

Life

in the community with Funeral Partners
Issue 14 | Autumn 2022

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Sam Kershaw

Chief Executive Officer

Sam has more than 40 years' experience in the funeral profession, having worked his way up from Trainee Funeral Director to senior management. He joined Funeral Partners in 2016 as Chief Operations Officer and two years later took over as CEO.

“

The fact that Funeral Partners is marking its 15th anniversary this year seems almost insignificant when you consider that some of the oldest former family-owned businesses within our network are approaching their 200th birthday.

Some of our branches in London and Leeds have served their communities for nearly 200 years and, in the case of **E Sargeant & Son Funeral Directors** of Berkshire, more than 300 years. But 15 years is still a milestone worth celebrating.

We are proud these historic funeral businesses chose Funeral Partners and we are proud that, over the past five years, we have doubled in size, becoming the third largest funeral services provider in the UK, as more and more funeral services across the UK have made us their acquisition partner of choice.

It is testimony to each and every one of the 1,000 dedicated funeral professionals working in our funeral homes in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the length and breadth of England, along with the senior leadership team, support office and area management, that Funeral Partners has gone from strength to strength without ever losing its shared values, respect and personal touch which make every funeral arrangement unique.

It is the small gestures, going the

extra mile to help families at the most difficult of times, that I want to celebrate. Like Rob Newman and Stephen Newell, across on Page 3, dressing up as Batman and Robin to give a family the send-off they wanted for their loved one.

The funeral profession has faced immense challenges over the past two years. The Covid-19 pandemic was unprecedented in modern times and remains in the headlines. You can read on Page 16 how our Director of Operations chaired a group set up in Greater London to provide a vital link between the funeral profession and the Government during the pandemic.

The profession also continues to face the challenge of greater regulation. We have welcomed the aims of regulation: to ensure grieving families have clear and transparent access to pricing information at their time of need. And, for those families who choose to purchase Pre-Paid Funeral Plans, regulation gives them confidence and security in their investment.

But, above all, we know what families value most – the culture and standards of service and support that date back to the earliest days of our profession, which will remain at the forefront of Funeral Partners' ethos and values as we enter our next 15 years.



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CARING ALISON SUPPORTS STONEHOUSE COMMUNITY

Funeral Director Alison Edwards at **Michael Gamble Funeral Directors** in Stonehouse, Gloucestershire, has been accepted as a volunteer and befriender with Sunflowers Suicide Support, a local registered charity which offers support for people who have been bereaved by a suicide.

after arriving to protect the island. He never really spoke about the Falklands and suffered in silence.

"Ten years after the war and coupled with the breakdown of his marriage, he took his own life. He was my hero and his loss has had a profound effect on me. I never really spoke about his death and how I felt losing him and the loss never got any easier.

"However, with the help of Sunflowers and their Grief Recovery Course, 30 years later I feel comfortable talking about him. I've said goodbye to the pain of losing him but I'll never say goodbye to him.

"Sunflowers is an amazing team run by people affected by suicide. They have been such a comfort and support to me

that I wanted to give something back.

"Sunflowers is a practical support service, not a counselling service, so families do not feel overwhelmed and alone. We hope this will give a glimmer of hope for the future."

Alison and her colleague Dee Paoletti have also completed training with the Alzheimer's Society to become Dementia Friends. Their office is now recognised as a safe space for anyone struggling with dementia.



sunflowerssuicidesupport.org.uk



Alison Edwards

Alison recently completed an eight-week Grief Recovery Course as she has personal experience of loss by suicide. The course has also been helpful in her role as a Funeral Director.

Alison went on to complete a two-day training course called ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training), which teaches participants to recognise signs when someone may have thoughts of suicide and work with them to create a plan to support their immediate safety.

Alison said: "I lost my brother David to suicide, he was 32 years old and was suffering from PTSD. He had served aboard HMS Antelope during the Falklands War, which was hit two days

'ONLY FOOLS AND HORSES' SEND OFF FOR RETIRED DECORATOR

An 'Only Fools and Horses' themed funeral took place at Slough Crematorium for a retired painter and decorator from the town.

Edward Frank Joyce, known as Eddie, who died aged 72, was a Del Boy-like character, according to his family.

Pam Wilson, from **E Sergeant and Son Funeral Directors** in Slough, arranged the funeral after the family saw the idea in the funeral home's Life Well Remembered book. Pam said: "As soon as the family saw the Only Fools and Horses themed funeral, they said it really summed up their Dad and that is the send-off he would have wanted."

A replica of the yellow three-wheeler 'Trotters Independent Traders' vehicle pulled a yellow hearse driven by two team members from the funeral home dressed as Batman and Robin, the characters Del and Rodney famously portrayed in a Christmas episode of the TV series.

Pam persuaded colleagues, Funeral Director Rob Newman and Funeral Services Operative Stephen Newell, to dress up as Batman and Robin.



Batman and Robin in the 'Trotters' Reliant

Pam adds: "Eddie's family said he was a real character, just like Del Boy and he loved Only Fools and Horses, so this was a really fitting tribute to him."

FUNERAL PARTNERS CONTINUES TO GROW WITH NEW ACQUISITIONS

Funeral Partners has continued its impressive growth, with three new acquisitions in the space of a month earlier this year.

All three acquisitions were long-established family businesses with strong reputations in their local communities: **Harpin's Funeral Service** in Wakefield, Outwood and Horbury; **Patrick Ryan & Daughter Funeral Directors** in Ealing and Greenford and **Humphris Funerals** in Banbury, who together have been established for nearly 300 years.

Sam Kershaw, Chief Executive Officer of Funeral Partners, said: "We are delighted that we have welcomed more businesses to the Funeral Partners family. We now have more than 230 funeral homes across England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, representing over 130 family businesses who have entrusted their reputation and heritage to Funeral Partners.

"We know it can be a very difficult decision for a family business to decide to sell so we offer a great range of flexibility in our negotiations. We want to ensure that our prospective funeral homes have a deal which is tailored for them."

