



APSE Seminar

16th November 2018



Service options for Bereavement Services

- The changing face of Bereavement Services
- Key challenges for the future
- Personal experience of addressing some of these challenges



The changing face of Bereavement Services

- I started working in Bereavement in 1981 as an office administrator at Beckenham Crematorium and Cemetery.

For anyone who thinks we work in a slow moving industry I would like you to give some examples of what I feel are the main differences that have come about in the last 37 years:

- Chapel service times were every 20 minutes
- Cremators were a world away from what we have today
- PG52, the clean air act and Mercury filtration equipment had never been heard of
- Smoke seen bellowing from the Crematorium stack was a regular occurrence
- Everything had to be recorded by hand, the initial booking, registers, indexes and the burial notice issued to the Foreman.



The changing face of Bereavement Services

- The daily list for the following day's funeral services was typed on a typewriter and photocopied
- There was no Gower, Blue skies or any other industry software
- The Crematorium and Cemetery Manager was a respected member of the community whose word was taken as gospel within their site
- They were seen as on a par with the local Bank Manager or Doctor
- Correct coffin sizes for burial were telephoned through.



Key challenges for the future and personal experiences of addressing these challenges

- Retain control of your sites
- Enforce your Cemetery regulations
- Persuade your authority to invest in Bereavement Services
- Become more entrepreneurial
- Stay enthusiastic and keep your staff motivated.



Future service options for Bereavement Services

When carrying out a review I explain the full range of service options for authorities, the main ones are as follows:

- Keep inhouse
- Speak to neighbouring authorities about forming a joint committee
- Approach the private sector about a lease or management agreement.

I list the implications of each option and then recommend a conclusion

- The ultimate decision largely depends on the appetite of the authority to invest. If the authority needs to share the investment burden then other options have to be looked into, however this will result in a shared and reduced income
- I encourage authorities to continue with single operation where possible. After all, if other parties can make a healthier profit from your site, then so can you and without giving away the family jewels.



Conclusion

- Retain your enthusiasm for what we do and this will filter through to your staff
- I am passionate about our industry, I truly believe we provide an extremely important service at a time when people are at their most vulnerable
- We are responsible for providing services at the end of a loved one's life and for their resting place. What could be more important than that
- Crematoria and Cemeteries are an extremely important part of a community, they are a source of recreation, historic information, important green spaces particularly within crowded cities, places of heritage and bio diversity. Places of sanctity, remembrance and quiet reflection.



Thank you for listening to me speak, I hope you all have an enjoyable day.