

Life

 Funeral Partners

in the community
with Funeral Partners
Issue 16 – Autumn 2023



Community Funds are helping people across the country **Page 14**

Grief support offered with letters to heaven

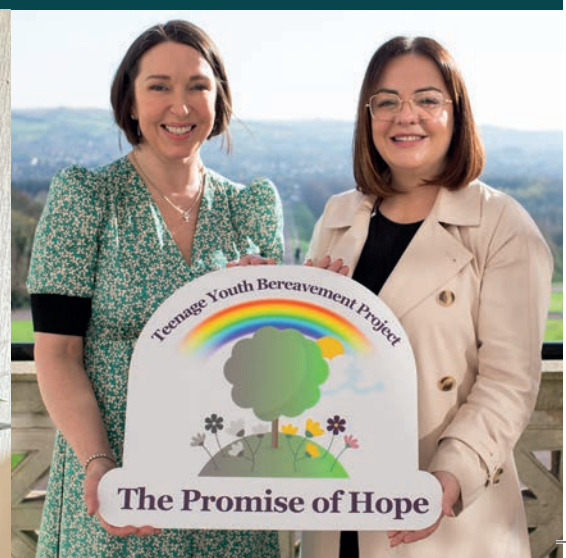
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Celebrating the valued work of our colleagues nationwide **Page 10**

Partnership helps young people navigate loss in early life

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Sam Kershaw

Chief Executive Officer



The UK's third largest funeral service provider

www.funeralpartners.co.uk



Funeral Partners continues to grow from strength-to-strength through acquisition and innovation, but we have to remember that above all, we are funeral directors serving local communities. We are seeing continued changes on how funerals are promoted, most notably national providers promoting direct cremation on television.

We continue to innovate in this area with our own Funeral Professional Services and our Choice Funeral Plans, plus the launch of more local and national TV advertising campaigns.

But now, more than ever, it is important for Funeral Directors to be part of the communities they represent and make sure families know that whatever service they require, their Funeral Partners funeral home can provide it, locally.

Heading into the latter part of 2023, it's a difficult time for many people with the cost-of-living crisis showing little sign of abating.

With people having less disposable income, there's no doubt that the charity sector will be hit hard, with

people having to think about whether they can support good causes, and I am very proud of our continued efforts to support charities large and small.

The third edition of charity football match Goals 4 GOSH was a great success, and organiser Jamie Groves and his team have now raised more than £110,000 for Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity, which is a simply phenomenal achievement. The event gets bigger each year and it is fantastic to continue to support it.

Our pledge to donate £50,000 to Thames Hospice has now been achieved. It's a testament to our fundraisers who have raised £10,000 in each of the last five years despite the restrictions on activities which could be held because of the pandemic. Our clients have also broken through the magic £10m mark via their online MuchLoved donations, supporting charities all over the country.

And then there's our very own Community Funds, which give good causes the chance to apply for small grants to carry on with their outstanding work. The success of the James Brown Community Fund in Northern Ireland – our first initiative of this kind – has been a real triumph. This has led us to launch two more which I am sure will be just as successful.

Additionally, there is our work in association with grief charity Cruse

Bereavement Support NI to help young people who are dealing with loss, and the complexities that come with it. This is such an important cause which I am fully behind us supporting.

That is by no means the end of our charitable efforts. I'm proud of the hard work our teams up and down the country put in, be it collections, donations or emotional support for local people. You can read more about this in the Funeral Partners in the Community section of this magazine.

On the business side of things, our network of funeral homes continues to expand with high quality, trusted brands. It's a pleasure to welcome Barry Pritchard Funeral Service and sister brands WN Allcock Funeral Services and Trafford Lowe Funeral Services, as well as Gordon Fletcher and Sons to Funeral Partners.

The reputation of Gordon Fletcher and Sons is also excellent, and they will be another brilliant addition to our homes in the North East of England which we are committed to strengthening further in the near future.

Finally, we have recently said a very sad goodbye to Steve Coyle, our Director of PreNeed, who passed away after a courageous and dignified fight with cancer. His absence will be deeply felt by everyone at Funeral Partners, and our heartfelt condolences go out to his family and friends. A full tribute to Steve can be found on page 17.

THERE'S A WAY BACK AT WAYS!

Founder's daughter joins business her father started three decades ago

The daughter of a well-known retired Funeral Director has joined the business he set up more than 30 years ago.