All three Funeral Directors will continue to be run by members of the founding families, providing continuity of care for local communities and continuation of the reputation they have worked so hard to build.

Harpin's Funeral Service

Harpin's was established in 1930 by Leonard and Vera Harpin. It is run today by their grandchildren Sean and Sara.

Sara Harpin-Shipley said: "With all the changes in funeral industry legislation, we were looking for a company who could look after that for us by bringing management expertise to take the stress away, whilst embracing the ethos of our family business.

"That's why we chose Funeral Partners. They are a good fit for us as they share our values and will develop the business for the future."



John Roach Funeral Directors

Funeral Partners' latest acquisition in Scotland brings the number of its funeral businesses north of the border to eight.

John Roach Funeral Directors of Johnstone, Renfrewshire, was established two decades ago by John and his business partner Les Boyce, officially launching their new venture on Christmas Eve in 2001.

John, Les and their colleagues will be staying on to run the business for Funeral Partners, serving local families as before. "There is no feeling of being swallowed up by this corporate giant," John said. "It is like joining a big family."

Funeral Partners' Regional Development Director for Scotland, Tara Cameron, said: "With an enviable reputation for professionalism, high standards and value for money, I am proud that they chose Funeral Partners as their acquisition partner."

Welcome to Edwin Pounds & Sons

Long-established Edwin Pounds & Sons Funeral Directors of Bradford became the latest high-quality business to join the Funeral Partners family in August.

Established in 1904, the well-known family business has been serving the people of Bradford and the surrounding area for more than 100 years, initially in the coal and farming industry, before moving exclusively into funerals.

Former owners Simon and Helen Broome will continue to run the day to day business with their team and with Funeral Partners' support.

Simon, who is founder Edwin Pounds' great grandson, has more than 30 years' experience in the industry and has worked full-time with the family business since 1990. Helen joined in 2007 after Simon's mother Judith retired. The majority of Edwin Pounds' eleven children worked in the business at some point.

Simon said safeguarding the futures of his loyal team members was a key reason for choosing to work with Funeral Partners, combined with the guarantee of keeping the family name above the door on the site where they have always been based.

Funeral Partners CEO Sam Kershaw said: "With a reputation built on compassion and high standards, I am delighted that Edwin Pounds & Sons have chosen Funeral Partners as their acquisition partner."

James Brown & Sons Funeral Directors

New funeral home in Newtownabbey extends reach of historic Belfast business.

As well as growth through acquiring new businesses, Funeral Partners also invests in opening new funeral homes in areas where they can support more families.

Long-established Belfast business **James Brown & Sons Funeral Directors** recently opened a new funeral home in Newtownabbey, located in Beverley shopping centre, Carnmoney, extending its personal service and respected reputation to a wider community.

The new funeral home was officially opened by Alderman Stephen Ross, Mayor of Antrim and Newtownabbey, bringing the number of James Brown and Sons funeral homes to seven.

Julian Hodgkinson, Regional Development Director (Northern Ireland) for Funeral Partners said: "James Brown and Sons has been serving the people of Belfast and surrounding areas for nearly 120 years.

"This new funeral home in Newtownabbey demonstrates how Funeral Partners are continuing to invest in the business by providing a high-quality service to Belfast and surrounding communities in north Belfast."



Alderman Stephen Ross, left, with James Brown

The funeral arranger at the Newtownabbey funeral home is Claire McIlroy, who has been in the funeral industry for more than four years. She said: "We look forward to providing local people with a personal service that includes advice and support when planning a funeral. The facilities at the new funeral home include two rest rooms where families can visit their loved one in a private and peaceful environment."



John Roach Funeral Directors' team, L-R, Colin Clark, John Roach, Les Boyce and Katie Mckay

FUNERAL PARTNERS CELEBRATES 15 YEARS



John Nodes Funeral Service, London, an early acquisition which dates back nearly 200 years



Funeral Partners proud of growth, resilience and investment while maintaining traditions, quality and service of a family run business

When Sam Kershaw joined Funeral Partners as Chief Operating Officer in 2016 with decades of experience in the funeral profession, he was surprised by its small, intimate family feel.

The business, founded by Phillip Greenfield in 2007, was already a leading funeral services provider in England. But its ethos and culture mirrored the traditional family businesses whose heritage and commitment to serving local families it sought to maintain.

Funeral Partners' 15th year anniversary makes the business seem so young compared with the decades of history amongst the businesses within its network with some dating back 100, 200 even 300 years. However, it is a key milestone and an achievement worth celebrating.

Phillip Greenfield founded Funeral Services Partnership with the aim of offering funeral businesses an alternative to the two big corporates, Co-op and Dignity, and the family business culture was central to his vision.

"I wanted to create a culture which aligned with the type of businesses we would be acquiring," Phillip explained. "We would keep the local identity of acquired businesses and invest in property, fleet and people to raise standards to premium level. We would take the administrative burdens away and allow them to concentrate on what they do best."



Sam Kershaw
Chief Executive Officer
Funeral Partners

Since Sam took over as Chief Executive Officer in 2018, Funeral Partners has become the fastest-growing funeral service provider in the UK. It expanded into Northern Ireland, which added 18 branches and 11 brands to the network, and grew significantly across the UK to more than 230 funeral homes, with 1,000 employees, now delivering more than 25,000 funerals each year.

"I'm proud that despite the relatively fast growth, we've maintained that family feel," Sam says. "That's our intention. Our aim is continued growth, but in a manageable way, while protecting our culture and core values."

Investing in people, property, fleet, technology and marketing remains key to Funeral Partners' strategy, continuing to evolve the customer experience and meet families' expectations.

Acquisitions are the primary focus of the growth strategy, working closely with and integrating former owners and the local team into the business, maintaining their heritage and allowing them to shape the role they wish to retain.

