

BRITISH INSTITUTE OF FUNERAL DIRECTORS



THE JOURNAL

ISSUE 8



Let's prevent suicide today.
Because tomorrow's too late.



SAMARITANS

If you, or anyone else is struggling you can contact The Samaritans on 116 123 any time, day or night.

For more information on The Samaritans and the work that they do
visit their website

www.samaritans.org

Samaritans | Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy | Here to listen

IN THIS ISSUE...



05 A LETTER FROM CLIVE PEARSON

Clive Reflects On This Month As National President

10 CONFERENCE 2026

All the details you need for the 44th Annual Conference in October 2026

20 NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

Two Little Stars tell us why they set up and how their memory boxes for bereaved siblings work

27 BOG BODIES

Victoria Wells looks at Bog Bodies, how they came to be and what they can tell us.

33 THE CRUSE WALK 2026

Cruse Bereavement Support start a new fundraising event in September to raise money for their services.

39 THE NORDFJORD ELEMENTS

Clive Pearson looks at a funeral in the minus temperatures of Norway's Olden Old Church



The CPD Standards Office

CPD PROVIDER: 60065

2023-2025

www.cpdstandards.com

*For all Executive,
Administration & General
Enquiries, please contact:*

BIFD National Office

Tel: 0800 032 2733

admin@bifd.org.uk

www.bifd.org.uk



Please send all Adverts,

Articles & News

c/o The Editorial Team:

journal@bifd.org.uk



**National President's
Chosen Charity**



**The Presidential Team:
National President, Clive
Pearson**

**1st Vice President, Dr Philip
Gore**

**2nd Vice President, Judith
Dandy**

**Immediate Past President,
Amanda Pink**



SUPPORTERS & CONTRIBUTORS

Auden Funeral Supplies

Bennetts Funerals

Colourful Coffins

Funeral Partners

J C Atkinson

Muchloved

Obitus

Letter from the National President

Clive Pearson

Dear members,

As we continue to navigate through a busy and productive year, I want to take a moment to reflect on our progress, share a few highlights from my recent travels, and look ahead at what promises to be an exciting autumn for the British Institute of Funeral Directing.



As we continue to navigate through a busy and productive year, I want to take a moment to reflect on our progress, share a few highlights from my recent travels, and look ahead at what promises to be an exciting autumn for the British Institute of Funeral Directing.

One of the highlights of my recent travels was stopping by to present a certificate to Stevie Salobehaj, who had the distinction of being the very first person to sign up as a new member of the Institute this year! Meeting members like Stevie is a wonderful reminder of the vitality and passion within our community.

It is a true privilege to stand as your President during a time when we are welcoming so many new faces to the BIFD, alongside a gratifying number of returning members who have rejoined our ranks this year. This surge in engagement speaks volumes about the strength and direction of our organisation. I want to express my deepest gratitude to our current leadership team. Their dedication, fresh perspectives, and hard work are driving the Institute forward, ensuring we remain a relevant, supportive, and esteemed body for funeral professionals.

Visiting members in their own settings is always one of the best parts of this role. During my recent travels, I had the pleasure of calling in at Moons Funeral Service. It was fantastic to catch up with Sophie and Andrew, where we spent a very worthwhile morning discussing the practical realities and current challenges affecting our profession today. These open discussions are invaluable, they keep the Institute grounded in what truly matters to you on the front line.

Professional development remains at the very heart of what we do. As we move further through the year, a strong schedule of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) sessions is taking place across our various regions. I strongly encourage you to take advantage of these local and online opportunities to learn, refresh your skills, and network with colleagues. We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at these upcoming gatherings.

Finally, October will be upon us before we know it, which means our Annual BIFD Conference is fast approaching. Places are still available. If you haven't booked yet, I encourage you to do so soon.

We are shaping up to have a brilliant conference with top-tier CPD sessions, details of which will be announced shortly, alongside some very exciting news about the Institute's future direction.



Thank you all for your continued commitment to excellence in funeral directing, and I look forward to seeing many of you on the road or at the conference in October.

Warmest regards

Clive

Clive Pearson

National President, Region C



The CPD Standards Office

**CPD PROVIDER: 60065
2023-2025**

www.cpdstandards.com



BIFD FUNDRAISING WALK: CONQUERING THE YORKSHIRE THREE PEAKS FOR SAMARITANS



SAMARITANS
Leek & District

National President, Clive Pearson, took on the Three Peaks on Thursday 4th June to raise money for his chosen charity The Samaritans

Please show your support by donating via the link, or through our social media pages.



British Institute of Funeral Directors Presidents Charity Supporting the Samaritans

Help raise money to support Leek and District Samaritans



Empowering choices with clarity and ease.

Real-time checks that remove uncertainty, streamline arrangements, and support better conversations.



Visit www.guardiancaskets.co.uk





THE CPD STANDARDS OFFICE
CPD PROVIDER: 60065
2025-2026
www.cpdstandards.com

Online Continued Professional Development provided by The British Institute of Funeral Directors



Wednesday 26th August 2026



Session starts at 6.30pm



[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87293721515?
pwd=M63J6bQujCq7f1vbBiddbpytQD2qHPr.1](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87293721515?pwd=M63J6bQujCq7f1vbBiddbpytQD2qHPr.1)



hayleyowenfd@gmail.com





The Law Firm Group

The British Institute of Funeral Directors welcomes the Law Firm to present their specialist advice when it comes to helping families during bereavement

- **Supporting Families Beyond the Funeral: Common Legal Issues and How to Navigate Them**
- **Helping funeral professionals understand the legal journey after a death, recognise common pitfalls and know when specialist legal advice can make all the difference.**



THE LAW FIRM
— G R O U P —

44th ANNUAL BIFD CONFERENCE

23rd – 25th October 2026



Mercure Tankersley Manor Hotel

Church Ln, Tankersley, Barnsley S75 3DQ

The BIFD Invites You To Conference 2026.....

BIFD National President, Clive Pearson, and his wife Leanne cordially invite all Members, Fellows, Students, Associates, Presidents of Kindred Associations, and Distinguished Guests to attend the upcoming Conference and Gala Dinner of The British Institute of Funeral Directors. The event will take place from 23rd to 25th October 2025 at The Mercure Tankersley Manor Hotel.



