

# life

Issue 5 | Autumn 2018

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# Sam Kershaw Chief Executive Officer

Sam Kershaw took over as Chief Executive Officer of Funeral Partners in January 2018, having joined the business in 2016 as Chief Operating Officer. Sam has 35 years' experience in the funeral industry, having worked his way up from Trainee Funeral Director to senior management.

"Investing in quality is at the heart of Funeral Partners' plans for growth, and we are delighted to have welcomed ten new highly respected funeral businesses into our family in 2018.

You can read about the latest businesses to join us on pages 4 and 5 of this magazine.

With quality at the heart of our business, we welcome the Competition and Markets Authority's review of the UK funerals market, which aims to ensure it is working well for customers.

We consider the market is healthy and competitive, with families making a choice based on service, reputation and heritage, balanced against price – in other words, we believe families make their choice based on value for money.

Differences in prices are driven by differences in quality, ranging from the professional training of employees, to the investment in funeral homes and vehicle fleets, to the provision of a good customer experience.

We also believe families' increasing preference to choose a range of bespoke options and the opportunities now available to personalise funerals give rise to much wider variations in price.

In line with the objectives of the CMA review of funeral pricing in the UK we are committed to being open and transparent on both



Sam Kershaw with Richard Lloyd whose business, Richard Lloyd Funeral Services of Woodley near Reading, joined the Funeral Partners family last year

*"The aim of these reviews is protecting families and providing them with a fair, transparent and high-quality service. At Funeral Partners, this is at the heart of what we do."*

our prices and services and to provide clear, itemised pricing to families.

When a family first makes contact with a Funeral Director, they may not know what they want for their loved one or what options are available. This makes price comparisons alone a blunt object, and quality needs to be included in any comparison.

As members of the National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD), we believe the Codes of Practice of the national associations are the most effective means of regulation of the industry.

The other significant national review currently taking place is HM Treasury's review of pre-paid funeral plans. Like the vast majority of funeral plan providers, our Choice provision is registered with the Funeral Planning Authority (FPA), which has stringent Codes of Practice.

Most plans are sold by Funeral Directors who provide good, clear advice to those considering buying a pre-paid plan. We believe the most effective way to protect the growing number of people investing in pre-paid plans is to strengthen the powers of the FPA and require all providers to be members. In addition, we would support regulation of the investments linked to the plan by the Financial Conduct Authority.

The aim of these reviews is protecting families and providing them with a fair, transparent and high-quality service. At Funeral Partners, this is at the heart of what we do.



## My accident changed my life – for the better

Funeral Arranger Gill Douglas, who joined **AH Rogers & Sons Funeral Directors** in Hedge End, Southampton, in June, explains why she is spearheading a fundraising campaign for Hampshire and Isle of Wight Air Ambulance (HIOWAA) which involves Funeral Partners branches across the region.

Gill Douglas was going through a stressful divorce on the day that changed her life. She was distracted as she walked her dog that morning in 2013 and stepped out into the road at a busy junction.

Although she remembers much of what happened next, it feels like it happened to someone else.

First there was a loud bang to the back of her head - she later discovered she had stepped into the path of a double-decker bus and her head had smashed its windscreen.

Witnesses say she was thrown about 20 feet in the air before landing on the road, splitting open her head and breaking several ribs. As a passer-by and the first responder reassured Gill and kept her neck still, she heard the air ambulance overhead.

Gill said: "When I heard the helicopter, I became quite scared as the severity of the accident dawned on me.

"The Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS) team were incredible, checking me over, and being amazingly calm and kind to me as, by then, I think the shock had really set in.

"I remember lying in the road, scared, not knowing if I may have life changing injuries. I know I was very lucky."

Remarkably, mum-of-two Gill was only in hospital overnight and made a full recovery,

and kind members of the public found and re-united her with her dog, but her experience changed her perspective on life.

Humbled by the care and kindness of the HEMS team, she set out to support HIOWAA, volunteering for them over the past four years.

The most recent step on her life-changing journey came in June when, after a long career as a hairdresser, Gill joined AH Rogers and trained as a Funeral Arranger.

Gill said: "I'm lucky to have found a job I'm passionate about which allows me to give something back. It is so rewarding and fulfilling to be able to help families."

With the support of Pre-Paid Funeral Plan provider Choice, Gill's Hedge End branch and Funeral Partners' businesses across Hampshire are 'giving something back' by fundraising for the air ambulance.

**For every Choice Funeral Plan sold in branch or online at [www.choiceplan.co.uk](http://www.choiceplan.co.uk) quoting HAA50 until March 2019, Choice will donate £50 to HIOWAA.**

Gill concluded: "My accident showed me that you do not know what is round the corner, you could get run over by a bus tomorrow! Having a plan or even just your wishes noted can be a great help to family, and peace of mind for yourself.

"I firmly believe my accident has changed my life for the better."