With Funeral Partners now made up of 130 former family-owned businesses, managing the exceptions and unique local nuances is no mean feat.

Sam said: "We have doubled in size in five years, in an environment in which we saw very unusual circumstances, we faced a global pandemic and an unprecedented period of



"I wanted to create a culture which aligned with the type of businesses we would be acquiring"

Phillip Greenfield
Founder of
Funeral Partners

“ I’m proud that despite the relatively fast growth, we’ve maintained that family feel ”

increased regulation and upheaval for the profession.”

Despite these challenges, Sam said: “We have built a reputation for being the acquisition partner of choice in the profession.

“We want to involve former owners in the future of their business because they have built up the reputation and community relationships which underpin their success. And our growth creates opportunities for their teams to develop their careers.”

Sam pays tribute to the teams who are at the heart of Funeral Partners’ 15 years of success, working proudly and professionally every day to care for every grieving family member and to support their local communities.

“ We have built a reputation for being the acquisition partner of choice in the profession ”

Despite wider choice, the growing interest in unattended funerals, DIY funerals, environmentally friendlier funerals and more unusual requests for processions, services and wakes, Sam says most families still want fairly traditional and personalised funerals, arranged compassionately by highly-trained professionals.

For the next 15 years and beyond, that will remain at the core of Funeral Partners’ service offering, while building on its success, evolving and innovating to meet the needs of its clients.

If you know of any Funeral Director in your local community who may be considering selling their business, please get in touch with:

Sam Kershaw on 07834 531822
email: sam.kershaw@funeralpartners.co.uk

Steve Wilkinson on 07528 970531
email: steve.wilkinson@funeralpartners.co.uk



“ There is always someone at Funeral Partners who knows the answer ”

Judi Edwards, one of Funeral Partners’ longest serving employees, reflects on her career and the changes she has seen during the last 15 years.

Judi Edwards had been a Funeral Director for five years at Huntleys Funeral Services in Redditch when it became the first funeral home to be acquired by Funeral Partners. She has seen a lot of change in the industry and within the business under Funeral Partners’ stewardship, with positive developments in terms of standards and day-to-day operations.

Judi said: “I remained at Huntleys post-acquisition and felt comfortable and secure with Funeral Partners being the new owner as the network grew. By 2011, I was promoted to the role of Operations Manager for the Midlands.”

As Funeral Partners’ growth continued, Judi’s career prospered. “In my current role, I get involved in acquisitions. As I was part of the first acquisition, I know what it feels like to transition to Funeral Partners so can help the people in those businesses and reassure them.”

Judi reflected on how far the business has come. “I am really proud of Funeral Partners and the people who work in the team. We have loyal and enthusiastic teams and management.

“Based on my experience, for new acquisitions it is really beneficial to be part of Funeral Partners as they provide all the support services that the individual funeral homes don’t have, like marketing, HR, finance, payroll, and quality assurance.

“As Funeral Partners has grown, experienced people from the funeral homes and profession have moved into some of the support services roles and we have recruited managers from other industries, so there is a lot of experience there to call upon. There is always someone at Funeral Partners who knows the answer and is willing to help, reflecting the great team spirit and culture that has been built.”



Huntleys Funeral Services in Redditch was the first funeral home to be acquired by Funeral Partners in 2007

Funeral Partners 15-Year Timeline



230+

Over 230 funeral homes across England, Scotland and Northern Ireland



130+

More than 130 family businesses



25,000+

Privileged to arrange and conduct over 25,000 funerals each year

1000+

Employ more than 1,000 people

2022

- Choice Funeral Plans from Funeral Partners, provided by the Alternative Planning Company Limited (APCL), become regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority
- Two Nissan Leaf electric hearses are introduced in Birmingham and Torquay
- James Brown & Sons in Belfast launches £20,000 Community Fund to support local initiatives

2021

- Funeral Partners proudly sponsors The Eternal Bond Scheme launched by Hospice Aid UK to provide greater financial security to hospices
- Funeral Partners family of businesses grows to 125 family brands
- CMA Regulation of Funeral Industry
- £5 million raised for charity via Much Loved by Funeral Partners families

2019

- 16 new businesses join Funeral Partners including 11 brands and 18 branches in Northern Ireland
- Funeral Partners new to Northern Ireland and immediately becomes largest funeral business in the region

2016

- Montagu acquires Funeral Partners from the previous private equity owners in partnership with the incumbent management team. Sam Kershaw joins as Chief Operating Officer

2017

- Funeral Partners celebrates 10th anniversary- its first decade

2018

- Sam Kershaw appointed Chief Executive Officer. 13 businesses with 24 funeral homes join the Funeral Partners family, taking the business to over 170 funeral homes and the third largest in the UK

2015

- Business expands to 130 branches through acquisition of 47 funeral homes from Laurel Funerals
- Acquires first funeral home in Scotland
- Partnership with MuchLoved, memorial website charity

2014

- Choice Funeral Plans from Funeral Partners launched
- Funeral Partners grows to 100 funeral homes

2013

- 'A life well remembered lives on' brand identity launched

2007

- Funeral Partners founded by Phillip Greenfield. Huntleys Funeral Services, Redditch becomes first Funeral Partners business

2009

- E Sargeant & Son, established in 1712 in Berkshire, and one of the oldest funeral services companies in the country, joins Funeral Partners

2010

- Funeral Partners grows to 50 funeral homes

Regulation of pre-paid funeral plans is good news for families

Funeral Partners has welcomed the regulation of pre-paid funeral plans as its funeral plan offering (called Choice) is now regulated. From the end of July 2022, our Choice funeral plans provided by Alternative Planning Company Limited (APCL) became one of the 26 regulated providers.

“This gives reassurance to all our existing customers that our Choice Plans provide exceptional security for their money,” said Funeral Partners Chief Executive Officer Sam Kershaw.

“We were one of the first companies to submit an application to become regulated. We welcome the regulatory changes which will allow customers to buy a pre-paid plan with confidence and stamp out poor financial conduct and sales practices.