Tankersley Manor centres around a renovated 17th-century residence, conveniently located just a minute from Junction 36 off the M1 and offering free parking. Its 98 refurbished rooms are designed with elegant craftsmanship and bursts of colour to create an inviting atmosphere for guests. You'll find leisure amenities such as a gym, swimming pool, jacuzzi, sauna, steam room, and five spa treatment rooms—perfect for enjoying some relaxation during Conference Weekend (advance booking is recommended). The Woodman Restaurant offers a cozy spot by the fire where you can unwind and savour classic Yorkshire dishes.

Nearby attractions include Elsecar Heritage Centre, Cannon Hall, and Chatsworth House.

The President's Charity For 2026.....



Clive and Leanne have selected The Samaritans as the Institute Charity for 2026.

Founded in 1953 by Chad Vara, who recognised through his own life experiences the importance of listening, the organisation empowers individuals by offering a compassionate ear to callers wishing to talk about their emotions, feelings, challenges, and concerns, hoping to help them make positive informed decisions about their lives.

The Samaritans' mission is dedicated to reducing the number of individuals contemplating or attempting to take their own lives. The organisation currently provides comprehensive 24/7 telephone support across England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. Its services have expanded to help individuals facing a broad range of issues, including suicide, depression, anxiety, stress, loneliness, all forms of abuse, and alcohol or drug use.

The itinerary so far...

Friday 23rd October 2026

The Education Committee is scheduled to convene in the morning, followed by a meeting of the Board of Directors in the afternoon.

Once you've settled into your rooms, Clive welcomes you to join him and Leanne for a three-course dinner in the hotel's function suite.

Saturday 24th October 2026

The Annual General Meeting will be held in the morning, and a buffet lunch will follow afterward.

In the afternoon, Clive has tentative plans for an activity of interest; further details will be provided once arrangements are confirmed.

The evening will commence with a drink's reception, followed by a three-course dinner accompanied by wine, cheese and biscuits, as well as tea and coffee. The programme will include the Diploma Awards Ceremony and the official Handover of Offices, concluding with music and dancing later in the evening.

Earlier than 23rd or later than 25th October 2026

Should you wish to extend your stay, we have arranged favourable rates for dates surrounding the Conference, allowing you to enjoy Yorkshire for a longer visit. Kindly inform us of your specific requirements, and we will endeavour to secure the most advantageous arrangements on your behalf.

The British Institute of Funeral Directors Conference 2026:

23rd – 25th October 2026

The Mercure Tankersley Manor Hotel

Church Ln, Tankersley, Barnsley S75 3DQ

The 44th BIFD Conference 2026 Rates

1. Friday Evening To Sunday Morning – THE COMPLETE PACKAGE

Friday Dinner	Double Room (per couple)	£675
Friday & Saturday Bed & Breakfast	Single Room (per person)	£425
Saturday AGM: On Arrival Tea & Coffee		
<u>Saturday Lunch Included</u>		
Saturday Evening Drinks Reception		
Saturday Gala Dinner – Includes 3 Course Meal, Cheese & Biscuits & Tea and Coffee		

2. Friday Evening To Saturday Morning - ONLY

Friday Dinner	Double Room (per couple)	£295
Friday Bed & Breakfast	Single Room (per person)	£200
Saturday AGM: On Arrival Tea, Coffee & Biscuits		

Saturday Lunch Is Available At £30 PP

3. Saturday To Sunday Morning - ONLY

Saturday AGM: On Arrival Tea, Coffee & Biscuits	Double Room (per couple)	£395
Saturday Evening Drinks Reception	Single Room (per person)	£235
Saturday Gala Dinner – Includes 3 Course Meal, Cheese & Biscuits & Tea and Coffee		
Saturday Bed & Breakfast		

Saturday Lunch Is Available At £30 PP

4. The Gala Banquet Dinner Only

.....£85 Per Person

Saturday Evening Drinks Reception	
Saturday Gala Dinner – Includes 3 Course Meal, Cheese & Biscuits & Tea and Coffee	

Saturday Lunch Is Available At £30 PP

5. AGM ATTENDANCE ONLY

.....Free To All Members & Students

Saturday AGM: On Arrival Tea, Coffee & Biscuits

Saturday Lunch Is Available On The Day At £30 PP

TO STAY BEFORE OR AFTER THE CONFERENCE B&B BASIS

Please add extra dates to booking form:

.....Double Room (2 People) £POA
.....Single Room (1 Person) £POA

The 44th BIFD CONFERENCE – 23rd – 25th October 2026

The Mercure Tankersley Manor

BOOKING FORM

Members Name: Membership Number:

Address:

Post Code: Contact Telephone Number:

Email Address: Number of Rooms Required:

Special Dietary Requirements: Yes/No Details of Diet

Arrival Date:/...../..... Departure Date:/...../.....

Attending **Partners** Name:

Attending **Guests** Names:

See Rates Page To Complete Form & Payment

Tariff (1) – Full Package

Double Rate: £.....

Single Rate: £.....

Tariff (2) – Fri to Sat

Double Rate: £.....

Single Rate: £.....

Tariff (3) – Sat to Sun

Double Rate: £.....

Single Rate: £.....

Tariff (4) – Gala Dinner Only

Total Attendees £.....

Tariff (5) – AGM Only

£ No Charge

Please return, or email, your completed booking form to the Conference Co-ordinator and make payment either by Bacs or by Cheque made out to “The BIFD”:

Bacs Payments To:

Sort Code: 60-83-01 - Account Number: 20336550

Reference: BIFDCONF

Mrs Margaret Dow

C/O The British Institute of Funeral Directors
National Office,
7-9 Station Street,
Meltham,
Huddersfield,
HD9 5NX

Email: treasurer@bifd.org.uk

Total Amount Due £.....



EVENT DETAILS & VENUE

HEART IN THEIR HAND

Unit 7, Dorcan Business Village, Murdock Road, Swindon, SN3 5HY

DATE & TIME

Saturday 19th September, 10am – 1pm

INVITATION & INFORMATION

An invitation for Region G members, and all funeral professionals, who would like to see firsthand the cherished keepsakes and personalised items created by the HITH team.

These memorial items are special tokens to ensure that the families we support have thoughtful opportunities for a tangible continuing bond with the person in our care.

We will be hosted by Cathy, founder of the company, who will share the poignant significance of these unique keepsakes.

Light lunch provided.