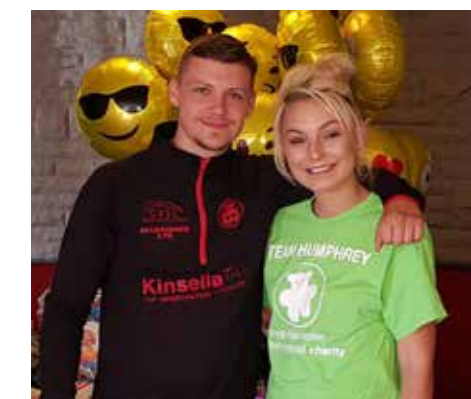
**Funeral homes across the North West of England have teamed up to raise vital funds for the Oncology and Haematology Ward at Royal Manchester Children's Hospital.**

For the next 12 months, Funeral Partners branch **G W Turner Funeral Directors** will be working alongside our other funeral teams in the region to raise money for the hospital's Ward 84.

They kicked off their fundraising with a family fun day organised by Funeral Arrangers Stacey Booth from G W Turner and Stephanie Tierney from **Robert Nuttall Funeral Service, Rochdale**, alongside Area Development Manager Angela Worrall and their colleagues from administration, training and **Michael Kennedy Funeral Services**.

Families enjoyed a range of activities and visits from Humphrey bear and local boxer, Luke Evo Evans, who posed for photos.

Stacey said: "The ward is very close to all of our hearts and working with the bereavement centre at the hospital makes you realise the absolutely incredible work that the doctors and nurses do on this ward every day.



Funeral Arranger Stacey Booth with Luke Evo Evans

"In 2015 Stephanie's daughter Elle spent a year on Ward 84 after being diagnosed with stage 4 Birkett's lymphoma. Elle, who is now nine and in remission, wants to thank the hospital and staff of Ward 84 for all their hard work and amazing care she received.

"The day was a complete success and we raised £946, which brings our total after our first event to £1,238."



# New areas for Funeral Partners as five more businesses join family

Ten respected funeral businesses have joined the Funeral Partners family in 2018 as it expands into new areas.

Thirty-year-old family business Howard's Funeral Directors and Graham Clegg Funeral Directors, both of Merseyside, have seen Funeral Partners establish a new Merseyside area.

Northamptonshire funeral directors Chambers & Brighty in Wellingborough have become the first business in Funeral Partners' new East Midlands area.

Family-run business John G Hogg of Sunderland has also joined Funeral Partners, strengthening its presence in the North East of England.

Ashdown Funeral Service, of Sidcup and Belvedere, sees Funeral Partners' expand its South East London area, as the business continues to invest in funeral homes across the country.

Funeral Partners' Chief Executive Officer Sam Kershaw said: "Ten businesses have now joined us in 2018 as we deliver on our aim of growing Funeral Partners.

"We are delighted to welcome these five new respected businesses, which have developed enviable reputations for professionalism and excellence. We are committed to investing in and supporting these businesses while maintaining their heritage and traditions of service to their communities.

"It is particularly exciting as we grow across all areas of the country to be able to establish ourselves in Merseyside, Tyne and Wear and the East Midlands."

## Howard's Funeral Directors renowned Southport family business

**Howard's Funeral Directors**, established by Peter and Mavis Howard in Southport in 1988, is now run by their son Carl Howard and his wife Nicky.

In 2012 Carl and Nicky opened their second branch in Station Road, Ainsdale, and, four years later, they relocated their head office to a purpose-built new site in Roe Lane, Southport.

Howard's is renowned as Southport's premier funeral business and has conducted a number of high profile funerals including that of Jean Alexander, better known as Hilda Ogden from Coronation Street.

Carl and Nicky Howard are staying on to run the business along with their Funeral Director Derek Crawford, Funeral Service Operative Chris Griffiths-Gripton and receptionist Helen Pitman.

Carl, now Business Principal, said: "We chose Funeral Partners as we are too young to retire! They have been very supportive and straightforward to deal with and we believe that they will look after both our and our clients' future."



Ian Chambers (left) and Jeff Brighty

## Chambers & Brighty respected Wellingborough business

**Chambers & Brighty Funeral Directors** was established in Wellingborough in 2000 by experienced funeral directors Ian Chambers and Jeff Brighty.

Former owner Jeff Brighty, who is remaining with Chambers & Brighty as Business Principal, said: "Funeral Partners offered us the opportunity to continue working the way we did as an independent business, with lots of enhancements. They are investing in the premises and in the workforce."

Established Funeral Director Andy Cox and Funeral Service Operative Scott Kelly are remaining with the business and have been joined by experienced Funeral Directors Richard Porter and Alex Whiting. Ian Chambers is staying with Chambers & Brighty for three months, before taking his well-earned retirement.

Jeff said: "Funeral Partners' management have been absolutely brilliant and have made us feel really at ease with the transition."

Jeff joined the funeral profession more than 35 years ago after serving in the Army. He started working with Ian Chambers in Wellingborough in 1989 and, 11 years later, they established Chambers & Brighty and built up a successful business.



