

**Bath and North East Somerset Council
Bereavement Services
Annual Report 2023 - 2024**



Contents

Introduction	3
Background	3
The competition	5
The crematorium	6
The memorials	9
The service	10
The service development programme	11

Bereavement Services

Annual Report

2023 - 2024

Introduction

Bereavement Services is a key service provider within the Council's portfolio. It provides a life event service like no other, often in a highly charged emotional context for the bereaved. This can be very challenging to everyone concerned, not least the staff who deliver this service all year round.

Services such as this are an at need service and many factors do affect the numbers of funerals that they receive, these are out of the control of the service providers, and are influenced by circumstances such as the national death rate.

The service has a number of Health and safety challenges found only in this industry.

This report looks at what Bereavement Services do; how it is performing in the marketplace; and what has been achieved over the financial year.

Background

Bereavement Services are the main provider of cremations and burials within the Bath and surrounding area. As such it caters for the majority of the population as the need arises. Over and above this a vast range of ashes / cremated remains memorials are available within Haycombe Cemetery coupled with this are a number of options for memorial trees and benches.

The Bereavement Service is obligated to facilitate public health funerals under the Public Health Act (Control of diseases) 1984. This means where a person dies within the geographical boundary of Bath and North East Somerset Council, and there is no one willing or able to take on the responsibility to arrange a funeral, this responsibility falls to the Local Council.

The Council's bereavement services team discharges its duty through the operation of 1 crematorium, 2 open cemeteries and 37 closed cemeteries and closed churchyards.

The main customer of Bereavement Services are Funeral Directors, however, residents can arrange their own loved one's funeral, purchase grave plots and cremated remains memorials directly from us.

Bereavement Services are responsible for all administration of the management and operation of Harptree Cemetery, Haycombe Cemetery and Crematorium and the Council's own closed cemeteries.

The team of twenty comprises a Bereavement Services Manager; one part-time Assistant Manager Cemeteries, one part time Assistant Manager Crematorium, one Cemetery Senior Supervisor; a crematorium supervisor; five full-time Memorial Consultants (working in reception); two crematorium technicians who also have grounds maintenance duties. Both technicians take it in turn for chapel and crematory duties.

As of June 2019, the grounds and grave digging work is carried out by the internal workforce to the Bereavement Service, this consists of the Cemetery Senior Supervisor, two Team Leaders and six Cemetery Operatives. A rolling programme of memorial inspections is included along with grounds maintenance at Haycombe and the outer cemeteries and all the grave digging across other Council owned Cemetery sites.