TO RSVP & FOR ENQUIRIES

Please share the information with all colleagues and RSVP to: admin@bifd.org.uk

THE BIFD CODE OF ETHICS

All members of the Institute have agreed to be bound by the following code:

A Fellow and a Member shall not conduct herself/himself at any time in a manner likely to prejudice her/his professional status as a Funeral Director or the reputation of her/his profession.

A Fellow and a Member will treat with respect each dead human body. A Fellow and a Member will pledge a complete confidential relationship to those she/he is called upon to serve.

A Fellow and a Member shall not solicit funeral orders nor employ any person to do so on her/his behalf, nor shall she/he either offer or give any rewards for any recommendations.

I _____ have read, understood and agree to the BIFD Code of Ethics.

I acknowledge that if any concerns arise from my compliance with these commitments, the Board of Directors will assess the concerns and may suspend my membership of the Institute.

Signed _____

Date _____



BRITISH INSTITUTE OF FUNERAL DIRECTORS

BIFD National Office 7-9 station Street Meltham Holmfirth HD9 5NX

Tel: 0800 032 2733 Email: admin@bifd.org.uk Web: www.bifd.org.uk

Email: admin@bifd.org.uk

Telephone: 0800 032 2733

2026/27 MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL

Please complete this form IN FULL and return it with your payment and any supporting documents, as required.

Name:		BIFD Membership No.:
Address:		
Town:	County:	Post Code:
Telephone:	Email: please print clearly	

I hereby apply to renew my membership in the British Institute of Funeral Directors, as follows:

✓	MEMBERSHIP TYPE	SUBSCRIPTION AMOUNT		
	Licenced Full Member (CPD FORM MUST BE COMPLETED)	£195.00		
	Full Member	£185.00		
	Certificate Member (non voting)	£ 75.00		
	Retired Member (voting)	£ 75.00		
	Retired Member (non-voting)	£ 50.00		
	Student Member	£ 75.00		
	Associate Member	£100.00		
✓	ADDITIONAL MEMBER ITEMS	Quantity	Cost	TOTAL AMOUNT
	Additional copies of Annual Licence <i>(ONLY available to Full Members with a Licence, as above)</i>		£10.00	£
	Member's Lapel Badge		£ 5.00	£
	Member's Window Sticker		£ 2.45	£
	Member's Tie (normal straight tie or clip on)		£10.00	£
Total Additional Member Items				£
Membership Subscription (as above)				£
TOTAL TO PAY				£

Member's Signature:

✓	Payment Method
	Cheque - enclosed <i>(Cheques to be made payable to the British Institute of Funeral Directors)</i>
	BACS (internet banking) Sort Code: 60-83-01 Account No.: 20336550 <i>(please quote your surname as the reference when paying by BACS / Internet Banking)</i>

To opt out of allowing your personal information to be shared, please tick the box.

PLEASE NOTE: If you are applying for a Licence, you must complete the 2025/2026 CPD Return and enclose it with your Subscription Renewal. CPD Returns will be checked and verified and you may be contacted and requested to supply additional information if we need further verification.



BRITISH INSTITUTE OF FUNERAL DIRECTORS

APPLICATION FOR FULL MEMBERSHIP - 2026/27

FULL NAME		
Address:		
		Post Code:
Telephone:	Home:	Business:
Mobile:		
Email:		
Website: www.		

Details of qualifications ie Diploma in Funeral Service or Diploma in Funeral Practice

Please complete and return this form to National Office with evidence of your qualifications. ie. a copy of your NAFD Diploma Certificate or IFD Cert FP Certificate. Once we have checked these we will provide you with our bank details for you to send payment prior to us issuing your membership certificate.

Are you or your company a member of NAFD or SAIF	Yes/No
---	---------------

I Declare that the information furnished by me as part of this Application is correct and I agree to comply with the Rules of the Institute including the Code of Ethics.
--

I Acknowledge that any Membership Certificate issued to me will remain the property of the Institute

I Confirm that on termination of my Membership of the Institute, for any reason, I will return my Membership Certificate and cease using the logo or any advertisement containing reference to the Institute.
--

I Agree to my details being shared with Institute members
--

Signature:

Date:

Please forward the completed application form to:
British Institute of Funeral Directors
BIFD National Office 7-9 station Street Meltham Holmfirth HD9 5NX
Tel: 0800 032 2733 Email: admin@bifd.org.uk Web: www.bifd.org.uk



BRITISH INSTITUTE OF FUNERAL DIRECTORS

APPLICATION FOR ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP – 2026/27

FULL NAME or COMPANY NAME		
Address:		
		Post Code:
Telephone:	Home:	Business:
Mobile:		
Email:		
Website: www.		

Involvement with the funeral/bereavement sector :

Please complete and return this form to National Office.

Once the Board of Directors have approved your application, we will provide you with our bank details for you to send payment prior to us issuing your membership certificate.

I Declare that the information furnished by me as part of this Application is correct and I agree to comply with the Rules of the Institute including the Code of Ethics.

I Acknowledge that any Membership Certificate issued to me will remain the property of the Institute

I Confirm that on termination of my Membership of the Institute, for any reason, I will return my Membership Certificate and cease using the logo or any advertisement containing reference to the Institute.

I Agree to my details being shared with Institute members

Signature:	Date:
------------	-------

Please forward the completed application form to:

British Institute of Funeral Directors
BIFD National Office 7-9 station Street Meltham Holmfirth HD9 5NX
Tel: 0800 032 2733 Email: admin@bifd.org.uk Web: www.bifd.org.uk

1st April 2025-31st March 2026

BIFD National Office 7-9 station Street Meltham Holmfirth HD9 5NX

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RECORD



MEMBERSHIP NUMBER:

Date	CPD provider (Please include: name, address and contact details)	Subject matter & training activity received	Comments	Number of hours
TOTAL				

National Office will require this log in support of your Licence application for 2026/2027. This information must be retained for a minimum of three years.

A continuation sheet may be used.



What is Two Little Stars

Two little stars is a non-profit organisation that offer bereavement boxes for siblings following a loss of a younger brother or sister under the age of 18. These boxes are there to offer comfort and support during a difficult time and are available free of charge upon request. Each box is tailored to be age-appropriate and is prepared following requests from funeral professionals. They include carefully selected books to help explain death to children in a gentle and understandable way, alongside keepsakes, soft toys, memorial items, and activities to help keep little minds occupied during an incredibly difficult time.

