five municipal cemeteries.

The Council's approach, centred on enhancing customer experience, inclusion, community engagement, digitisation and environmental sustainability, has created a service reflective of the large, diverse population it serves.

The service has successfully strengthened their customer experience through clear communication, improved consistency of standards and enhanced support for bereaved families. To add to this, the Council has introduced digitised services, including multi-faith guidance, translation functionality and 'what to expect' information, as well as online memorial information for family members who are unable to attend in person.

Inclusivity and responding to community need is central to the service, ensuring that cultural and religious requirements are met with sensitivity and respect. The bereavement team can accommodate same-day coffined and uncoffined burials for the Muslim community and provides dedicated support for Sikh and Hindu families who wish to witness the charging of the coffin.

In addition to providing burial and cremation services, the Council has strengthened its provision of bereavement support within the community, offering grief cafes, inclusive spaces for remembrance and memorial events. By working alongside local voluntary and community organisations, the Council ensures that families receive compassionate support throughout the bereavement process.

Environmental management has focused on responsible stewardship across the five municipal cemeteries, prioritising safety, dignity and compliance. The Council has ensured to maintain historic sites through heritage preservation work and collaboration with local Friends group to support, care, engage and understand the site's historic value.

Investment and improvement activity has been focused on Southampton Crematorium, where proactive planning has enabled a range of practical enhancements to both the environment and the customer experience. These improvements include the introduction of high-quality artificial floral displays within the chapels, which are rotated seasonally to provide an appropriate and dignified setting while delivering cost efficiencies. The Council is also exploring opportunities to work towards Green Flag standards for the crematorium's woodland garden of rest.

This work has been delivered through strong leadership, the adoption of common standards, and the sharing of good practice and service development. By taking a joined-up approach that balances professionalism with compassion, Southampton City Council has demonstrated how bereavement services can modernise while continuing to meet the evolving needs of the communities they serve.



Providing compassionate care for London's pet owners

Lambeth

APSE Cemeteries and Crematoria Innovation Award 2026 finalist, Lambeth Council, serves London's vast population of pet owners through the Greater London Pet Crematorium, offering dignified and compassionate services to bereaved families across the city.

Established in response to the shortage of nearby burial spaces, with the closest pet crematorium located 21 miles outside of London, the facility ensures that residents have access to respectful, local end-of-life care for their animals.

With 46% of households in London owning at least one dog, and one in five without access to a garden, the vast majority of pet owners have no option to privately lay their pets to rest. To add to this, veterinary crematoriums are often costly with prices ranging from £280 to £400.

Lambeth Council's Greater London Pet Crematorium offers a compassionate alternative to expensive private cremations, capping prices at £248 and providing a range of services to support bereaved families through the process. The Crematorium offers collection and care of the pet, chapel ceremonies, ash scattering and dedicated memorial services, allowing owners to honour their pets as cherished family members. Aside from the production of memorial items, all services are provided entirely in-house by the Crematorium's dedicated team of bereavement professionals.

In addition to providing compassionate services for families, the Crematorium also generates income for the council whilst keeping the environmental impact of the service to a minimum. The pet cremator requires 40% less fuel than the majority of competitors on the market and is housed in a previously underused chapel at Streatham Cemetery.

The building now hosts the cremator, and family services for pet funerals, achieving profits of roughly 60% per cremation. The facility maximises existing amenities available to other mourners, giving pet-owners access to comfortable waiting rooms, choice of music and tributes and the use of a non-denominational chapel to support a range of belief systems.

By transforming an underused chapel building, responding to the rising demand for pet cremations and offering a compassionate service for families, Lambeth Council's Greater London Pet Crematorium has created a service that meets the needs of modern urban communities.



Proposed new cemetery and crematorium for Chelmsford

Chelmsford council is developing plans to build a proposed new cemetery and crematorium in Gallywood.

The facility will respond to the aging population and demand for high-quality and varied bereavement services in the area.

The Writtle Road Cemetery and Crematorium has proudly served Chelmsford and the surrounding area for many decades. However, the existing facility is approaching full burial capacity and the existing crematorium equipment is reaching the end of its operational lifespan. It also lacks many of the features expected of a modern bereavement service.

The proposed facilities at Stock Road will deliver a state-of-the-art bereavement facility for the city and the surrounding catchment area. The new site will provide sufficient burial and cremation capacity to meet the needs of Chelmsford and the surrounding area for the next generation.

The proposal will secure long-term bereavement provision, broaden the range of services available and support their net zero ambitions.

Moray Council completes construction on Elgin's new cemetery

Construction has been completed on Elgin's new Linkwood cemetery, creating a major new site that will provide long-term burial space for the area.