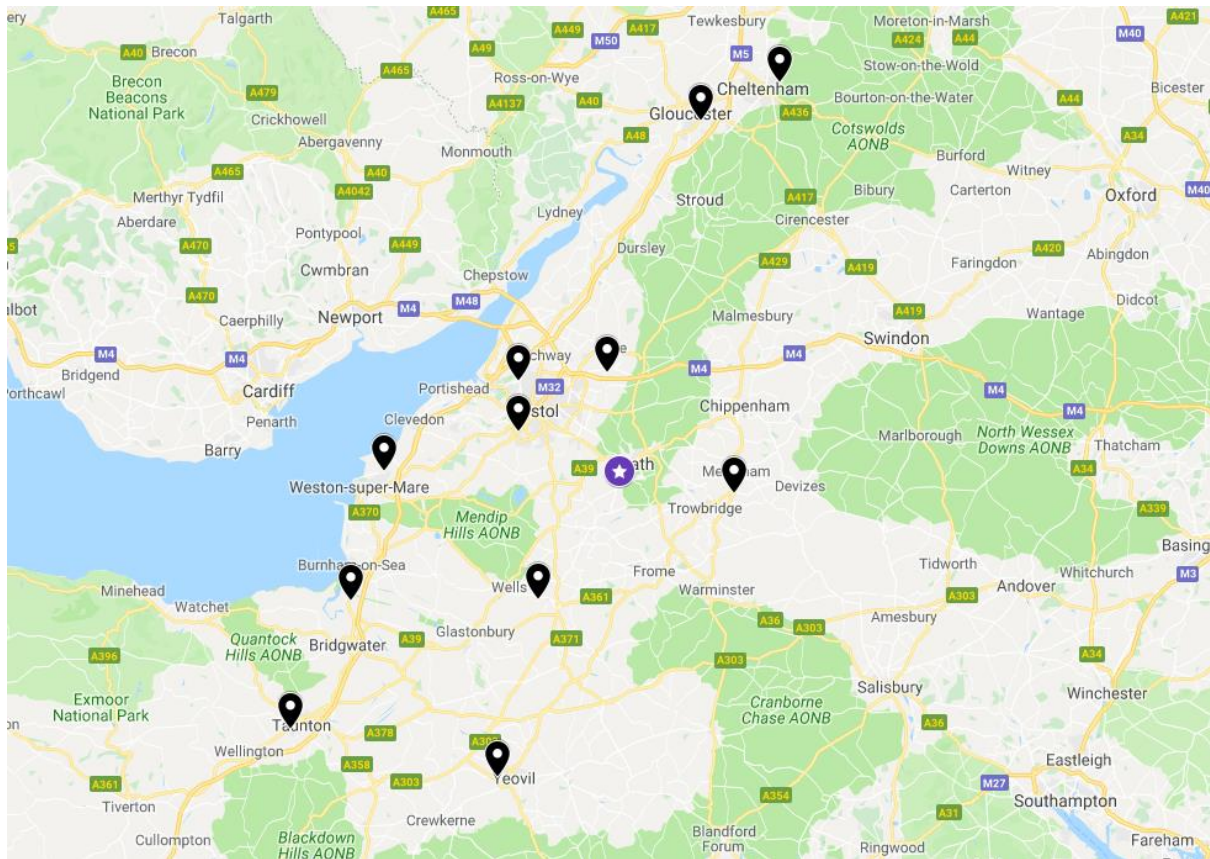
Standard office opening hours are 09.00am – 4.00pm. Services are held on request on a Saturday, for which overtime costs are incurred.

As from 14th November 2022 we introduced our Direct Cremation offerings throughout the day along with a price sensitive full-service cremation slot conducted by our in-house Celebrant held at 09.00am and 09.30am Monday to Friday this is to address funeral poverty, it also gives further choice to the bereaved for a low-cost option. Our in-house Celebrant is also available to conduct funerals, memorial services, and ashes interments at request.

On a more positive note, the improvement of technology allowed us to bring in a new audio system that is more responsive to the customer's needs and facilitates live webcasting, and the ability to show words and images to accompany the service.