They also work in partnership with T Hemsell, who kindly provide baby and child transfers free of charge. The only support requested is a small contribution towards fuel costs or a donation towards Two Little Stars Wishlist.

Their aim is to provide Sibling Memory Boxes to funeral directors and bereavement services when a baby or child is sadly in their care, ensuring that families receive support through referrals made via their simple online request form. This new approach allows them to continue helping families without the pressures of organising fundraising events. Instead, they operate through an Amazon Wishlist, where supporters can purchase items that help us create and fill our memory boxes.

They also work in partnership with T Hemsell, who kindly provide baby and child transfers free of charge. In return, he simply asks for voluntary donations towards fuel costs or contributions to the Two Little Stars Amazon Wishlist.



Story behind Two Little Stars

In 2019, Chloe experienced the devastating loss of her little boy, Byron Anthony, at 22 weeks. In his memory, she organised fundraising events and supported families at their local hospital for several years. Over time, managing the fundraising on her own

became difficult, so she made the decision to take a step back for a while.

A few years later, she met her husband, Theron Hemsell through their work in the funeral industry, and they were overjoyed to discover they were expecting their daughter together. Sadly, in January this year, they experienced the heartbreaking loss of their daughter, Rebecca Ann, while they were away on a repatriation duty in Kent.

After some time, they reflected on the support work Chloe had previously carried out in Byron's memory and decided to create a new approach that would honour both of their children. From this, **Two Little Stars – Sibling Memory Boxes** was born.

How do you request a box

All you need to do is send a message to Two Little Stars and then they will send you a short online form to complete and return back to them.

They don't require a lot of information, all they need is the funeral home details, ages and genders of the baby or child that is in your care and the ages and genders of any siblings receiving a memory box

Please visit their website that offers information and referral support to funeral directors and bereavement services - www.two-little-stars.co.uk





THE CPD STANDARDS OFFICE
CPD PROVIDER: 60065
2025-2026
www.cpdstandards.com

Online

Continued Professional Development provided by The British Institute of Funeral Directors



Wednesday 9th September 2026



Session starts at 6.30pm

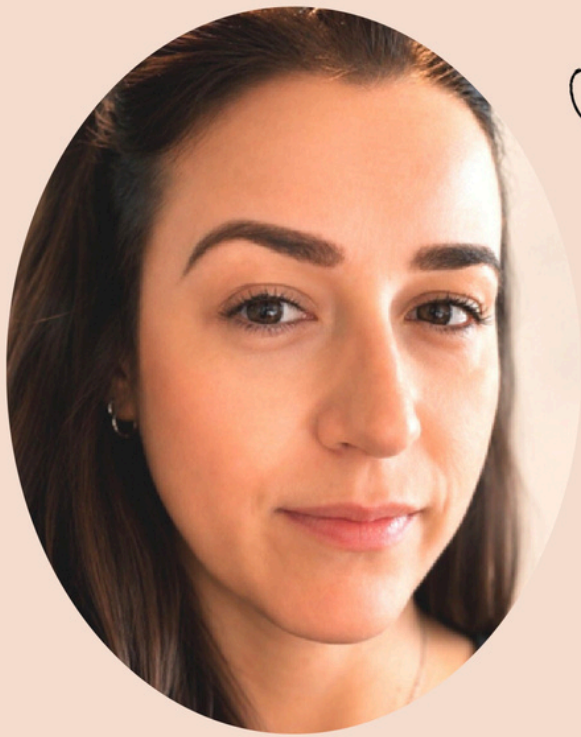


[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82905064109?
pwd=xaSsQ0CSfa4xlfhzlPlNN44ugnA4ME.1](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82905064109?pwd=xaSsQ0CSfa4xlfhzlPlNN44ugnA4ME.1)



hayleyowenfd@gmail.com





Everlight Tribute Films



Lucy, founder of Everlight Films is our guest in September talking about personalised tributes. With over 5 years of experience creating bespoke tribute films, Lucy has created hundreds of tributes to honour loved ones through meaningful, beautifully crafted memorial keepsakes. Everlight Tribute Films was created with compassion at its heart – to offer a personal, caring service during some of life's most difficult moments. Every tribute is thoughtfully created to reflect a unique life, treasured memories, and the love that remains.



Join the session to see if Lucy can be an asset to your working life easing the burden of creating personal tributes for families



**The British Institute of Funeral Directors
invites Members, Students, Associate
members & Guests to a visit to
Halliday Funeral Supplies**



THURSDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2026



6.30



Visit includes a factory tour



**H2 PRENTON WAY, BIRKENHEAD,
WIRRAL, CH43 3DU**



**For further information contact Hayley
07821 155 985**

hayleyowenfd@gmail.com



HALLIDAY
FUNERAL SUPPLIES LTD

Flexible • Ethical • Trusted



Our Biggest Coffee Morning ☕

When SAIF National President Gary Staker asked us to get involved in the Biggest Coffee Morning to raise funds for his chosen charity of the year, Parkinson's UK, we jumped at the opportunity! Who wouldn't want to be part of such a fantastic cause?

We decided to host two events, one in Billericay and one in Brentwood, as we have offices in both areas.



Billericay Coffee Morning, or should we say, afternoon tea!

For our Billericay event, we decided to combine our regular Billericay Community Dance with the afternoon tea, creating the perfect opportunity for people to enjoy some dancing, refreshments, and good company — all while supporting a great cause.



We were also delighted to welcome Parkinson's Billericay, who joined us to share information and answer questions for anyone who wanted to learn more about the charity and the support available. Information leaflets were available throughout the afternoon, alongside plenty of dancing!

We also organised a raffle, with all entrance fees and raffle proceeds donated to Parkinson's UK.

Scones with jam and clotted cream were enjoyed with plenty of tea, coffee, laughter, and conversation. It was a wonderful afternoon, and the smiles on everyone's faces showed just how much fun fundraising can be.

Brentwood Coffee Morning

For our second coffee morning, we headed to Brentwood Bowls Club, where we were joined by the local Parkinson's group. They provided useful information and leaflets, helping to raise awareness while we enjoyed a brilliant afternoon together.



Once again, all entrance fees and raffle proceeds were donated to Parkinson's UK.

This time, we swapped the scones for some delicious cakes — because every good coffee morning needs cake!