“Our primary concern has always been that Funeral Plans are sold fairly and transparently, so what the customer has bought is what the customer expects, providing security of invested funds and the potential for peace of mind when it comes to later life planning.”

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has become the regulator of the sector, with the aim of ensuring consistent high standards and boosting consumer protection.

Funeral Partners' Choice Pre-Paid Funeral Plans are primarily sold through its network of more than 230 funeral homes across England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. For maximum security of its funeral plan funds, Choice works only with UK-based life assurance companies who are authorised and regulated by the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA).

As part of ensuring our teams were completely up-to-date with the new regulations, Funeral Partners undertook our largest ever training programme, with over 520 team members now able to offer our Funeral Plan.

In addition, Funeral Partners developed a new website, new marketing literature and has invested in monitoring our regulated activity to ensure we remain fully compliant.

- **To find out more about Choice Pre-Paid Funeral Plans, visit choiceplan.co.uk**
- **To see our network of Funeral Partners' funeral homes, visit www.funeralpartners.co.uk.**
- **To see which Funeral Plan providers the FCA has authorised, visit the www.fca.org.uk**

Your questions answered

By Steve Coyle, Director of Pre-Need

Q I already have a Choice Plan. What do the regulatory changes mean for me?

A You do not need to take any action. Your plan is safe and your money remains securely invested in order to provide the services you have purchased when they are needed.

Q I already have a funeral plan with a company that has not been regulated. What should I do?

A If you already have a plan with a firm that has not been regulated, you should contact the firm and ask for a refund. If you can't get in contact with them, contact the Financial Conduct Authority: www.fca.org.uk/contact.

Q I am considering buying a pre-paid funeral plan, but how can I be sure my money is safe?

A The regulation of the industry is good news, ensuring your money is safe and your plan is sold fairly and transparently. You will have access to the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) as a further level of protection. At Choice, we only work with regulated UK-based life assurance companies for maximum security of your investment.

For a brochure and for more information, call us on 01803 298 243, visit choiceplan.co.uk or visit funeralpartners.co.uk to find your nearest funeral home.

Belfast groups awarded share of new community fund

Six worthy projects that improve the quality of life for local residents and the wider community have been given a boost from a new fund established by **James Brown & Sons Funeral Directors** in Belfast.

The new community fund has been set up to provide practical assistance to help grassroots projects that make a real difference to people in the Belfast area. All recipients of the fund represent communities within a three-mile radius of James Brown & Sons located on Belfast's Knockbreda Road, Lisburn Road and Newtownards Road, and Dundonald, Dunmurry, Newtownabbey and Whiteabbey.

The first six successful applicants to be awarded a share of the £20k fund were invited to a special presentation hosted by James Brown & Sons funeral home in Newtownards Road.

Congratulating the fund recipients, James Brown said: "We are really pleased to be able to help our local community by providing financial support for these groups.

"It gives me great pleasure to recognise these wonderful organisations in their work and I wish them well in

achieving the aims of their very worthwhile projects. I look forward to seeing how the funding is put to good use over the coming weeks and months."

The fund will be distributed in three cycles throughout 2022 with grants of between £300 and £1,500 being awarded in each cycle.

The deadline for applications to the next James Brown & Sons Community Fund is 17 October 2022 at 12 noon. Applicants must demonstrate how they improve the quality of life for local residents and the wider community. Projects applying for the fund should apply by email in no more than 500 words aligning to James Brown & Sons' funding focus areas: Health, Education, Employment Opportunities and Poverty/Social Deprivation.

For more information visit

www.jamesbrownfuneraldirectors.com/community-fund

Building Bridges Community Boxing Club

Building Bridges Community Boxing Club, located in north Belfast, was awarded funding to purchase equipment for its 'Making A Difference' project, an eight-week fitness programme aimed at improving the physical health and wellbeing of its participants.

Photo: L-R, Andrew Neale, Funeral Partners, Rosie Bradley, Building Bridges Community Boxing Club, Julian Hodgkinson, Funeral Partners



East Belfast Mission

East Belfast Mission, located in east Belfast, was awarded funding for a celebration day. The event will celebrate education and success while promoting increased community engagement for the future. As well as fun activities, the celebration will share stories of how members of the community have overcome barriers to training and employment.

Photo: L-R, Andrew Neale, Funeral Partners, Charmaine Newell, East Belfast Mission, Julian Hodgkinson, Funeral Partners, Emma Moore, Funeral Partners



Nettlefield Multi-sports

Nettlefield Multi-sports, located in south Belfast, was awarded funding for its 'Books to Boots' programme, incorporating sporting sessions with education to help foster good relations locally and encourage parents to get involved in their children's education.

Photo: L-R Julian Hodgkinson, Funeral Partners, Rachel McClean, Simon McClean and Judith Acheson from Nettlefield Multi-sports, Andrew Neale, Funeral Partners, Emma Moore, Funeral Partners

Rainbow Alley

Rainbow Alley, located in south Belfast, was awarded funding for garden benches to be situated in a community garden, an initiative which neighbours of Reid Street started during lockdown. The garden includes produce growing, wildflowers and a 'sowing' area, where people can meet together and enjoy the open air.

Members of the team at Rainbow Alley meet James Brown (far right), James Brown & Sons Funeral Directors



The Olive Branch

The Olive Branch, located in east Belfast, was awarded funding for equipment associated with a poverty and social deprivation project. Alongside providing refreshments this will offer a space for friendships to be formed and where people find support relating to their specific needs.

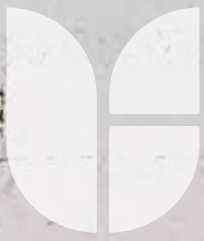
Photo: L-R, Andrew Neale, Funeral Partners, Rev Sammy Robinson, The Olive Branch, Julian Hodgkinson, Funeral Partners,

EastSide Partnership

The Scaffolding Project at EastSide Partnership, located in east Belfast, was awarded funding for its uniform scheme. The funding will provide vouchers for families in need of assistance with purchasing school uniforms for secondary school-aged children.