The competition

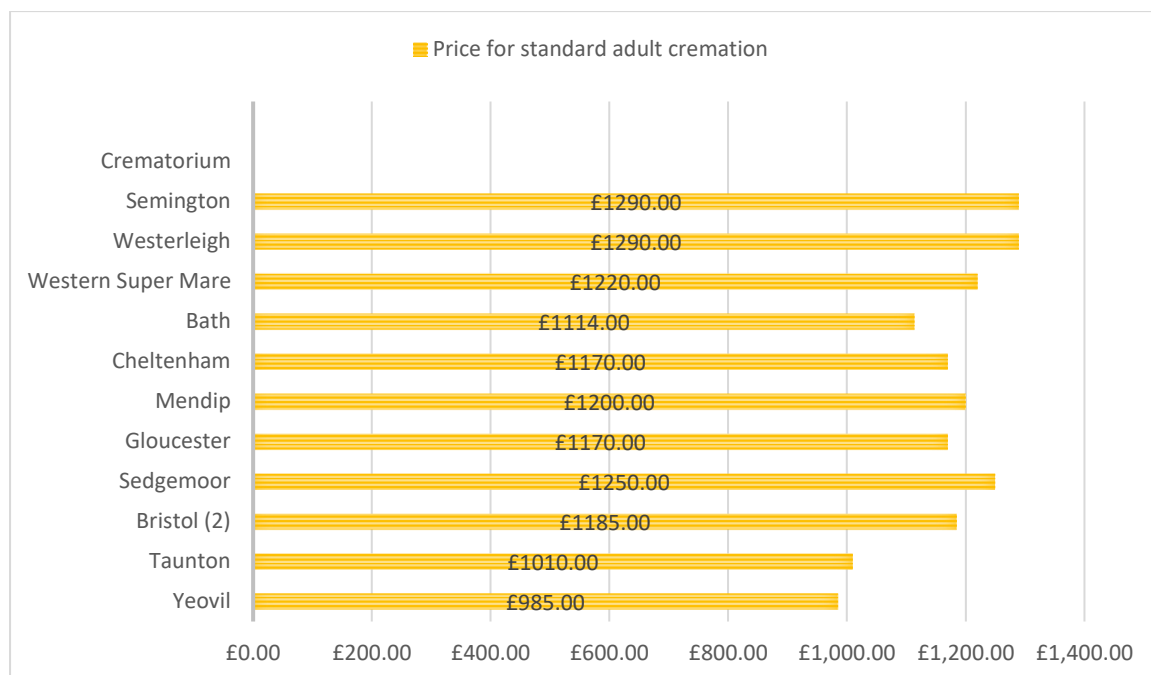
- Haycombe Cemetery and Crematorium is in close proximity to 11 neighbouring crematoria.
- Five of these are operated by the private sector.
- All are within 90 minutes travelling time of Haycombe.



Fees and Charges, Cremation.

Bath crematorium sits in ninth place regards fee structure for standard adult cremation, across eleven of the most local Crematoria. Some of these facilities are modern but many have had substantial investment over recent times.

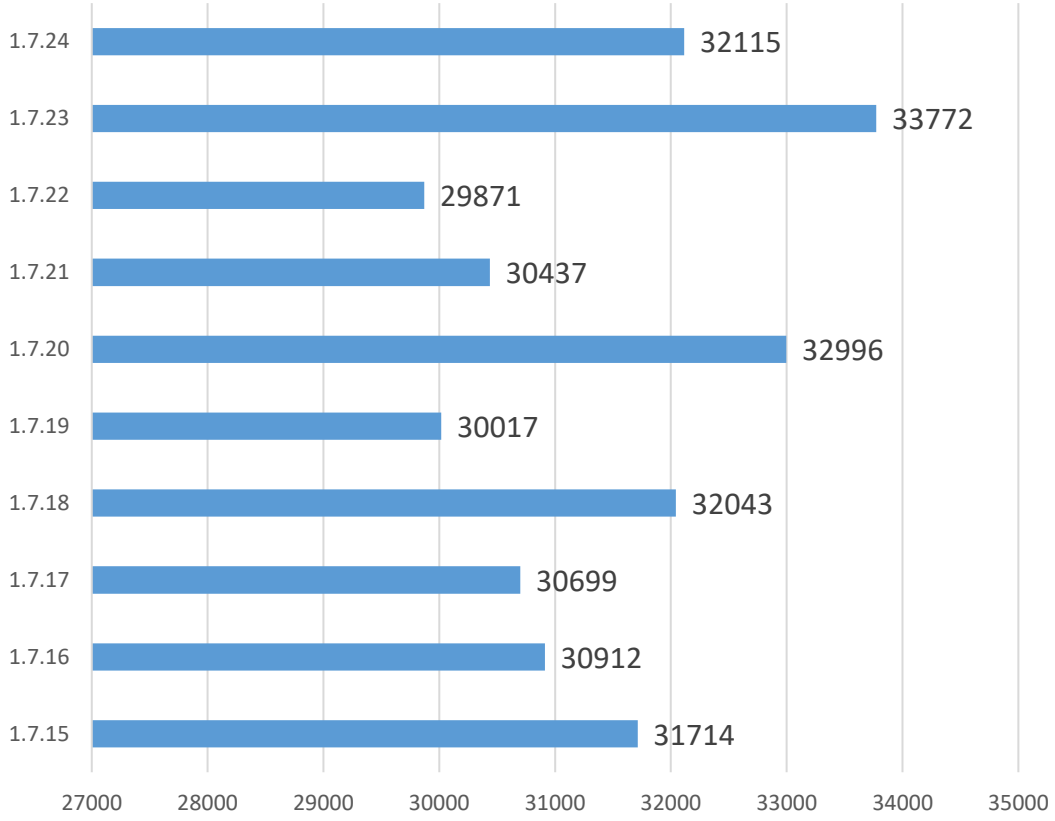
During the Summer of 2022 Haycombe had a full refurbishment of the crematorium chapel, a new disabled exit ramp and steps were installed, and the waiting room refurbished along with the installation of digital screens for ease of viewing. Over the early summer period of 2023 the Top Chapel now named the Hilltop Chapel had a complete internal refurbishment, ensuring a more ambient and befitting environment.