With sunshine, great company, plenty of chatter, and the beautiful bowling green as our backdrop, the event was a huge hit. There was certainly no shortage of smiles, laughter, or second helpings!

We were thrilled to raise £384 at our Brentwood and Billericay event, making both mornings a fantastic success.

A huge thank you to everyone who came along, donated, baked, organised, danced, bowled, bought raffle tickets, or simply stopped for a cup of tea and a chat.

Most importantly, we are delighted to have helped raise funds and awareness for Parkinson's UK. It just goes to show that a little coffee, a slice of cake, and a lot of community spirit can go a very long way!



Land Rover Defender Hearses and Support Vehicle



Our Land Rover Defender hearses are built on long wheel-base chassis' enabling them to accommodate coffins/caskets up to 7 ft long. Our matching support vehicle for mourners has 7 seats.



Bennetts Funeral Directors Ltd
Call 01277 887110
www.landroverfunerals.com

The Bodies the Bog Kept: What Europe's Oldest Funerals Can Teach Us

Victoria Wells

Deputy Editor, Region C

Somewhere in the peat of Denmark, Ireland, and the north of England lie some of the best-preserved human remains on earth — not mummified by human hands, but by the ground itself. Bog bodies are among archaeology's strangest gifts: skin, hair, fingernails, even stomach contents, kept intact for two thousand years by the cold, acidic, oxygen-starved water of a peat bog. And increasingly, they're being read not just as archaeological curiosities, but as funerals.



Peat bogs create a chemical environment almost perfectly hostile to decay. The lack of oxygen stops bacteria in their tracks, and sphagnum moss releases a compound that essentially tans human skin the way leather is tanned, while dissolving bone. The result is a body frozen in a single, uncanny moment — Tollund Man, discovered in Denmark in 1950, still had stubble on his chin and the rope that killed him around his neck, so well preserved that police initially treated the find as a recent murder.



More than a thousand bog bodies have been found across Northern Europe, most dating from the Iron Age. Many, like Tollund Man, show signs of violent death: strangulation, throat-cutting, blows to the skull. For years the assumption was straightforwardly grim — these were executed criminals or human sacrifices, disposed of rather than honoured.

More recent scholarship complicates that picture considerably. Some bog bodies were buried with care — laid out deliberately, sometimes accompanied by cloaks, jewellery, or the remains of a final ceremonial meal. Old Croghan Man, found in Ireland, had a leather armband thought to signify high status, and had eaten a last meal of grain and buttermilk consistent with a ritual feast, not a hasty disposal. Bogs themselves held spiritual significance in Iron Age Europe — thought to be thresholds between the world of the living and the realm of the gods, which may explain why bodies, weapons, and votive offerings were deliberately placed into them rather than simply lost there.

Under this reading, the violence many bog bodies suffered wasn't necessarily punishment. It may have been sacrifice — an extreme, ritualised funeral rite reserved for people of particular importance, offered to the bog itself as a kind of sacred ground.

What makes bog bodies remarkable to a modern eye isn't just the preservation — it's the intimacy. Unlike a skeleton, a bog body has an expression. Tollund Man's face is famously peaceful, eyes closed as though asleep, a detail that unsettled the archaeologists who found him and still unsettles visitors to Denmark's Silkeborg Museum today. It closes a two-thousand-year gap in a way bone alone never could.



For those of us who work in death care, there's something quietly moving in the idea that a landscape — rather than a coffin, a shroud, or a headstone — became this era's chosen vessel for the dead, and did the job so thoroughly that it kept faces recognisable across two millennia. It's a reminder that the instinct to mark a death with deliberate, careful ritual is not a modern invention. It is, quite literally, older than memory itself.

Save The Date



Suicide Bereavement UK's 15th international hybrid conference is going to be our biggest and boldest yet.

🎤 Theme: Suicide Bereavement: Silence Isn't Always Golden

📅 Date: 16th September 2026

📍 Venue: Titanic Hotel, Liverpool (and online)
🕒 Time: 9:00am – 4:30pm

Join us for an inspiring and thought-provoking day where new research findings will be presented for the first time.

To view our interactive flyer and to register visit
https://suicidebereavementuk.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/4049_SBUK_Conference_2026_flyer_online_v2.pdf



**Silence Isn't
Always Golden**

DON'T FORGET!



**Our next conference runs from Friday 23rd - Sunday 25th October at
Tankersley Manor Hotel.**

Remember to book your places soon to secure your place.



The British Institute of Funeral Directors invites you to Quinn Hearse & Limousine



Monday 5th October 2026



6:30pm



13, Garvaghy Road,
Portglenone, Co. Antrim,
BT44 8EF



hayleyowenfd@gmail.com



Quinn
Hearse and Limousine



THE CPD STANDARDS OFFICE
CPD PROVIDER: 60065
2025-2026
www.cpdstandards.com

The Original Colourful Coffins®

As individual as you

'The heart & soul of football lies with it's fans – honour them'

Stunning club designs

- Available in Wood or Cardboard
- Matching Printed Interiors available
- Caskets and Scatter Tubes made to match



Call 01865 779172 or email enquiries@colourfulcoffins.com for more information





REGION C WELCOMES



ORTHO METALS

To provide an educational talk about metal recycling that is provided at local crematoriums



Parkwood Crematorium, Park Road,
Elland, HX5 9HZ



Wednesday 18th November



6.30pm



Zoom

Meeting ID: 870 0563 1159

Passcode: 907544



OrthoMetals.



HAYLEYOWENFD@GMAIL.COM

The Cruse Walk: Come Together and Remember Those We Love

This September, Cruse Bereavement Support launches a new event bringing people together to remember loved ones, celebrate their lives and raise vital funds to support the charity's work.

The Cruse Walk is Cruse's new flagship fundraising event. Participants can take part in one of two in-person events or join virtually from wherever they are.



The in-person events will take place at:

- **London:** Dulwich College, Sunday 20 September
- **Birmingham:** Sutton Park, Sunday 27 September

Registration is completely free, and participants are invited to raise whatever they can to support Cruse's vital bereavement services.

As demand for Cruse's services continues to grow, every step taken and every pound raised will help the charity provide bereavement support to more people across the UK.



Whether you're walking in memory of someone special, in support of someone experiencing grief, or simply to help Cruse continue its work, The Cruse Walk is an opportunity to come together, remember those we love and make a meaningful difference.