Photo: L-R, Julian Hodgkinson and Emma Moore, Funeral Partners, Barbara Smith, Scaffolding Project at EastSide Partnership, Andrew Neale, Funeral Partners.





Funeral Partners *in the community*

To find your local branch visit
funeralpartners.co.uk



Carl (far right), Shaun and Finn during their 24-hour golf marathon

Golfing duo raise over £10,000 for deaf children's charity

A duo from two funeral businesses completed a 24-hour golf marathon, raising a staggering £10,000 for charity.

Carl Tate, Funeral Homes Manager at **Daren Persson**

Funeral Services, which covers North Shields and Wallsend, and his brother-in-law Shaun Bruce from **John Blenkiron and Sons Funeral Directors** in Richmond raised the money for the National Deaf Children's Society. They were joined by Finn Kelly, aged 16, who works and plays at the golf club.

The charity has supported Carl's family, as his granddaughter Cienna-Rose has profound hearing loss after being born three weeks premature in 2021.

Carl said: "Shaun and I are big golf fans and wanted a challenge, so we thought this was the ideal way to raise money for the National Deaf Children's Society and help with all the great work they do for deaf children and their families. We had a great time playing golf even though it was a little tricky when it got dark.

"The support we got was fantastic. There were over 150 people there on the night to support us which was great. I am really pleased that we managed to raise so much money for the charity, it will make a big difference to many children and families."

It's not too late to donate via JustGiving at www.justgiving.com/Carl-Tate24Hr

Team conquers Yorkshire Three Peaks to support cancer charity

A team of enthusiastic walkers from **Hammerton's Funeral Directors** in South Yorkshire took to the hills recently to complete the Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge to raise nearly £1,500 for a cancer charity.

Despite the summer heatwave, the team, made up of Funeral Director Craig Shepherd, Funeral Service Operatives Alex Seaman and Chris Dexter, together with Alex's wife Shelley, completed the 23 miles of climbing the mountains of Wharfedale, Ingleborough and Pen-y-ghent, the three highest peaks in Yorkshire in 12 hours 50 minutes.

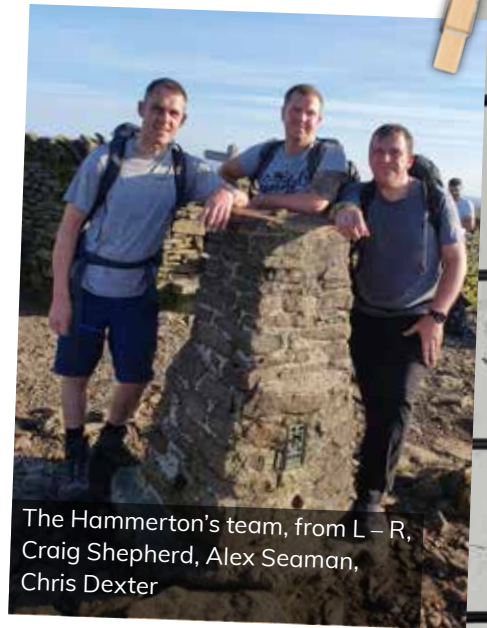
Craig said: "We all enjoy walking so we thought we would take on the Three Peaks as it provided a big challenge, but I don't think we realised quite how hard it would be.

"We hoped to complete it in under 12 hours but, as the weather got hotter, we started to struggle. We still managed to complete it in under 13 hours which we were pleased with."

Hammerton's Funeral Directors has funeral homes in Barnsley and Goldthorpe. The team were raising money for the South Yorkshire-based Weston Park Cancer Charity.

Craig continued: "We decided to support the charity as one of the team had a close relative who was treated at Weston Park Hospital. It is a great cause and I am really pleased that we managed to raise nearly £1,500."

He said the team might attempt the challenge again, but added: "We would do more training as it was much tougher than we expected."



The Hammerton's team, from L - R, Craig Shepherd, Alex Seaman, Chris Dexter



 **National Bereavement Service**

Proud to be working in association with Funeral Partners

0808 164 2239

Death Café helps people to talk about death

Death Café Belfast, a free event offering people the opportunity to come together to chat about the topic of death over coffee and cake, is now being hosted by **James Brown & Sons Funeral Directors** in Dunmurry.

First set up in Belfast in 2018 by qualified therapist and funeral celebrant, Rachel Smith, it moved into the funeral home after Funeral Arranger, Lisa Hutchinson, came on board offering support for the event.

Rachel said: "The concept of a Death Café is straightforward enough – a group of people come together to talk about death for a couple of hours. It isn't a support or bereavement group, and we don't provide counselling. It is about having conversations about your thoughts and emotions in a comfortable and safe place to help people overcome any fears they may have."

Lisa added: "As a Funeral Arranger, I see how families take comfort from the conversations they had with their loved one, and that the arrangements they are making are in keeping with their loved one's wishes."



Rachel and Lisa (?) with participants in the Death Café

Sonia assists at her first funerals

Sonia Hunt is going from strength to strength in her role at **Pinks Funeral Directors** in Surrey as she has recently assisted at her second funeral.

Sonia has never allowed her learning disabilities to stand in her way, especially since she joined Pinks as a part-time administrator. Since then, Sonia's interest in the funeral profession has grown so much that she has already assisted experienced Funeral Director of 45 years, Eddie Dipper, at two funerals.

Sonia said: "I really enjoyed helping with the two funerals although I was nervous the night before and had to go to bed early so I could focus on what I needed to do on the day. I made sure that my uniform looked really smart and was pleased to wear it."

"Before we went out to the funeral, we talked to the family to make sure we were carrying out their wishes. It is important to do it right as a funeral is an important day for the deceased person and their family."