The team at Howard's, from left, Helen Pitman, Chris Griffiths-Gripton, Carl Howard and Derek Crawford



The team at John G Hogg Funeral Directors, with John Hogg Snr far right next to partner Claire and John Hogg Jnr

## John G Hogg Serving Sunderland for 25 years

Family business **John G Hogg Funeral Directors** of Sunderland was established by John Hogg over 25 years ago.

John will continue to serve as Business Principal, with his partner Claire and son John Hogg Jnr remaining as Funeral Directors within the dedicated team.

John said: "I wanted to slow down a bit but still play an active part in the business. When I spoke to Funeral Partners, I liked the way they could take the business to the next level while carrying forward our family values and continuing to serve the families we have served for many years."

Sunderland born and bred, John joined the funeral industry from school, establishing his own business in Hendon in 1992. In his first year he carried out a small number of funerals, building up his reputation and business to now look after hundreds of families every year.

He opened his second branch in Pallion in 1996 and the Farringdon branch in 2003. John Jnr joined his father in the business straight from school in 2005. With his team of 11 funeral service professionals. John has received several local awards for excellence.

John is a lifelong Sunderland football fan, and the business is a sponsor of the Club as well as several junior football teams, and will continue to support local community activities.

## Ashdown Funeral Service Founders bring 50 years' funeral experience

Formed in Sidcup in 1995 by Edward and Rachel Micallef, **Ashdown Funeral Service** opened a second funeral home in Belvedere in 1999.

With over 50 years' experience in the funeral profession between them, Edward and Rachel have built a reputation for personal service in their local communities. As Funeral Partners invests in developing the business, they will continue to work at Ashdown for 18 months as they start to plan for retirement.

Funeral arranger Sue Culley also remains with the business, which becomes part of Funeral Partners' South East London area.

Rachel said: "We're happy to be part of Funeral Partners as it's important the business continues to look after families the way we have."

Graham Clegg with Funeral Director Andrew Roughley



## Graham J Clegg Funeral Directors Enviably reputation for quality of service

Established by experienced Funeral Director Graham Clegg in Maghull, Merseyside, in 1994, **Graham J Clegg Funeral Directors** has gone from strength to strength, becoming the largest funeral business in the area.

Graham joined the funeral profession in 1974, working with his grandfather, father and uncle in the family business where he learned his trade. Since branching out on his own, the business has built up an enviable reputation in the local community for excellent customer service.

With his wife Christine, Graham is remaining to support the business and the established team of Funeral Director Andrew Roughley, Funeral Service Operatives Robert Hardaker and Ian Buckley, administration support Karen Slater and Pauline Davies, assisted by Stephen Davies and John Rutherford.

Graham said: "I'm proud of the service we provide to the community. We chose Funeral Partners because we want more time to ourselves and they will protect our reputation and the way the business works, and provide security to the team."

After being involved in the profession all his life, Graham said he was looking forward to spending time with their dogs, while continuing to volunteer with the local Labrador rescue centre.



# The Youngertakers

A recent BBC documentary focused on young people entering the funeral profession. It posed the question: Is one of the world's oldest professions a place for a young person?

Choosing to become a Funeral Director may not be top of the list for teenagers planning their future careers. But what is it like as a career choice? And how hard is it for a young person to deal daily with grief and sadness?

**Life in the community talks to three young funeral directors to find out.**

## Rebecca Blenkiron 23

**Funeral Director**  
**John Blenkiron & Sons,**  
**North Yorkshire and County Durham**



### What made you choose the funeral industry?

My family have worked in this industry my entire life. I grew up seeing what my grandfather, father and uncles do and I discovered that's what I wanted to do.

The death of a close relative is something people encounter a limited number of times, and families rely heavily on us to get it right for their loved one. You can help people more than I ever expected.

### What previous experience did you have and how did it help you?

I waited for 10 years and the experience hospitality provides is invaluable. You learn very quickly how to read the environment you're in and how to handle it appropriately. You learn that every situation and every person is different.

### People must assume your job is all doom and gloom, is this the case?

At times this job can be heart-breaking, you feel compassion for every family, but you learn to cope in order to help them in their hour of greatest need.

My job is to listen to stories told about the person who has died and personify them into a celebration of their life. It involves organisation, and the ability to be pragmatic, as often families will make last minute decisions. Most of all my job is to deliver a flawless service for families to help them move forward with their grieving.

### What is the most rewarding aspect of delivering a celebration of a person's life?

When organising a celebration of life families often share fond memories and characteristics of that person. The most rewarding part is knowing you have

delivered the celebration to the highest standards, helping that family to fondly remember their loved one and giving them a safe environment to grieve.

### What skills do you need to work with bereaved families?

The most important skill is knowing how to read situations. You have to sense how the family is feeling, have they already made their decisions about the funeral? Or are they distraught and in need of lots of advice? You have to be highly empathetic.

### What community activities do you get involved with?

As a company we sponsor many local activities such as theatre productions and themed days at church. It's a lovely feeling to see your business associated with such positive activities.