Linsie Kemp is now working as a Funeral Arranger at **J H Way Funeral Services** in Dawlish, Devon, which was founded by her father John Way in 1990.

This is her first job in funeral services after a varied career in which she has previously worked as a teaching assistant and run a local taxi company.

But she is now belatedly carrying on in the family tradition, as both her father, John, and grandfather Hedley, were Funeral Directors.

John retired ten years ago, selling the business to Funeral Partners, who have retained the name and the level of service families have come to expect.

Despite being around the business as a child, Linsie said she was glad to begin working in funerals later in life.

"I don't think I would've been emotionally ready, and I'm not sure I would still be doing it now if I had started as a teenager," she said.

"But now I absolutely love it – it's the best thing I have ever done.

"It's such a pleasure to help people with the last thing they'll ever do for their loved one, which is to arrange their funeral and see their wishes through to the end.



Linsie Kemp

"It's an honour and a privilege.

"No two funerals are the same – you might be arranging one funeral in the morning when you're crying your eyes out with a family and arranging a different one in the afternoon when you're all laughing away."

Linsie said she loves working at the branch where her father used to work, and even answering the phone, which was her home number as a child.

"My dad has been keeping an eye on the business over the years and is really proud that there is a Way back at Way's," Linsie said.

"He used to live in the flat above the office and it gives me an amazing feeling when I answer the phone.

"I feel like I am making a real difference and representing my family every day."

FUNERAL DIRECTOR'S TWO DECADES IN INDUSTRY HAS HELPED HIM GIVE BACK TO HIS COMMUNITY

A Funeral Director whose career began with an impromptu trial shift is now celebrating 20 years in the business.

Sam Bryan had left his job at a courier company when he answered an advert for a Funeral Service Operative at **Woking Funeral Service** back in 2003.

With Sam having dressed in appropriate attire for the interview, the-then manager invited him to help out and see what the job entails.

After impressing the manager, he was offered the job full-time shortly afterwards and has remained at Woking Funeral Service ever since, working his way up to the position of Funeral Director – and he has no immediate plans to retire.

"It means that I can give a little back to my community," he said.



Sam Bryan

"When someone recognises me and thanks me for what I did, that's an honour, and a really nice feeling knowing I have helped and supported someone.

"I always say to people I can empathise with you, but I don't know how you feel, because the loss of a loved one is always deeply personal.

"If I can get somebody to say 'Sam, you made a difficult day more bearable' then that is great, I feel personal satisfaction that I have made a difference for that person and their family."

NEW STARTS AND OPPORTUNITIES ARISE IN THE FUNERAL PARTNERS FAMILY

A funeral business launched in the 1930's has joined our network, a former director has returned and there are new homes for two of our thriving brands.

Gordon Fletcher and Sons, Barry Pritchard Funeral Services, WN Allcock Funeral Services and Trafford Lowe Funeral Services are our latest funeral brands in the north of England.

Godalming Funeral Service have moved into their permanent base to improve their offer to their community and John Blenkiron and Sons Funeral Directors have also opened a third office in Catterick.

Godalming Funeral Service

Funeral service moves into refurbished home to continue to serve families.



Anghus and Paul Weightman

Godalming Funeral Service, which opened last year, has now moved into their new permanent home.

Operated by Senior Funeral Director Paul Weightman and his son Anghus - a respected Funeral Director in his own right - the team have been supporting clients from a second branch in Guildford but are now based primarily at the funeral home in Godalming, following an extensive refurbishment of the building.

The site, which was previously occupied by a chiropractor, also functioned as a funeral home, where Paul worked for many years of his funeral career, before it closed in 1990.

The doors of the new branch are now officially open, following a dedication ceremony.

Paul said: "The building is unrecognisable compared to just a few months ago and is now a new, comfortable and welcoming environment for the families we are committed to serving.

"I'd like to thank Funeral Partners for the investment they have made in creating a funeral home we all are very proud of, which will enable us to continue to support the bereaved communities of Godalming and Guilford with our new and modern facilities."

Barry Pritchard Funeral Services, WN Allcock Funeral Services and Trafford Lowe Funeral Services

Founding Director returns to Funeral Partners.

Barry Pritchard was one of the founding Directors at Funeral Partners before he decided to launch his own venture, along with his wife Yvonne.