The 5.6-hectare site, located off Linkwood Road and Hallowood Road, was identified through Moray Council's Local Development Plan as the most suitable replacement for the existing cemetery, which is nearing capacity. The new site is roughly equivalent in size to almost eight football pitches.

Delivered by Pat Munro Ltd, the development includes new internal access roads, parking, pedestrian pathways and extensive landscaping to create a peaceful, accessible and respectful setting.

Although construction work is now complete, the cemetery will not open straight away. Grass has been sown across the burial sections and time is needed for it to establish and for the ground to settle naturally. This year-long establishment period will help ensure the site is ready to welcome visitors and can be used respectfully and sustainably for future burials.

As part of the project, more than 1,000 trees will be planted, along with extensive shrubs and wildflowers, helping to enhance biodiversity across the site.

The contractor will remain on site until December 2026 to oversee a 12-month maintenance period, monitoring and caring for the newly landscaped and grassed areas to ensure they establish successfully.

Linkwood cemetery will be in use by early 2027, and when that happens, the existing Elgin Cemetery will close to new burials. However, coffin lairs with remaining burial capacity at the existing cemetery, along with Muslim, infant and ashes burials will continue to take place there for several years to come.

Sheffield City Council making significant progress to secure future burial space

A new report due to be considered by Sheffield City Council's Strategy and Resources Policy Committee sets out the progress made since the Council committed to developing a long-term solution to burial provision.

The work includes creating new burial space at existing cemeteries, identifying potential new cemetery locations, and strengthening engagement with communities and faith groups to help shape future provision.

Among the key achievements highlighted in the report are the creation of more than 100 new burial plots at Tinsley Park Cemetery through the clearance of previously unused land. This will help to address immediate capacity pressures and provide additional space for Muslim burials, with further phases of work are planned.

The Council has also progressed work to increase capacity at existing cemeteries, including City Road and Stocksbridge, while detailed technical, legal and environmental assessments continue at a number of potential new cemetery sites across the city.

Particular focus is being given to options in the south-east of Sheffield, where existing burial capacity pressures are most significant and there is a clear need to bring forward future provision.

The report notes that recent and planned interim measures have the potential to significantly extend burial capacity while new cemetery sites are brought forward. This will reduce the immediate risk of burial space being exhausted before long-term solutions can be delivered. It also highlights extensive engagement with local communities, including the establishment of a Sheffield Muslim Bereavement Partnership Forum, helping to ensure future provision reflects the needs of Sheffield's diverse communities.

This report demonstrates the significant progress being made, from delivering new burial plots now to developing longer-term solutions to help meet Sheffield's future burial needs.

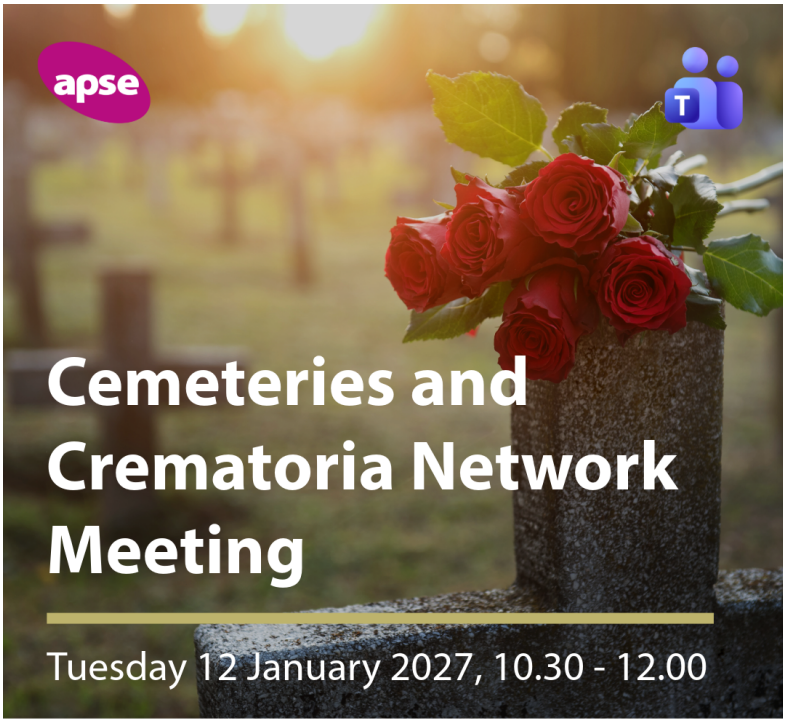


Upcoming events

Do you want to share best practice, network with local government colleagues and keep up to date with the latest developments in bereavement services? Explore our upcoming events:



Scan the QR code to book



FREE for all **APSE members!**

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