To find out more and sign up for The Cruse Walk, visit www.cruse.org.uk or email fundraising@cruse.org.uk.

Have you thought about becoming one of our sponsors?

Benefits include, but not limited to:

- Advert and Editorial in The Journal
- Links in Member Communication
- Promotion at Conference and Events
- Promotion on CPD Invites and our website



**CONTACT THE
EDITORIAL TEAM FOR
DETAILS OF OUR
COMPETITIVE
PACKAGES**

JOURNAL@BIFD.ORG.UK



Sereni and Funeral Partners Join Forces To Support Families Across Four European Countries



- Combination brings together operations in the United Kingdom, Belgium, Germany and Poland
- Continuity for families: local brands and leadership teams remain unchanged

Woking, 4th August 2026 - Funeral service providers Sereni, with funeral homes in Belgium, Germany and Poland, and Funeral Partners, one of the largest funeral providers in the United Kingdom, are joining forces. The combination creates one of Europe's largest funeral groups, with operations in four countries.

Both companies will retain their established brands and the local identities of their funeral homes – a model both groups already pursue successfully in their respective markets and one that ensures continuity for the families they serve. “Supporting families reliably at difficult moments is the standard we hold ourselves to in every country,” said Jörg Reschke, CEO of the Sereni. “Joining forces with Funeral Partners allows us to learn from one another and to live up to the high standards they deserve.”



The combination aims to unlock synergies in areas such as procurement, technology, and administrative processes. “We support this combination as a long-term partner,” says Caspar Berendsen, Chairman of the Board of Sereni. “Sereni and Funeral Partners have both shown that a consolidation model can work while respecting the local market. Our aim is to support the management teams of both companies through the next phase of growth in Europe.



Sam Kershaw, CEO of Funeral Partners adds, “Joining forces with Sereni will further enhance the support we provide to bereaved families, while also creating new development opportunities for colleagues across the Group.”

Together, the two companies will serve more than 75,000 funerals and 46,000 cremations a year with 3,100 employees. Alongside traditional funeral services, both also offer pre-need funeral plans.

About Sereni

Sereni was founded in Belgium in 2016 and has grown into a leading funeral group with a presence in Belgium, Germany and Poland. Sereni handles 45,000 funerals a year across 450 funeral homes with 1,800 employees, in a partner network that preserves local identity while providing central support in areas such as administration, marketing and succession planning. The group also includes 8 crematoria in Germany and Poland operating 46,000 cremations a year.

About Funeral Partners

Funeral Partners was founded in 2007 and, with around 300 funeral homes and almost 1,300 employees, is one of the largest funeral providers in the United Kingdom. The company supports around 30,000 funerals a year.



New Leam Lane Funeral Home Opens It's Doors To Support Local Families



Nicola Lynn, Funeral Director at Walker & Morrell Gateshead office with Samantha Rutherford, Funeral Director at Leam Lane

A funeral director that has supported families across Washington and Gateshead for more than two decades has officially opened a new funeral home in Leam Lane.

Walker & Morrell Funeral Directors celebrated its new branch in Fewster Square with a special ribbon cutting ceremony and community open day.

Local residents were invited to meet the team, look around the new funeral home and ask questions about funerals and the support available to bereaved families. The event was attended by staff, friends, family members, local clergy, residents and representatives from local charities.

The ribbon was cut by Rev. Gareth Rowlands, Lead Chaplain at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, before Rev. Rupert Kallus of St Andrew's Church in Leam Lane led a special blessing of the chapel of rest.

Advertorial

Martin Morrell, Area Development Manager at Walker & Morrell Funeral Directors, said: “We have supported the people and families of Washington and Gateshead since 2002, and opening in Leam Lane gives us the opportunity to provide the same valuable, high-quality service from somewhere more local. It also means families can have the reassurance of knowing their loved one is nearer to them at what can be an incredibly difficult time.”

The open day gave visitors an opportunity to see the new chapel of rest and speak openly with the funeral directors. The team was also able to answer questions and help dispel some of the myths and uncertainty that can surround funerals and funeral services.



Samantha Rutherford talks to visitors at the new Leam Lane funeral home.

The Leam Lane funeral home is led by Funeral Director Samantha Rutherford, supported by Nicola Lynn and Natalie Holywell from Walker & Morrell's other branches.

Samantha said: “I am excited to be working for Walker & Morrell, which has such a strong reputation for providing caring and comforting support to families.”

“I am here to support the people of Leam Lane, whether they need immediate help, would like some guidance or simply want to understand more about the choices available. Our aim is to help every family create a funeral that feels fitting and personal.”

Alongside opening the new funeral home, Walker & Morrell is strengthening its links with the Leam Lane community through partnerships with two local sports clubs. The funeral director is supporting grassroots football through a sponsorship arrangement with Leam Rangers Football Club, including sponsoring the club's Player of the Month award. It is also sponsoring a tee box at The Ravensworth Golf Club.

Martin added: “Being part of a community means more than simply having premises there. We want to support local organisations and build relationships with the people who live and work around us.

Leam Rangers and The Ravensworth Golf Club both bring people together, and we are delighted to be supporting them.”

Walker & Morrell Funeral Directors also has branches in Washington and Old Durham Road, Gateshead.

Members of the community are welcome to visit the new funeral home in Fewster Square, meet the team or ask for information and guidance.



A career path that makes a difference



Grow your skills, support families, and strengthen communities.

Choosing a career in funeral services means more than professional development, it means making a lasting impact. With clear pathways for growth and training, you'll build your future while helping others through life's most important moments.

**Discover a career that matters.
Scan the QR code to find out more.**

funeralpartners.co.uk/story



Preserved in the Nordfjord Elements: A Funeral in Norway's Olden Old Church



Nestled at the base of steep green slopes in the village of Olden, Norway, stands Olden gamle kyrkje, Olden Old Church. Built in 1759, this white timber cruciform church is a stunning architectural survivor, constructed after its predecessor was flattened by violent fjord winds in 1757. Designed as a symmetrical cross to better withstand the area's severe storms, it stands today as the only remaining 18th-century cruciform church in the entire Nordfjord region.

For funeral directors, visiting Olden Old Church feels like stepping back centuries into the history of our trade.

Inside, the structure remains completely untouched by modern amenities. The walls retain their raw, unpainted timber, the pews still bear hand-carved 17th- and 18th-century initials of local families, and the original birch branch hat pegs (hattekrekser) still adorn the men's side of the nave.