He has stayed in close contact with Chief Executive Sam Kershaw and has now selected Funeral Partners as his acquisition partner after choosing to sell their three businesses.

The three Funeral Services brands boast five branches across Sheffield and Derbyshire, which are new areas for the Funeral Partners network.

Barry is currently serving as the National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD) President and working with Funeral Partners to give him more time to focus on his proudly earned role.

"I've kept in touch with lots of friends and former colleagues since I left and it has been great to see the company thriving," he said.

"Once the decision had been made to sell the businesses, they were the obvious choice.

"Being President of the NAFD is a real honour and I want to give it my all during my term, and this arrangement will allow me to do this."

Barry is a third-generation Funeral Director following proudly in the footsteps of his father Alan - known to many as Jim - and grandfather Charles.



Barry Pritchard

Gordon Fletcher and Sons

Family business at the heart of County Durham community joins Funeral Partners.

A funeral business boasting more than 80 years of rich history has become one of the latest additions to the Funeral Partners family.

The team at **Gordon Fletcher and Sons**, which operates three funeral homes in County Durham, said that keeping their family name and ensuring job security for their team were among the key reasons for deciding to join.

The family-run business was originally set up in 1938 by Thomas Atkinson Fletcher, who combined arranging funerals with joinery work.

His son Gordon Fletcher then took over and renamed the business Gordon Fletcher and Sons, which dealt with construction work as well as funerals.

His children, Peter and Colin, were encouraged to study and despite gaining qualifications in the building trade, remained closely tied to the funeral sector.

Commenting on their decision to join Funeral Partners, Peter, said: "We won't be here forever, and there's nobody in the family who can take over, so we have got to look to the future and safeguard the legacy of the business and



Peter and Colin Fletcher

the future security of our staff. There are people who have been with us for 15 and 20 years.

"Working with Funeral Partners has meant we can keep them on, and to enable us to continue with business as usual supporting our community and bereaved families.

"We've been able to keep our identity, our heritage and we have the respect of the Senior Team and management."

Sam Kershaw, Funeral Partners Chief Executive, said: "Gordon Fletcher and Sons is exactly the sort of business we want to work with. They have an exemplary reputation and decades of history and experience.

"It's fantastic they have chosen us, and I look forward to helping write the next chapter in their story. We welcome Colin, Peter and the team to our family of businesses."

John Blenkiron and Sons Funeral Directors

Community to benefit from new Catterick funeral home.

A Funeral Directors which has been helping families for more than five decades has opened a new branch in Catterick.

John Blenkiron and Sons Funeral Directors have opened a third home in Catterick so families there can access them easier.

The whole building has been completely refurbished to ensure families feel welcome and comfortable at a difficult time, allowing the team at John Blenkiron and Sons to provide the exemplary quality of service and care which has become their hallmark.

Their first branch was launched in Richmond in the 1960s, while their second base in Barnard Castle has been open for more than 30 years.

Business Principal James Blenkiron is the son of founder, John, and said he is thrilled to have opened another funeral home in his father's name.

"He would be incredibly proud for the business which he started to be expanding further afield to help support more families," James said.



James Blenkiron, Julie Elliott and Will Bellerby

"It's something we have wanted to do for a long time, and I am delighted that with the help of Funeral Partners, we have been able to make it happen."

Funeral Director Will Bellerby - himself a former soldier having served in the Royal Logistics Corps - will be Funeral Director at the new Catterick branch.

Will said: "We are pleased to be able to support the bereaved families in Catterick by having a premises close by."



Funeral Partners in the community

To find your local branch visit
funeralpartners.co.uk

Bereaved can send letters to heaven

A Funeral Director is giving local people the chance to write a letter to their loved ones who have passed away.



Sam Barksby

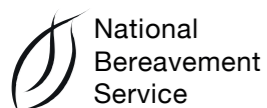
Sam Barksby, Senior Funeral Arranger at **Farthing Funeral Service** in Felixstowe, has placed a special Letters to Heaven post box outside the funeral home, which she hopes will provide a way for the bereaved to help them through their grief.

Sam explained: "I find it very helpful during times of sadness, stress, or confusion to put my thoughts and feelings down on paper, so I'm hoping others will too."

"I invite anyone who has suffered a loss either recently or in the past to come and see us. We have compostable, seeded paper that can be used, which once posted can be planted in our memorial garden so the memory of a loved one can live on in the flowers that grow there."