### What do you find most difficult?

The most difficult part is learning how to manage your emotions. You need to be able to do so in order to be helpful to your families.

### What support have you received from Funeral Partners?

At 23, I never dreamed I would be arranging and conducting my own funerals. Funeral Partners has offered me so many opportunities. It's such a massive responsibility, and to be trusted with it gives me faith in myself and my abilities.

### How important is it to you for your branch to maintain its heritage now it is part of a larger organisation?

Our heritage is so important. As my grandfather started the business over 50 years ago I feel an obligation to maintain the individuality of our branch. Every decision I make I think of my grandfather, the standards he set, and whether he would be proud of what I am doing.

### What are your career aspirations?

I definitely see myself staying in the industry, and I hope to be the manager of a local branch one day!



## Becky Perry

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**Funeral Director**  
**Chris White**  
**Funeral Directors,**  
**Salisbury**

### How long have you worked in the funeral industry?

I'm coming up to my 15th year. I wanted to work in the industry since I was 10-years-old. My grandfather's funeral was a beautiful day and I knew the minute I saw the Funeral Director in charge that I wanted to help people.

### What previous work experience did you have?

I arranged work experience with a local Funeral Director through my school. From the first day I knew it was what I wanted to do. I had retail and waitressing jobs at weekends, so that customer experience came in handy.

### People must assume your job is all doom and gloom, is that the case?

Although we face challenges and hard days, we are also a bubbly, friendly and outgoing team and we laugh every day. We support each other and I make sure we always debrief the day together. This job gives you a very special sense of peace and appreciation for each day we are given.

### What do you enjoy most?

Where do I start? I love working with a wonderful and passionate team delivering the most incredible service to our families. I love meeting and keeping in touch with our families, forming friendships along the way. I love working with all the people we work with in the community.

The most special part is knowing that we can make a difference to a family who are suffering and ease that suffering a little. This role puts a great deal into perspective.

### What is most rewarding about delivering a celebration of a person's life?

Learning the life lessons of people who have had a lifetime to learn. We have the privilege of hearing about people's lives on a daily basis and it is truly enlightening and touching. I think we can provide families with the tools to celebrate their life which helps them through their path of bereavement.

### What support have you received from Funeral Partners?

They have been amazing, always involving me in innovative ideas and trials, asking my opinion and driving our standards up.



**Lee Howard 28**  
**Acting Area Development Manager**  
**Payne & Sons Funeral Directors,**  
**Eastbourne**

### When did you join the funeral profession?

I joined in 2010 when Payne & Sons was established by my family.

### What previous work experience did you have?

I had worked closely with the public in previous jobs.

### What does your job entail, people must assume it is all doom and gloom, but is it?

I look after the Sussex area covering five branches, helping with their development. It is hugely rewarding when you have helped a family through the toughest time of their lives which makes the job a lot more positive.

### What do you enjoy most?

I enjoy the accomplishment of a successful service, knowing I have made someone's difficult time easier.

### What is the most rewarding aspect of delivering a celebration of a person's life?

Clients making you feel you are part of their family.

### What skills do you use when working with bereaved families?

Listening, trying to understand and being compassionate.

### What do you find most difficult?

Seeing people's pain.

### What would you say to anyone thinking about working in the industry?

It is a hugely rewarding job where you will learn more skills every day. I would highly recommend it.

### What are your future career aspirations?

I want to be able to progress and learn as much as I can. I aspire to be the best I can be within the funeral industry.





# Community pinboard

## Donations for furry friends

Funeral Director Julie Jennings from **Wilton Funeral Services** has been busy collecting donations for Waggy Tails Dog Rescue in Bournemouth.

She created an eye-catching window display full of doggy items, posters and information about the rescue centre and requested donations of blankets, towels, leads, collars, treats, and wet food pouches.

Julie also created a bespoke 'A Board' display and purchased a dog bowl to be placed outside the branch, plus she collected blankets and towels from her family and donated personal leads, harnesses, collars and £20 worth of treats.

She said: "I couldn't get over the generosity of the local community. Pets at Home in Christchurch donated a £15 voucher. The vets in Tuckton donated a huge bag of dry food and Funeral Partners donated £50.

"We also had loads of items and a £50 cheque donated from passers-by. Our van was overflowing with the collections!"

"Waggy Tails were delighted and most of the staff were there to greet us when we dropped all of the items off. They really appreciated it and made us feel so welcome – they even let some of the dogs star in our photo shoot."



Julie Jennings with  
Waggy Tails driver Gary Cerrone

## Making a splash for charity



The team from **Dartford Funeral Service** have been making a splash to raise money for three charities: New Hope Animal Rescue, Ellenor Lions Hospice and The Salvation Army.

Debi Runeckles, Sarah McCabe, Jason Howitt, Martin Purkis, Bill Wyatt and Matthew Day spent the day cleaning cars inside and out and raised nearly £300.