Crucially, the historic building operates with no heating and no electrical lighting whatsoever.

Because a larger parish church was erected nearby in 1934, routine services no longer take place in the Old Church. Today, it remains open primarily as a summer museum. The sole exception? Funerals. However, permission is strictly limited: services are held only for individuals who hold a direct, historical connection to the church or the immediate valley.

Conducting a funeral in such a venue presents unique operational challenges that put professional composure to the ultimate test—a reality made vividly clear during a service held here this past January.

Outside, the fjord valley was locked in a brutal winter freeze, with temperatures plunging to minus 6. Inside the unheated, uninsulated timber nave, the temperature was identical, a bone chilling minus 6.

As mourners gathered, the atmosphere was hauntingly atmospheric, yet relentlessly severe. Every exhalation from the congregation produced thick, billowing plumes of white vapour so dense that you could clearly see the breath of every person in the room with every word spoken.



The true test of the afternoon fell upon the officiating priest. Clad in traditional vestments that offered virtually no protection against the arctic chill, the priest began the service. Within minutes, the ambient frost took full effect. His jaw locked up and his teeth began chattering together so fast and so loudly that the physical sound echoed off the bare wooden walls.

Despite his best efforts to deliver a dignified eulogy, his violent shivering rendered his speech completely unintelligible, not a single word could be understood by the congregation.

While modern funeral practice heavily emphasises climate control and seamless logistics, Olden Old Church serves as a striking reminder of our profession's raw, elemental roots. It is a place where history, heritage, and the harsh realities of nature collide requiring funeral directors to prepare not just for the emotional weight of a service, but for the extreme physical demands of the environment itself.



**THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT
& REGION C
WELCOMES YOU TO THE HAUNTED
CITY OF YORK
FOR A GHOST WALK &
SOCIAL EVENING**

**£7
each**

Wednesday 25th November

**The spooky start is on Parliament
Street near Barclays bank at 7pm**



**Clive, Yorks experienced ghost hunter will guide
us to the spooky parts of the city**

The evening will conclude in a haunted pub

Boo!

For further information please contact Hayley

Hayleyowenfd@gmail.com



much  loved

Your place to remember

tribute pages • funeral notices • online donations

For more information: 01494 722818 • support@muchloved.com • muchloved.com



Develop skills and knowledge to give families **more ways to say goodbye**



Become an expert in understanding Obitus products and services, with specially-designed training to suit your learning needs.



Training Videos



Virtual Classroom



In-Person Events

Discover Obitus Academy by clicking on the 'Academy' tab on your Obitus Dashboard, or get in touch through learning@obitus.com.

August whispers of
summer's golden glow,
reminding us to slow
down, soak it in, and
cherish each lingering day.





**Funeral
Business Central**



Dom Watson

**IS YOUR BUSINESS MODEL IN DANGER OF
SUFFERING FROM RIGOR MORTIS? WHY IT'S
ESSENTIAL TO ENSURE YOU DON'T LET YOUR
OUTLOOK, OR YOUR BUSINESS MODEL GET
STALE.**

Part 1

- Resomation as an alternative to cremation and burial
- Scattering of ashes by drone or at sea via an official RNLI lifeboat
- Polarization of coffin options - from the ultimate in environmentally conscious, carbon neutral "Moses" coffins - to the most outrageous non-traditional psychedelic caskets
- Ashes turned into wall art, jewelry and even seed balls
- Hearses in all shapes and sizes - from army trucks to fire engines, vintage cars and "Ernie" the campervan
- The inevitability of politics between competing sector bodies
- The increasing threats from corporate funeral firms

These are just a few of the NEW, FUTURE and PERMANENT features of the UK funeral sector that you need to be aware of, prepare for or adapt to, to ensure that both YOU and your business don't just survive, but thrive in the years ahead.

The world is moving faster than ever.

The challenges of direct cremation, increasing regulation, staffing issues, and squeezed margins from consumer trends and national competition are covered extensively elsewhere on this website.

Change is undeniable and inevitable.

Last night, whilst I watched an episode of Clarkson's Farm on Amazon Prime, an advert from Co-op Funeral services, featured twice during the advert breaks.

As the owner of a business that specializes in and has aligned itself with the long-term success of the independent funeral sector, it is with a heavy heart that I have to admit that the advert was clever, emotive and beautifully conceived and executed. The truth is it moved me. Thankfully in more ways than one... because it motivated me to drag myself out of bed at 6am this morning to write this article. Having seen this situation before in other sectors - and knowing what I know - it compelled me to act, to share my knowledge and to start a call to arms for the independent funeral sector.

The threat to your business from corporate funeral chains is very real.

Almost half of all UK households subscribe to Amazon Prime - and this is just one of many mainstream platforms; so, you can be certain that almost all of your local client base is seeing or being exposed to something similar. (A quick Google search will confirm in most cases that one or more of the "big 3" are using 'pay per click' to come up first on web searches in your area.

What was particularly noteworthy about the Co-op funeral advert was that it was promoting, modern, personalized '**bespoke**' funeral services.



This is a classic 'thought leadership' tactic. A tactic designed to change consumer expectations and behaviour.

Yet the irony is that in reality, Co-op Funeral Services - and for that matter the other main corporates (Dignity and Funeral Service) - are the least able to provide truly bespoke services compared to what you can offer. It's mostly smoke and mirrors. An illusion.

This is because, by nature, the corporates are volume driven businesses, serviced by expensive advertising campaigns (and acquisition.)

In simple terms, their business model is just a numbers game.

They seek competitive advantage in 2 key areas:

- Margins

; and

- Brand awareness (consumer familiarity and by extension a sense of trust).

Their scale means that they can afford to advertise nationally.

Their scale also means that many of their costs are significantly lower than yours.

At the last count, across their c800 sites, Co-op delivered around 100,000 funerals annually.

It's not rocket science that when things are bought at scale, it becomes easier to negotiate a cheaper cost per unit from your suppliers; or alternatively and even more profitably for really large operations - the next step up is to control your own supply chain by buying it or building it. Unsurprisingly, Co-op and Dignity own their own purpose-built coffin manufacturing operations in Merseyside and East Yorkshire respectively.

Competitive Advantage or Achilles heel for the big boys?

Don't be disheartened. I share this information to empower you, not to depress you. Because knowledge is power and this information can help you compete effectively in your local market, on your own terms.