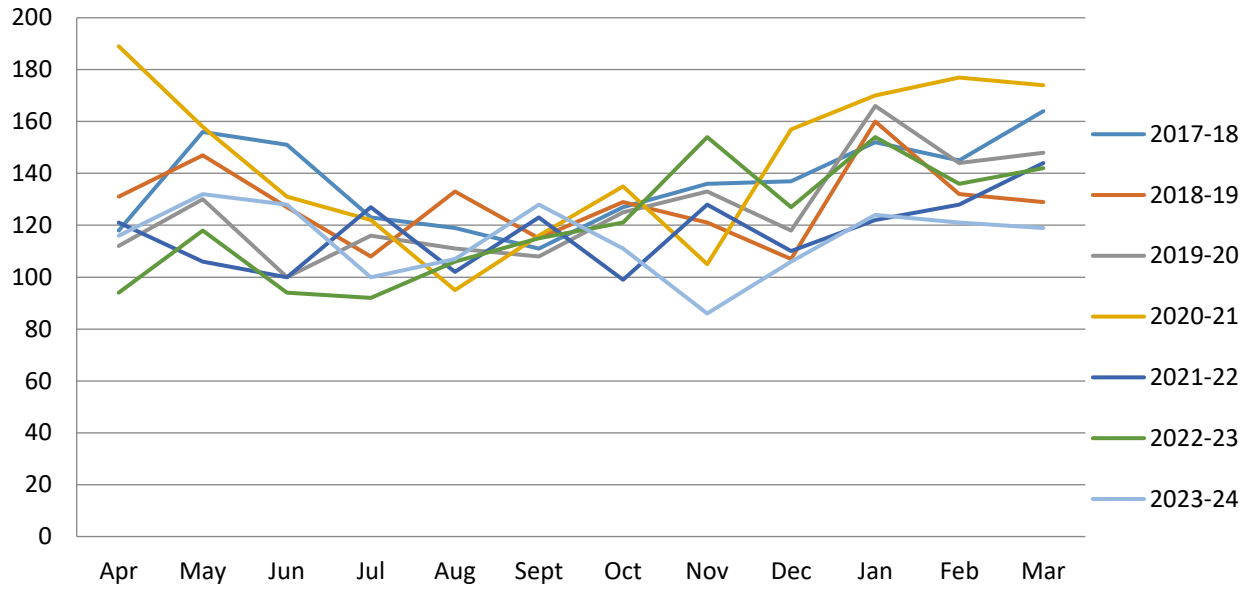
The crematorium

- Haycombe carried out 1453 cremations in 2022-2023. And has seen a small drop to 1378 cremations in 2023-24.
- The office of national statistics shows 29,053 deaths for the first 6 months of 2023 this figure increased for the first six months of 2024 to 32,115.
- There are 20 crematoria within the southwest region.