Sonia's role included walking in front of the hearse and seeing it into the crematorium. Eddie Dipper added: "Sonia did a great job at both funerals. The first one was a family friend of Sonia's so it made it even more personal to have her there. The work we do is all about helping people and Sonia is definitely very good at that."



Sonia Hunt with Funeral Director Eddie Dipper



Representatives of HAVEN Funeral Services with the tree, from L-R, Chris Wickenden, Steve Thomas, Stephen Greenlees, Douglas Goddard, Simon Roberts.

Tree planting marks HAVEN's 20th anniversary

Residents of Acton Care Centre in West London helped **HAVEN Funeral Services** to celebrate its 20th anniversary.

The event was marked by a tree planting in the care home's beautiful gardens, a release of doves, a prayer and a celebratory tea. Funeral Arranger Anna Goddard said: "It was lovely to see the residents of Acton Care Centre enjoying themselves and we had some lovely comments in the memory book, which everyone signed. Some of the comments were from staff at the Care Centre."

The home's Activity Co-ordinator, Karina, commented: "You have planted roots for 20 years and now there is a tree in Acton Care Centre – a connection forever." Deputy Manager Sylwia Czepukowicz added: "Twenty years of great service and dignity. Thank you for doing an amazing job and thank you for all your support over the years."

STAR-STUDED CELEBRITY FOOTBALL MATCH RAISES OVER £25,000 FOR CHILDREN'S CHARITY



Celebrities including ex-professional footballers and social media personalities battled it out on the pitch raising more than £25k for Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity (GOSH Charity).



Now in its second year, the Goals 4 GOSH football tournament, which took place at Crystal Palace's Selhurst Park stadium, saw the Palace Pelicans secure a 4-2 win over the Crystal Koalas – both teams taking their names from wards at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH).

Lianne Sanderson (ex-England women's international) captained the winning team with Anton Ferdinand (ex-Premiership footballer) captaining the Koalas.

The big match was preceded by a TikTok tournament – featuring some of the platform's biggest names such as Cal the Dragon, Shaun Nyland, Dan Spragg, Connor Kern and Paddy Murphy – as well as a kickabout between local schools and former pros.

Goals 4 GOSH was the brainchild of Jamie Groves, Regional Development Director at Funeral Partners, with the support of Pinks Funeral Directors, Gillman Funeral Service and other Funeral Partners funeral homes in South London.

Jamie said: "I am delighted that the second Goals 4 GOSH tournament was another resounding success. As well as having two great teams, we doubled the number of people who came along to provide support with over 1,000 people in the crowd this year. The crowd created a great atmosphere, cheering on both teams."

Marina Barnes, Head of Community Fundraising at GOSH Charity, said: "We're so grateful to everyone involved in Goals 4 GOSH this year for raising such a fantastic total to support GOSH Charity. Thanks to



the generosity of the star-studded squad, and all those who bought tickets and took part in the raffle and auction, the money raised will make a huge difference to seriously ill children from across the UK who are treated at Great Ormond Street Hospital."

Jamie added: "The event wouldn't have happened without the support from colleagues at Funeral Partners across the South London region who helped with the raffle, auction table, selling programmes and checking tickets."

Money raised could help fund research into pioneering new treatments for children, provide the most up to date medical equipment, fund support services for children and their families, and support the essential rebuilding and refurbishment of the hospital. Over the two years the event has run, it has raised a total of £63,000 for the GOSH charity.



Jamie's special invite to address conference

Jamie Groves, Regional Development Director for Greater London South, has had a special invite to speak at this year's Chartered Institute of Fundraising Supporter Experience Conference, in October.

The conference will see presenters sharing their insights from charities who have used their skills to exceed expectations.

Jamie will be speaking as part of the supporters panel about his contribution to Goals 4 GOSH, raising funds for Great Ormond Street Hospital. Jamie has organised the charity football match for the last two years raising an amazing £63,000 for Great Ormond Street Hospital.

Jamie said: "It's a privilege to be involved in raising funds for such a worthy cause. Thank you to everyone over the last two years that's participated in making the event so successful."

Watch this space for Jamie's next fundraising challenge!





RICHARD IS ELECTED AS NEW BIE PRESIDENT



*Richard Van Nes
Director of Central
Operations, Funeral Partners*

In recognition of a career spanning nearly 40 years in the funeral profession, Richard Van Nes MBIE has been elected as the National President of the British Institute of Embalmers for a two-year term.

Richard, who was born in Canada, has been involved with the British Institute of Embalmers (BIE) since he arrived in the UK in 1994.

Richard said: "I am delighted to take up the role of President of the BIE. I am looking forward to working with my colleagues to support people in our profession and provide them with advice, training, and education."

Richard, who is Director of Central Operations for Funeral Partners, started his career in funerals with a family-owned business in Canada before joining the Service Corporation International (SCI) in North America, which was then the largest funeral company in the world. He followed the company to the UK in 1994, joining the BIE and being involved as a full member ever since.

He continues: "After leaving SCI I worked for Dignity for several years, holding various management roles. I then went to work for Co-operative FuneralCare as a Regional Manager before joining Funeral Partners as the Deputy Operations Director in 2010. Since then, I have held many different management roles." In his current role at Funeral Partners, Richard is responsible for ensuring the highest quality standards and compliance with all regulations affecting the funeral industry, from health and safety and data protection to the new regulations arising from the

Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) review.

Together with his role at Funeral Partners and being President of the BIE, Richard is also heavily involved with local and national government. He said: "The pandemic changed a lot of things for all of us and from the very start I served as the Chair of the Funeral Cell of the Mortality Management Group for Greater London. I continue to be part of the excess deaths partnership for Greater London as the liaison between the funeral profession and the government, the NHS, and Coroners."

Speaking about the changes Richard has seen during his 40 years in the profession, he said "At the centre of these changes is the official and government regulation of the funeral and related professions in the UK." The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) issued the Funerals Market Order in 2021 which legally regulates certain activities of all providers of funeral services in the UK. The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) regulation of Funeral Plans and Funeral Planning Providers came into effect in July 2022.