Drivers had the option to choose which charity to support and could even purchase homemade doggy biscuits baked by Debi and Sarah, with all funds raised on the day being donated.

Debi said: "We had an absolutely brilliant turn out. The weather was glorious, and we couldn't believe that we were non-stop all day.

"People who came enjoyed refreshments whilst they waited and loved that they had the option to purchase homemade doggy treats, we had none left at the end of the day. We are so pleased with how much money we raised and hope that this is something we can do again soon!"



## Fundraisers tee off at charity golf day

The team from **Walker & Morrell Funeral Directors** in Washington, Tyne and Wear, organised a charity golf tournament to raise money for The Bradley Lowery Foundation.

The foundation was set up to continue Bradley's legacy and raise funds for medical treatment and equipment which is not available on the NHS.



Funeral Director David Hindmarch practices for the fundraising golf tournament

Funeral Director David Hindmarch said: "I think everyone across the UK was touched by this young man's battle and all of us at Walker and Morrell wanted to try to raise as much money for the foundation as possible."

The tournament took place at the George Washington Golf Course in September. Teams of four players played 18 holes in Texas Scramble format.

David continued: "The day was great fun and raised £1,169 to help continue Bradley's legacy."

## Racing for life

Funeral Arranger Cheryl Cox from **Doves Funeral Directors**, Sevenoaks, took part in the Maidstone Mote Park Race for Life to raise funds for Cancer Research UK.

After signing up for the race in April, Cheryl and her sister-in-law Becky started training for the 10 km run where they began with hour-long runs, which increased closer to the race day, and made sure they went for long walks at least five times a week.

Cheryl finished the 10 km alongside Becky in 1 hour 30 minutes on one of the hottest days of the year and managed to raise £300.

She said: "I took part in Race for Life because, working for Doves, I come across many families whose lives have been devastated by cancer including my own family members, and I wanted to raise money to support a great cause."

"It has spurred me on to raise even more money for other charities."



Cheryl (right) with Becky at the Race for Life

## Skydivers' leap of faith for MIND

Two brave team members from **William H Painter Funeral Directors** in Yardley, Birmingham, took part in a tandem skydive to fundraise for MIND mental health charity.

Funeral Director Vickie Bardell and Diary Manager Shaz Calvert took the leap of faith from a plane at 13,000 feet at Skydive Langar Nottingham.

Shaz said: "I was absolutely terrified just before we jumped out of the plane but the feeling you get when you are in the air is indescribable. The views were incredible.

"Both Vickie and I knew we wanted to raise as much money as we could for the charity, so we thought it would have to be something big – a skydive it was!"

Their adrenaline-fueled jump has raised £1,400 for MIND. Shaz continued: "The work MIND does across the UK is astounding. MIND reports that one in four people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year and we work with many families who have been devastated by mental health issues."



Vickie Bardell (left) and Shaz Calvert prepare for the jump

To find your local branch visit [www.funeralpartners.co.uk](http://www.funeralpartners.co.uk)



# Medical examiners will allow families to raise concerns

Reforms of the process for certifying deaths in England and Wales are scheduled to be rolled out from next April.



The new role of Medical Examiner will be introduced to scrutinise all deaths not referred to a Coroner.

The aim of the reforms is to improve patient safety by introducing a system of medical scrutiny, to improve accuracy in recording the cause of death, and to give bereaved families greater transparency and the opportunity to raise any concerns.

Reform of death regulation was recommended 15 years ago by the Shipman inquiry into the murders of more than 200 patients by GP Dr Harold Shipman and again in the 2013 Francis Inquiry into Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust. Both called for the independent scrutiny of deaths and the involvement of bereaved families.

Provision was made in the Coroners and Justice Act of 2009 for all deaths in England and Wales not investigated by a Coroner to be scrutinised by an independent Medical Examiner.

The new Medical Examiners will scrutinise a doctor's certification of cause of death, taking into account any concerns raised by the bereaved family, before registration of the death will be permitted.

Medical Examiners have been piloted in Sheffield, Gloucester and several other locations in England and Wales, scrutinising more than 20,000 deaths.

Consultations into the proposed reforms took place in England and Wales in 2016 and the Government announced in June this year that the new system would be introduced in April 2019.

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Lord O'Shaughnessy, said medical examiners would be

employed in the NHS system with lines of accountability separate from NHS acute trusts.

He said: "The reforms aim to improve engagement with the bereaved in the process of death certification and offer them an opportunity to raise any concerns, as well as improving the quality and accuracy of Medical Certificates of Cause of Death."

He added this would improve safeguards and enable Medical Examiners to report matters of clinical governance to support local learning and changes to practice and procedures.

Funding will initially be through the existing fee for completing medical cremation forms, combined with central government funding.

Richard Van Nes, Funeral Partners' Director of Central Operations, said: "These reforms have been in the planning stage for a number of years and implementation has been delayed several times. We are still awaiting complete details and we hope it will now go ahead on schedule in order to provide a better service to bereaved families."