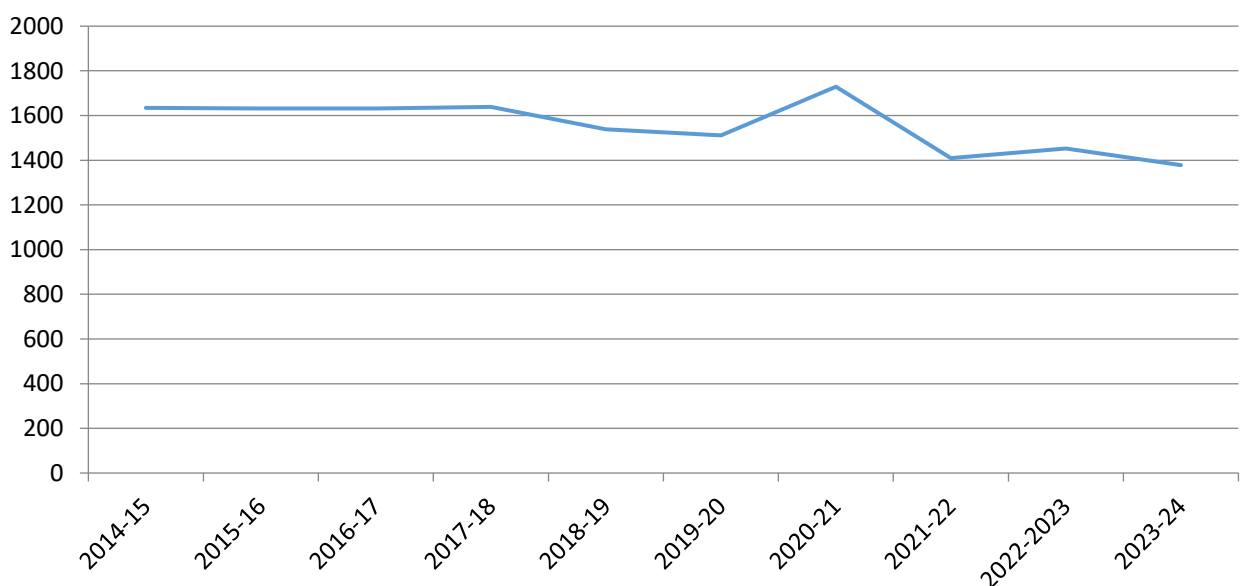
Total Deaths Registered - South West Region