Sam also runs a local bereavement café on the first Wednesday of every month, and in a separate endeavour she is inviting volunteers to knit a pair of matching hearts, one of which will be given to the deceased, while the other will be held by their family as a keepsake.

Sam is passionate about supporting those who have lost someone dear to them: "I want to help people work through their grief in a way that is meaningful to them."



Proud to be working in association
with Funeral Partners

0808 164 2239

Oyez, oyez, town crier Sonia congratulated for two decades of amazing service

Funeral Partners administrator Sonia Hunt has been given a special award to recognise her community efforts during an incredible 20 years as Caterham's town crier.



Sonia Hunt with
Chris Botten

Tandridge District Council celebrated Sonia ahead of a meeting in July, where she was handed flowers and a portrait of her in her regalia and thanked for her sterling service.

Sonia said: "I'm very proud and I have loved my time doing it. I am passionate about history and it has been great to bring back some tradition to the role."

Sonia has learning disabilities and a number of physical ailments which she has battled since childhood, but she never lets them stand in the way of fulfilling her town crier duties, nor the work she does as an administrator based at **Pinks Funeral Directors**.

She is the first black woman, and the first person with learning disabilities to be Caterham's town crier.

"When I was born, because of my health issues, they didn't think I would live very long," Sonia said.

"I haven't let those issues hold me back and I am happy with what I have achieved."

As town crier, Sonia opens community events like fetes, carnivals and festivals and was proud to spread the news of the coronation of King Charles earlier this year.

Her community work even led to her getting her role at Pinks, impressing Area Development Manager Karen Rattigan, who offered her work experience.

Sonia's attitude and aptitude led to her earning a part-time role, where amongst other administrative duties, she creates community window displays and represents Pinks at community events.

Last year Sonia shadowed one of the Senior Funeral Directors before being able to conduct a funeral by herself - another milestone moment in Sonia's career at Funeral Partners and personal ambition met.

For now, she plans to continue to combine her commitments at Funeral Partners and her civic duties as long as she is physically able to.

"It's an honour I want to continue with as long as I can," she said.

Star Wars surprise for young carers

Funeral Arranger Donna Forrester helped young carers to receive gifts and organised for a special Star Wars Stormtrooper to visit them at a party after building a special charity relationship.

Donna, who works at **Aaron Black Funeral Directors** in Edmonton, received a bunch of flowers from a client she had helped in early 2022, which, unbeknownst to her, also included £150.

After the man refused to take the donation back, it was decided to give the cash to a charity of Donna's choice, and she took her time to research who she wanted to receive the money.

She eventually chose the Young Carers from Enfield Carers Centre, which supports people aged between five and 18 who have to look after somebody in their family.

After that donation, the relationship blossomed and Donna arranged for an appeal for gifts for the youngsters to be displayed at the Edmonton funeral home and Donna called on the help of a friend to appear dressed as a Stormtrooper at a special bash.

Donna said: "I was told the money I had initially given had helped pay towards a trip to Southend where they had visited the aquarium and done lots of other wonderful things."

"I have a friend who is part of a group called Heroes of the Empire and part of their work is to visit children in hospitals and in other difficult situations dressed as superheroes or famous characters to cheer them up."

"I am really looking forward to working more with them in the future."



Donna Forrester with a Stormtrooper

Fundraising team saddle up with special race night



The team at WH Putnam
present a cheque for £6,500

Fundraising Funeral Directors raised thousands of pounds for charity in honour of a colleague who is battling Motor Neurone Disease.

The thoughtful team at **WH Putnam Funeral Directors**, which has branches in Harrow and Edgware, made sure the going was good for guests to place their bets at a special charity race night.

Generous punters, who also took part in a sports themed auction and raffle, helped raise £6,500 for the North London Branch of the Motor Neurone Disease Association.

The charity was chosen because Jerry Bentley, Diary Manager at Funeral Partners brands in London, is battling the disease.

Senior Funeral Director Lee Dimmock said: "The amount we raised and the support we had was absolutely amazing."

"The money is going directly to our local branch meaning it is helping Jerry directly and other people in his position who live nearby."

Book donations help people starting a new chapter



Brian Jones with
Ashley Durrant

Hundreds of people were given the gift of reading after a collection by **W. Storey Funeral Service**.