The Government has stated, in line with its aim that bereaved families should not have to pay burial and cremation charges for children, that deaths of under 18s will be exempt from the cost associated with the medical examiner system.



Richard Van Nes

# Your Choice, your peace of mind

**We all know there are a number of companies offering Prepaid Funeral Plans, all with varying options, prices and often lots of small print.**

So how do you choose which company to entrust this very important personal decision with, and be confident your wishes and money will be safe and secure?

Whilst we can't speak for all these other companies we can tell you about the significant benefits of purchasing a **Choice Prepaid Funeral Plan.**

Our aim is always to help you plan in as much, or as little, detail as you wish. We don't have rigid plan types to choose from, instead we take a flexible approach, as we believe every funeral is unique and our experienced staff are always happy to advise and provide ideas and options.

- We have a large network of local funeral director branches throughout the UK, most of whom have been established for decades in their local community
- We are more than happy to discuss your plan in branch or we can visit you in the comfort of your own home which many of our customers prefer
- Our plan covers all the Funeral Director costs at today's prices so however much those costs go up over time, you secure and fix the price at the time of purchase
- Your invested funds are held independently with UK-based life assurance companies regulated by the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) so are completely secure
- You can express your wishes about any element of the service including transport, hymns and readings - all for safe keeping, so less worry for your loved ones during a difficult time
- Your personal wishes can be added to or amended at any time
- If you move house, your plan moves with you
- We are always here to offer support and advice to you and your family whether this is on the phone, in person, in the branch or via our independent free bereavement helpline.

As a business we pride ourselves on our services, so we try to keep the rules of our plans simple. There are no upper age limits, health screening and no financial credit checks and we offer a number of flexible ways to pay for your plan that include cash, cheque, credit card or monthly instalments calculated from 12 to 60 months to suit your budget.

We are members of NAFD, the National Association of Funeral Directors, the country's leading funeral trade association so you can be sure we adhere to strict regulations to protect you and your family.

**We are always here to talk through options and pricing in more detail - we'd love to hear from you. Pop in to branch or call the Choice team on 01803 298 243 or email us at [info@choiceplan.co.uk](mailto:info@choiceplan.co.uk)**

## What's your choice?

Life Magazine  
Discount of £300 off  
is available until 31  
December 2018.  
Quote: **LIFE2018**





# Keeping it in the community

## ♥ Monster Challenge

Four intrepid members of the **M L Williams** and **James Dykes** funeral teams in Ayrshire took on a beast of a challenge along the banks of Loch Ness.

Operations Manager Fraser Mackay, Trainee Funeral Director Shannon Maxwell-Doyle and Funeral Service Operatives Euan Leckie and Helena Watson tackled the 10 km Beast Race.

Fraser said: "It was a case of mud, glorious mud, as the Beast Race took us through dense forest, undergrowth, heather and bog, on rough dirt tracks and, of course, into Loch Ness itself.

"Then add the obstacles – 30 of them – ranging from clambering over ten feet high walls, crawling through mud under barbed wire, being waist deep in mud and wading into the icy loch.

"We started together and crossed the finishing line together arm-in-arm in a time of 2 hours 30 mins."



The beast race team, from left, Helena Watson, Shannon Maxwell-Doyle, Euan Leckie, Fraser Mackay



Fraser Mackay tackles the mud with Shannon and Euan close behind

## ♥ Glowing Gold for children with cancer

Businesses in Coventry were Glowing Gold to show their support for children with cancer and their families.

**Henry Ison & Sons Funeral Directors** were among those located along Daventry Road who placed gold bows in their windows to raise awareness of the Shine a Light charity.

The charity is run by Sam Schoolar, who had cancer herself as a child. In conjunction with Coventry Building Society, its Glow Gold for September campaign highlighted the support available to families.

Funeral Arranger Trisha Green, from Henry Ison's Daventry Road branch, said: "It showed a great sense of community spirit."

Trisha, who has been volunteering for the charity for a year, explained: "The work they do is amazing, supporting the child and their family from diagnosis through to adulthood.

"Unfortunately, not all children survive and the charity is there for the family as long as they need them."



Trisha Green with Henry Ison's Glowing Gold window display

## ♥ Clean-up teams tackle pensioner's garden

Staff from two funeral homes joined forces to tidy a pensioner's front garden, bringing light back into his living room and restoring the use of his front path.

Funeral Director Mark Carr from **Maunders Funeral Service** in Paignton and Funeral Service Operatives Craig Parker and Rob Voisey from **Torbay & District Funeral Service** in Torquay spent the day cutting back overgrown hedges and plants.

The community clean-up team wanted to ensure the elderly gentleman, who lives on the same street as Maunders Funeral Service, could have a clear path to access his home. Following the initial clean up, the team will also maintain the resident's outdoor space.

Mark said: "It's easy to forget that, as people get older, little things such as garden maintenance can become more and more difficult. The gentleman was over the moon with how his front garden now looks and we all feel a sense of pride to have been able to help him.