Haycombe Cremations



Haycombe cremations last 10 years

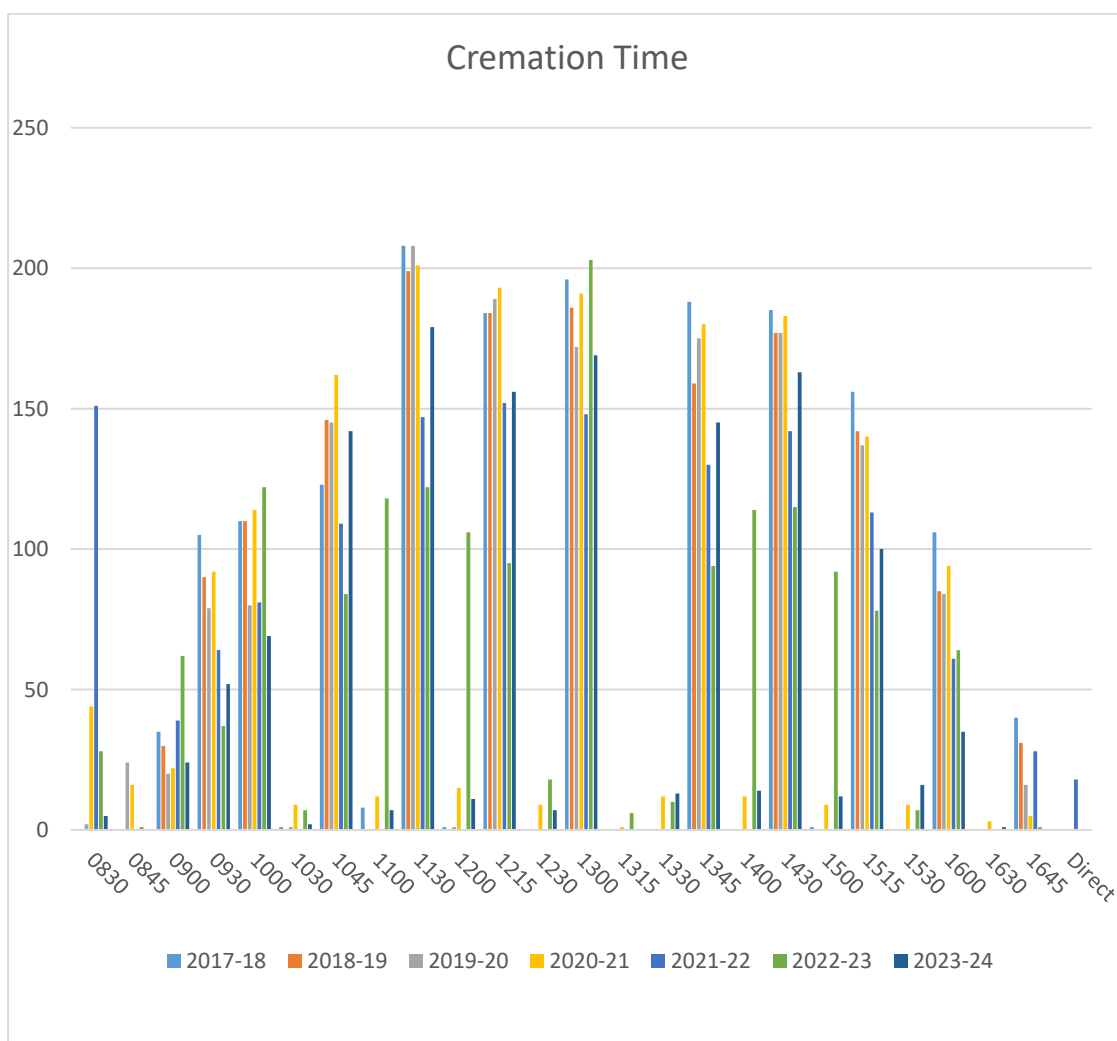


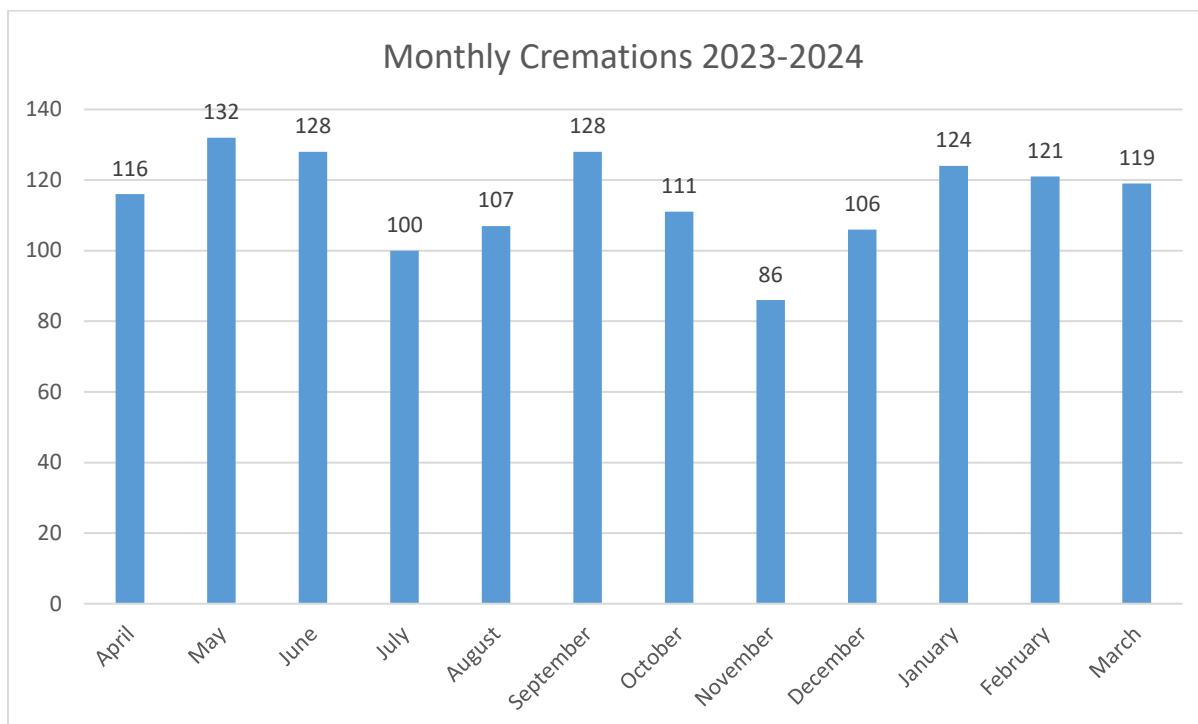
The Memorials

Memorial Sales Trends	2020 - 2021	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024	Notes
Englishcombe & Valley View	48	46	26	30	It is likely that sales of these have declined due to the incline of the site and the option for other memorials
Circle Gardens	5	16	10	25	These proved very popular and subsequently a new circle garden has been created
Sanctums	6	5	4	9	
Coppice / QEII Tree Memorials	9	10	14	11	
Shrubbery Kerbstones	23	26	15	19	
Towers (Glade & Meadow)	7	14	12	14	
Book of Remembrance	72	72	74	69	
Benches	13	10	12	9	
Pergola Garden				25	The Pergola Garden has now re-opened and additional memorial plots made available. A further bespoke cremated remains memorial section named Sunset Walk has recently been completed and will offer additional options for the bereaved.

The service

- Our busiest cremation service times are between 10.00am and 2.30pm.
- Unattended Direct Cremations throughout the day 08.30am – 3.30pm.
- The price sensitive services at 09.00am and 09.30am with our in-house Celebrant are allowed a maximum of 20 minutes.
- The booking times from 10.45am until 4.00pm are 45-minute services.
- Our busiest months for cremation services in 2023-24 were May, June, and September.





The service development program.

There has been plenty happening in Bereavement Services and there is more to come.

When	Achievements
July 2019	Working with I.T. a new administration and registry system was procured which included mapping of the council owned cemeteries and provided a portal to the public for deceased searches.
July 2019	New media equipment installed in both chapels. This allowed for high-definition recording and streaming of services, and for visual tributes to be requested.
May 2022	Successful application and granting of the prestigious Green Flag Award for Haycombe.