Richard added, "Improving standards and education is my passion and I believe we have seen more change in the past few years than over the preceding decades and the coming years are poised to bring even more change."

WHY SAYING GOODBYE IS SO IMPORTANT

The Covid-19 pandemic placed stringent restrictions on the numbers who could attend a funeral and prevented thousands of families from saying goodbye to their loved one in the way they would have chosen.

Two professionals who work closely with bereaved families and with Funeral Partners explain why ritual is so important for those who are grieving. Attending a funeral and the rituals associated with it are important for most people. It provides the opportunity not only to celebrate the life of their loved one but to share and release grief to help complete their life cycle. If this cannot happen, it can have a profound impact on the bereavement journey.

Nicole-Darcy Foley worked for 24 years as a Funeral Director before re-training as a multi-faith minister. She works closely with families, supporting them during a bereavement, and knows how important a funeral is.

Nicole explained: "In our profession we allow people to have time to say goodbye to a loved one and complete their life cycle with dignity, but the pandemic changed all of this.

"During the pandemic it started with only five people attending a funeral, which was horrific for the people involved as they don't feel they said goodbye to their loved one and there was no closure.

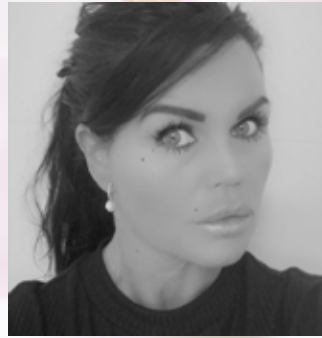
"I have seen the impact that not having the usual funeral rituals has had on families as they didn't get the chance to have a proper funeral and say their goodbyes. There have been long term effects from this that many people will take a long time to recover from."

The pandemic also had a great impact in Northern Ireland where funeral rituals are closely followed.

Michelle McMaster is a Trauma Recovery Consultant who has worked with Funeral Partners for several years providing training and support to teams in the funeral homes and supporting families. Michelle said: "In Northern Ireland, a funeral traditionally takes place three to four days after the person dies but, during the pandemic, this didn't happen.

"It is very important to families and loved ones that they attend a funeral in Northern Ireland and if they can't attend for any reason, it can affect their ability to grieve naturally. During Covid, people couldn't carry through these rituals,

“
The funeral home team carries everyone else's raw grief and people may take for granted what they do, but they feel the stress and tension too.
”



Nicole-Darcy Foley,
Multi-faith minister



Michelle McMaster,
Trauma Recovery Consultant

and it left many with an additional sense of loss which some are still dealing with now."

It is not just families and loved ones who were impacted by the pandemic, but the teams at funeral homes too. Funeral Partners offers support sessions to raise awareness of positive mental health and this support was increased during the pandemic. Mental health champions from within Funeral Partners' teams volunteered to be trained and be there to support their colleagues.

Michelle said: "During the pandemic, the teams at the funeral homes had to provide support to families and carry all of the additional stress due to the changes in funeral processes.

"The funeral home team carries everyone else's raw grief and people may take for granted what they do, but they feel the stress and tension too."

Now the pandemic has eased, both Michelle and Nicole are providing bereavement support services and supporting the arrangement of memorial services in memory of people who passed away during this time and whose families were unable to access the usual funeral rituals.

Funeral Partners' teams are pleased to again be providing support and advice through every stage of the funeral planning process, helping families celebrate the life of a loved one.

For advice and support, contact your local Funeral Director via www.funeralpartners.co.uk or, for bereavement support, contact the National Bereavement Service on **0808 164 2239**.



Thank you messages

Hammerton's, Barnsley

As soon as I entered, I felt as though a weight had been lifted. Professional and dignified service throughout and wonderful catering. Thanks to each and every one.

JJ

M L Williams, Ayr, Scotland

The service we received throughout the process of arranging my aunt's funeral was excellent. On the day of the funeral everything ran so smoothly. Thanks to all.

AY

Exeter & District, Devon

I highly recommend Exeter & District Funeral Service after our recent loss of a very dear friend. I cannot thank Warren enough for his tireless, compassionate attention to detail, giving all of us the time we needed to come to terms with our loss. Thank you Warren for making the day faultless and more bearable.

WL

Our teams regularly receive messages of thanks and five-star reviews for their services via MuchLoved, Google and Yell. Here is a recent selection.

W Storey, Guisborough, North Yorkshire

Tim and his colleagues at W Storey Funeral Service could not have provided us with a better service. He was patient, understanding, compassionate and very professional in his approach.

He provided support and advice which we accepted and followed that resulted in a beautiful and dignified service for our Mam. We are forever grateful for all he did for us and for our Mam. Thank you.

SB

Hemming & Peace, Stratford-upon-Avon

Absolutely stunning service. Impeccable from start to finish. We dealt with Nigel Peace and Harvey. They were both top notch. Highly recommend. We were handled with dignity, humility and respect throughout.

SH-C

Mears & Cotterill, Wandsworth

The team at Mears and Cotterill was amazing. Sam gave 100%. Very special lady and a very special team. Thank you all.

TC





Banfield & Pomphrey, Hastings

Just wanted to say a huge thank you to everyone at Banfield and Pomphrey. They were brilliant, in particular Tony, who was the main person helping us through a really difficult time, he was an absolute star. Couldn't wish for a more friendly, caring and professional person.

AK

Walker & Morell, Gateshead

Many thanks to Nicola and her team for all the support and kindness shown to me and my sister when our mum passed away recently. They are dedicated, professional and caring and we hold them in very high regard. Please don't hesitate to use them if you are in need of a funeral director.

JC

WH Putnam, Edgware, Middlesex

Lee was a Godsend, he explained everything, he went above and beyond. The compassion shown to our family will never be forgotten. Tom ensured everything went to plan on the day and was very professional. Thank you again.