"I have wanted to try to clean up our street for a while now and I am already looking forward to moving onto our next project. I am hoping to get other residents and businesses on the street involved."



Mark Carr and Rob Voisey restore the elderly resident's garden

## ♥ Getting muddy for Cancer Research

Four fundraisers from **James and Thomas Funeral Directors** and **Woking Funeral Service** in Surrey got covered in mud to support the vital work of Cancer Research UK.

James and Thomas Funeral Director Paula Ray, Funeral Arranger Julie Brown from East Horsley branch, Funeral Arranger Angela Collyer from the Guildford branch and Funeral Arranger Louise Jarrett from Woking Funeral Service raised £270.

They took part in the 5km Muddy Run in Guildford. Paula said: "It was a great afternoon, so much fun getting muddy and for such a great cause. We walked, ran, climbed, and crawled through the obstacles."



Getting muddy for a great cause, from left, Louise Jarrett, Paula Ray, Angela Collyer, Julie Brown

## ♥ Three funeral homes become 'Dementia Friendly'

Funeral directors from the Bromley area have taken the steps to becoming Dementia Friends, an initiative run by the Alzheimer's Society.

Teams from the Orpington and Bromley branches of **Doves Funeral Directors** and **Steven Mears Funeral Directors** in Beckenham received dementia awareness training to become the first three funeral homes in Bromley to receive this recognition.

The training provided Funeral Arrangers Sherry Kane, Sarah McCabe and Liz Sargent with a more in-depth understanding of dementia and advice on how they can help to create dementia friendly communities.

The decision to become Dementia Friends was sparked by the Bromley Dementia Action Alliance's plans to make Bromley the first dementia friendly London Borough.

Sherry said: "This training has provided us with a valuable insight into what it's like to live with dementia and we hope to be able to put what we have learned into action.

"We are always looking to develop our skills and this type of awareness training will allow us to provide an exceptional level of service to people living with Dementia as well as their family, friends, and carers in the local area. We are over the moon to be the first three funeral homes in Bromley to receive this recognition."

**"We are over the moon to be the first three funeral homes in Bromley to receive this recognition"**



# National Bereavement Service supports grieving families

The National Bereavement Service was founded to provide practical support and guidance for families needing independent advice after losing a loved one.

Managed as a not-for-profit service, it works with Funeral Partners and organisations including the Homicide Service, The Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Dying Matters and Hospice UK who support families and individuals after a death.

Launched in 2011, the service provides impartial and caring advice to the bereaved.

The most commonly-asked questions include:

Where and how do I register a death?

What is Probate and what do I need to do?

How do I stop junk mail?

The service also offers advice about:

- Help with bereavement benefits
- Advice around circumstances including Coroners' investigations, murders and suicides
- Signposting to local sources of emotional support including Cruse, specialist support groups and professional counsellors.

Most importantly, the National Bereavement Service provides a sympathetic ear for bereaved friends and relatives to talk to, and a personalised service which may involve researching local options and helping the caller to make contact with them.

Funeral Partners provides families with a freephone helpline directly to the service's team of advisors. The number is also promoted on printed literature and branch websites.

**For free advice and support call 0808 164 2239**

## New managers signal Northern expansion

Two new Area Development Managers are supporting Funeral Partners' expansion in the North East of England and into the Merseyside area.



Heather McBeth

With Daren Persson Funeral Services, Walker & Morrell, John Blenkiron & Sons and, most recently, John G Hogg, becoming part of the business's North East area, new ADM Heather McBeth has been getting to know her new teams.

Heather has more than 25 years' experience in people management, training and business development. She has worked in disadvantaged areas with families for Sure Start and, subsequently, managed three Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service offices in the region.

Heather moved to Marie Curie to develop their coordination service, working with the NHS to enable palliative care patients to get home from hospital and die at home if they wished. She set up a bespoke befriending service, recruiting and training volunteers.

Heather said: "I joined Funeral Partners because, through personal experience, I wanted to make a difference for those having to plan a funeral. I wanted to be involved in raising standards and encouraging people to talk about their wishes.

"My Mum was palliative with lung cancer and it lifted a weight from her shoulders when we went to plan her funeral together."

Heather is proud of the care and respect given to families. "Everyone is incredibly dedicated, including the way they support local communities.

"I am looking forward to our Macmillan coffee mornings as I love cake! I am excited about Christmas – getting some beautiful displays in our branch windows, maybe dressing up and singing at local care homes!"

New Merseyside Area Development Manager Nick Wiscombe is responsible for two of the newest businesses to join Funeral Partners, Howard's and Graham J Clegg Funeral Directors.

Nick joined the funeral profession 14 years ago, after starting his career in the textile industry, and quickly rose to become a regional manager as he realised it was a job he loved.

"I like meeting people and love helping them," he said. "It's such a privilege to work with families, to get to know them and learn about the life of their loved one."

Nick thanked Funeral Partners' ADMs for giving him so much time.

"I'm learning about the people in my teams and reassuring them that I care as much as they do about providing the highest standards of care.