As a smaller local supplier, if you have an open mind - and are prepared to embrace new things - you can be far more fleet of foot than the big 3.

You can change your strategy and your business model in days, if not hours. Whilst for the corporates, due to their scale (and their so-called economies of scale) changes of model, must be discussed by multiple decision makers and once finally agreed, must be disseminated across the chain, branch by branch. It's a bit like turning an oil tanker, with a game of Chinese whispers thrown in for good measure.

What's more, if you are smart, you can use their own advertising against them.

With such a complex organization - and the need to keep their margins high by volume buying or manufacturing - they will never be able to offer the range of choice and services you can.

This means that when it comes to offering choice, and bespoke 'truly' personalized products and services - you can run rings around them!

Remember, thanks to the advice from neutral consumer resources such as [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) and [MoneyHelper](https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk). A family booking a funeral will typically contact 2 to 3 funeral providers for quotes. This is your chance to shine. Getting your customer journey right is essential, especially "first contact" and the initial arrangement and planning meeting, and this is an area that should be reviewed and enhanced continuously.

Despite their clever advertising, the reality is that multiples operate funerals like a conveyor belt. Yes, they offer a few personalized options, but to put it bluntly, so do McDonalds!

Whilst some of the more cutting edge, unconventional products and services highlighted drone ashes scattering and ashes seed balls, or camper van hearses may not be core mainstream services for your funeral business; being open minded enough to have them up your sleeve - and to use them as illustrations of just how bespoke a service you can offer - can truly be a game changer and differentiation point for you and your business.

My second alarm has just gone off, and my tummy is telling me it's breakfast time and time to get on with the rest of my day. But, before I finish, there is one final often forgotten advantage of mixing things up that I want to share with you before I finish.

Freshening things up by offering new products within your funeral businesses is not only good for your customers. If you select new products and services that you and your staff genuinely love, it becomes so much easier and more enjoyable to sell them to customers.

Because if you believe in them - and genuinely enthuse them - they will sell themselves.

This is win, win, win, win:

- Customers are happy because they are giving their loved ones the best possible send off and memorial
- You and your staff are stimulated by providing an enhanced service and upselling without having to hard sell
- Your businesses top line will be better off
- Your business's bottom line will also improve

Lastly, it feels good to up your game and future proof your business, to be the captain of your ship and the master of your destiny.

So next time you see an advert from one of the big boys, thank them for highlighting the importance of remembering their loved ones in the most personalized way possible - and make sure it is your firm that not only offers the best solution in your area - but is the firm that is trusted to deliver it.

If you enjoyed this article, look out for part 2 which will follow shortly. I will be taking a deep dive into some of the other key themes from the National Funeral Exhibition in 2026.

Need some motivation to get started?

- Option One - Watch Clarkson's Farm and let the Co-op funeral services advert get you fired up and motivated to fight back! (From a content point of view, I would strongly recommend Series 5, episode 3 "Tripping" which is particularly relevant, as it highlights (albeit in a different sector) the pace of change in technology and the advantages of adaption and evolution.
- Option Two - Not sure where to start? Give me a call. I offer a free 30-minute consultation and have extensive experience helping independents fight back against the big boys to ensure they thrive and future proof their businesses.



Funeral
Business Central

Dom Watson

Call us on 0778 899 6505
or email us at
hello@funeralbusinesscentral.co.uk
and we will come back to you
promptly



Join Dom on a zoom CPD session in 2027

Wednesday 13th January 2027
&
Wednesday 8th September 2027





BRITISH INSTITUTE OF FUNERAL DIRECTORS SPRING EDUCATION DAY

Saturday 6th March



Venue: Gedling super Venue, Nottingham Crematorium,
NOTTINGHAM

Join us for a day of informative sessions,
industry speakers, and networking.

For Bookings and Registration:
email admin@bifd.org.uk

EVENT SPONSORS



westerleigh
GROUP

Obitus

UK COLLEGE OF FUNERAL STUDIES

Elevate Your Compassion into a Career Professional Excellence with the BIFD

In an profession built on trust, empathy, and meticulous attention to detail, professional qualifications are more than just certificates, they are a promise to the families you serve.

The British Institute of Funeral Directors (BIFD), offers a prestigious educational pathway designed to transform dedicated individuals into the future leaders of the funeral profession. Whether you are already working in the sector or looking to make your first meaningful steps, our university-accredited curriculum provides the gold standard in funeral education.

The Certificate in Funeral Service (Level 3)

Your journey begins here The program is the bedrock of your professional development, it bridges the gap between basic assistance & professional understanding.

- **Comprehensive Syllabus:** The history of the profession, Health & Safety, Administration, Bereavement Care, The Coroner, Registration & First Call
- **Flexible Blended Learning:** A mix of in-person weekends & interactive online sessions tailored for working professionals.
- **The Foundation:** Successful completion awards you 30 credits at Level 3, providing the essential prerequisite for senior qualifications.

The Diploma in Funeral Service (Level 4)

For those ready to embrace the full responsibility of a Funeral Director, the **Diploma (Dip. F.S.)** is the definitive mark of excellence. This advanced course deepens your technical expertise & leadership capabilities.

- **Advanced Practical Skills:** Focuses on the complexities of conducting funerals, repatriation, bequethal, burial at sea dealing with uncertainty cremation & burial laws, exhumation & client care.
- **Rigorous Assessment:** Includes written papers, oral examinations on funeral arrangement, & real-world observations of you conducting a service.
- **Career Milestone:** This qualification is level 4 & signals to employers & families alike that you have achieved a masterly standard of professional practice.

Why Choose the UK College of Funeral Studies?

By studying through the UK College of Funeral Studies, you gain access to **BIFD-accredited tutors** who are active practitioners in the field. You aren't just learning from a textbook; you are learning from the lived experience of those who understand the delicate balance of the modern funeral home.

Enrolment Highlights:

- **Student Membership:** Join the BIFD as a student member from day one, gaining access to a community of professionals & ongoing CPD opportunities.
- **Nationally Recognised:** Graduate with qualifications that carry weight across the entire UK funeral industry.

Your vocation deserves the best education.

Register your interest at funeral-studies@outlook.com

07821 155 985

The next Certificate in Funeral Service start September 2026

**Start your journey with the British Institute of Funeral Directors today
& define your future in funeral service**