July 2022	The installation of a DeNox system to the cremators – thereby reducing emissions.
Sept 2022	A full refurbishment of the crematorium chapel and exit area (adding a disabled ramp) was completed – giving the interior a fresh and modern new appearance.
Latter 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Newton Nook additional memorial options installed in this new section at Haycombe. ii. Queen Elizabeth II memorial woodland created for green burials within Haycombe. iii. Memorial Display Garden completed and opened alongside the main lodge at the entrance to Haycombe.
Early 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Cremators re-blocked and new filtration tank installed. ii. Re-opening of The Pergola Garden at Haycombe for

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii. additional cremated remains memorial plots. Website updated with added information along with a funeral diary detailing funerals for that week. iv. Increased usage of our Facebook page to itemize events and updates within Bereavement Services. v. The first beehive installed at Haycombe. vi. The first stage of planting of the Serenity Garden by the Grow for Life Charity took place.
2023-2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increased memorialisation offer – tree’s, scattering areas new memorial options. ➤ Renaming of the individual chapels within Haycombe to The Hilltop Chapel & The Valley Chapel ➤ The internal refurbishment of the Top Chapel, toilets, and Book of Remembrance Room ➤ Extension and development of the Butterfly babies section ➤ Installation of gas meters for each individual cremator ➤ Additional beehive installed and co-located with the current one. ➤ Green Flag Award received in July 2023 – new application submitted for 2024/25. ➤ An additional excavator / digger purchased to spread the workload. ➤ Sunset Walk created and installed to allow additional memorial plots. ➤ The release of the Bereavement Service newsletter