NNW

Aaron Black, Edmonton, London

Donna and team, sorry 5-stars are not enough. You helped my family and went the extra mile for us! I know it's your job, but you were truly amazing.

At all times, you kept us up-to-date and nothing was too much trouble. Sincere thanks to you and your team. Dignity, respect and I have no hesitation in recommending your services.

SS

Bairds of Antrim, Northern Ireland

After the untimely death of my dear wife, Jackie and all the team were absolutely fantastic in helping me to organise a perfect funeral.

Jackie was the most considerate and accommodating person anyone could ever meet. No request was ever too much. I would even have Bairds arrange my own funeral in a heartbeat.

PD

C&T Radmall, Horsham, West Sussex

What can I say...Well, Mel Watson and her colleagues are amazing. They were very caring, sensitive and professional. They went above and beyond the call of duty to make the event as smooth and meaningful as possible when our budget was limited. We thank them from the bottom of our hearts.

CA

Dartford Funeral Service, Kent

I'm so pleased I came to Dartford Funeral Service. I was recommended by friends, I looked on your website and I liked it. I came down and met Debi. Debi was very welcoming and so helpful in helping us arrange my father's funeral.

When I came down to see my father, he looked so handsome and so peaceful. My father's service was beautiful, we had a graveside service. I want to thank everyone at Dartford Funeral Service for everything you have done for us.

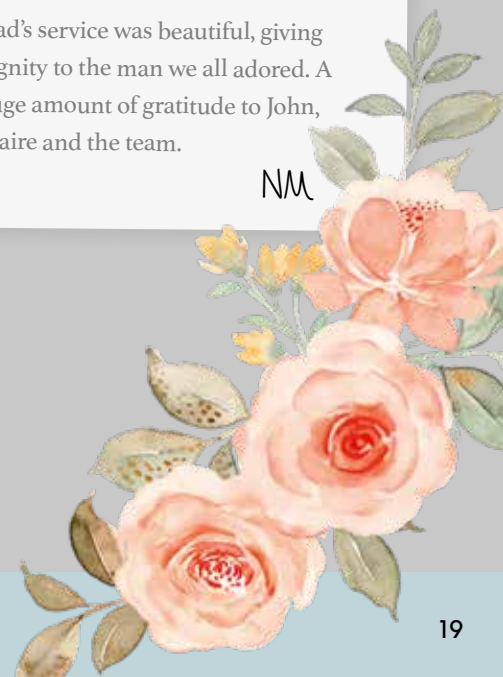
FE

John G Hogg, Pallion, Sunderland

The care, compassion and support we all received from John G Hogg Funeral Directors was impeccable. Each and every member of staff was so empathetic during the loss of my dad, and still following the funeral - we felt like part of the family.

Dad's service was beautiful, giving dignity to the man we all adored. A huge amount of gratitude to John, Claire and the team.

NM



Funeral Partners provides NEIGH-bourly support

Bruce brings joy to Hampshire care home residents

Retired funeral horse, Bruce, brought joy to the residents of a care home in Hampshire when he trotted in for a visit.

Bruce, aged 19, regularly worked for **Diamond & Son Funeral Directors** in Lymington. The team from Diamond & Son thought it would be nice for Bruce to visit Linden House in Lymington, a dedicated care home for people living with dementia.

After retiring seven years ago, Bruce now enjoys life with his owner Claire Knights, Area Development Manager for Funeral Partners.

Claire said: "Bruce has looked after many families through Diamond & Son, taking them on their last journey, and is quite well known in the area. He has an amazing calm temperament which is why we thought it would be nice for him to spend time with residents at Linden House.

Stephanie Brown, Funeral Arranger at Diamond & Son, said: "Bruce got so many smiles. He had a very special connection with two of the elderly residents, which was

magical to watch."

In retirement, Bruce enjoys quiet hacks in the forest, rides on the beach and going to the pub.

Stephanie added: "This was Bruce's first visit to a care home and, as it was a such massive success, we hope he can do more visits in future."

"Lorraine Bell, Home Manager, said: "He bonded especially with Nigel, one of our residents. Nigel is a great horse lover, the smile on his face was a joy to watch.

"Having Bruce visit us brought simple, unforgettable memories to our residents, not only for the horse lovers, but the many others who came out to see him. This we hope was the first of many visits of Bruce and we look forward to his return."



Bruce meets Linden House residents

Patrick the pony is making a real difference in Torbay

The team from a Torquay funeral home are helping the local community by supporting a charitable organisation that provides pony therapy.

Torbay and District Funeral Service has a longstanding relationship with Community Pony, which supports local people through Patrick, its Miniature Shetland therapy pony. Funeral Partners has donated over £1,000 towards Patrick's training to become a therapy pony and to sponsor the van which transports him around to visits.

Sandra Murphy, Area Development Manager for Funeral Partners, said: "Our team has continued to support Patrick in his work as a therapy pony, providing comfort to local people in Torbay."

Kirk Petrakis, Director of Community Pony, said: "We are really grateful to Sandra and the team at Torbay and District Funeral Service for their support with our therapy pony project. The money they donated has helped with Patrick's training and gone towards the cost of equipment and he has a fantastic comfortable van to travel around in.

"Patrick is now fully insured as a therapy pony. We have attended wakes, where Patrick has brought comfort to those affected by grief and bereavement."

For more information, see communityponycic.org.uk.

Photo supplied by Kirk Petrakis, showing, L-R, Patrick, Kirk, Funeral Arranger Jade Cross and Sandra Murphy, Area Development Manager



For more information about all the funeral homes in the Funeral Partners family visit www.funeralpartners.co.uk or contact Marketing Director, Kelly Hailou: Kelly.Hailou@funeralpartners.co.uk
We welcome your feedback and comments about this issue of Life magazine, or if you would like to contribute, please contact: community@funeralpartners.co.uk.