"Community is at the heart of all that we do. In the past, I have abseiled, arranged charity golf events, been involved in Pride, International Women's Day and diversity awards. Last year I dressed my dog in a Christmas outfit (she loved it) and raised money for the homeless by selling mince pies.

"The people I have met through bereavement inspire me to live life to the full, my job shows me that life can be really unfair and I appreciate what I have."

## Thank you Letters

### Harrison Funeral Home, Enfield

I would like to thank Harrison Funeral Home for the care and attention given to me and my family. I would like to give a big thanks to Donna who made me feel at ease, comfortable and let me do my mum's funeral exactly how I wanted it to be.

The pall bearers were brilliant, they helped with everything even the music. Donna and all at Harrison's honoured my wishes and made the day a special day of which my mum would have been proud.

DW

### Bexley Funeral Service, Bexleyheath

From the moment we set foot over the door the staff were so helpful, understanding and courteous. Nothing was too much trouble, we were shown all different types of coffins and it took quite a time to choose but we didn't feel rushed at all.

Everyone that came said what a perfect send off for our mum, which we feel we could not have achieved without the fantastic service we received from Bexley Funeral Service. We highly recommend them.

KL

Our teams often receive notes of thanks from families they have helped. Here are just a few.

### Dawe Brothers Funeral Directors, Hereford

Keith provided a relaxed and reassuring presence during the arrangements, making appropriate suggestions about the ceremony. We had complete confidence in the guidance given. On the day their impeccable organisation meant we could relax and attend to the personal aspects of the ceremony..

J & VM

### Walker & Morrell Funeral Directors, Washington

Everything was carried out exactly as planned, with immaculate attention to detail and with the utmost sincerity. Martin Morrell could not have been more helpful and went above and beyond what I expected. My mother and I have enormous respect and gratitude to him and his colleagues.

DP

### M L Williams Funeral Directors, Ayr

It was our first ever funeral and we thought it was excellent as to how we were approached, how professional everything was. We thought that the funeral directors were extremely trustworthy.

CTR

### Sterry Funeral Service, Hythe

The service was always friendly, helpful & personal.

M

### Chambers & Brighty Funeral Directors, Wellingborough

Thank you for such a respectful day.

R



## NEW 'IN MEMORY' PINS PROMOTE PERSONAL CHOICE



Families celebrating a loved one's life are increasingly making more personal choices.

From the type of funeral service, dress code and choice of coffin, to the music, eulogy, and hearse, families are choosing personal touches that reflect their loved one's interests.

Funeral Partners, in partnership with their principal Order of Service provider, Just Digital, is now offering a range of 12 different 'In Memory' lapel pins for clients.

The idea came from Adam Hill, Just Digital's Managing Director, after one of his teenage daughter's friends tragically died. She asked if he could provide a keepsake that all the group could wear in memory of their friend. Adam struggled to find a suitable memento, and eventually had an angel wings pin made.

Drawing inspiration from the red poppy pin badges now available to mark Remembrance Day and the Manchester bees used to represent the city's unity and spirit following the Manchester Arena bombing last year, Adam suggested the pins could add an inexpensive yet highly personalised option for families arranging a funeral.

The lapel pins were trialled in several funeral homes, with a music-loving family ordering 80 silver-plated treble clef pins to hand out to every mourner.

Adam said: "The use of small brooches, badges and pins as symbols of remembrance dates back to the 1600s. The Victorians also embraced tokens of remembrance with more affluent families giving out keepsake black brooches or touchstones at funerals. They were worn for up to two years, especially through the period of deep mourning by the immediate family.

"Today there is a shortage of options for families to gift to mourners. So far, we've had positive feedback about the 'In Memory' pins from families and funeral arrangers. Families may ask for a small number for close friends and family, others may distribute them among the whole congregation. It gives them another personal choice.

"They come in a voile drawstring pouch and can be kept safe and worn, for example, to mark the anniversary of the person's death."

Designs include the infinity symbol, angel wings, red or white roses, silver dove, and a forget-me-not, with each pin silver-plated or enamelled.

## Shortlisted in national awards

Funeral Partners has been announced as a finalist in the **Personnel Today Awards** in the 'Managing Change' category for its work on raising the profile of the funeral industry through improving its professional standards.

The company has been shortlisted alongside seven others, including insurance giants Aviva, Gatwick Airport and Yodel.

Funeral Partners has been recognised for its success in introducing a new comprehensive career framework, which has enabled the business to attract experienced talent from the industry and drastically decreased vacancy rates.

Claire Billington, Head of HR, said: "Our HR and Operational Team worked together to develop and embed an effective process for career development and progression within our business.

"We achieved an outstanding level of engagement with staff when rolling out the new process, and since then have seen a high number of people develop and advance through the career framework and be rewarded for their achievements. I'm very proud of what we've achieved so far."

Winners of the Personnel Today Awards will be announced at a prestigious ceremony in London in November.



Claire Billington  
Head of HR, Funeral Partners