The community in Guisborough donated nearly 500 books to be distributed which were split into adult and children's titles, with the team donating the ones for youngsters to a nearby school.

The rest of the titles were divided between Bridge House - an organisation which supports homeless people - and The Moses Project, a charity offering guidance, mentoring and support for men with past and current addictions to drugs and alcohol.

Whilst they were handing over the books, Trainee Funeral Director Ashley Durrant and Funeral Arranger Francesca Capaldi were given a tour of The Moses Project by CEO Brian Jones.

Francesca said: "It was amazing to receive so many books - we didn't expect this many, but people also respond so well when we have charity collections."

"Visiting the Moses Project was a great experience - we learned how the charity is run, how they help people and met lots of volunteers while we were there."

HAT-TRICK EDITION OF CHARITY FOOTBALL MATCH NETS OVER £46,000 FOR GOSH CHARITY

Celebrities including former footballers, top musicians and social media sensations took to the pitch to raise an incredible £46,731 for Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity (GOSH Charity).

Now in its third year, Goals 4 GOSH returned to Selhurst Park, the home of Premier League side Crystal Palace, as the Palace Eagles took on the Crystal Kangaroos. The action-packed day included a TikTok Tournament featuring stars of the platform, and an Allstars Tournament where celebrities, sponsors, and families of children under the care of Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH), strapped on their boots.

Among the stars to appear was grime star Santan Dave, ex-Premier League defender Anton Ferdinand, England lionesses Fara Williams, Katie Chapman and Lianne Sanderson, and Hollywood star Tamer Hassan.

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

Jamie said: "Goals 4 GOSH has taken off to a level we never could have imagined when we launched it two years ago.

"If you'd have told me back then we'd have raised a combined total of more than £110,000 I would never have believed you – it's absolutely incredible, I'd like to thank everyone who took part, watched from the stands or tuned in on the livestream, as well as those who provided sponsorship, donations, goods, their time, resources and marketing support to spread the word. None of this would be possible without the support I receive from Funeral Partners, and from my good friend, Charlotte Styles who has co-organised this event with me since 2021.

"The money raised is absolutely vital for this amazing charity and knowing how it will benefit GOSH families is what drives me to fundraise for this extraordinary hospital."

In addition to the funds raised at this year's Goals for GOSH event, Jamie secured a surprise £10,000 donation, which was presented by former World Cup winner Cesc Fabregas after the initiative was nominated for a global competition run by the Spaniard's club, FC Como.

The funds also received a boost from TikTok rapper Formz who released a charity single for Goals 4 GOSH called 'Heroes', which was played on national radio stations including Magic FM and Absolute Radio.

Kelly Hailou, Marketing Director speaking on behalf of Funeral Partners, said: "Everyone at Funeral Partners

is incredibly proud of Jamie and what the team have achieved. We have been humbled by the generosity and support this event has received from all involved."

Tentative plans are already being made for next year's event and future fundraising.

Commenting on the success of this year's event, Marina Barnes, Head of Community Fundraising at GOSH Charity said: "Goals 4 GOSH is a fantastic family event that has gone from strength to strength over the past three years. We'd like to thank Jamie and Charlotte, as well as everyone who supported on the day, for making this year's event the most successful yet.

"Funds from Goals 4 GOSH will go towards building a new, state-of-the-art Children's Cancer Centre at GOSH, which will house the most cutting-edge facilities and expertise to give hope to the hundreds of children and families every year who face a cancer diagnosis."

In recognition of their tireless commitment to fundraising for the organisation, Jamie and Charlotte have been named GOSH Charity volunteer ambassadors.



For more information about Goals 4 GOSH, go to Facebook @goals4gosh, Instagram @goals4gosh or www.linktr.ee/Goals4gosh where donations are still open.



THE PALACE EAGLES WIN THE GOALS 4 GOSH CUP



CELEBRITIES AND EX-PROS WERE OUT IN FORCE



GOALS 4 GOSH FOUNDERS CHARLOTTE STYLES AND JAMIE GROVES



JAMIE GROVES SHOWING OFF HIS SKILLS AT SELHURST PARK



CELEBRATING THE VALUED WORK OF OUR COLLEAGUES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

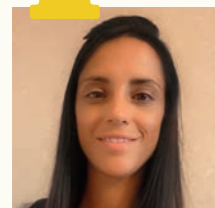
Each and every day our 1,000 funeral professionals across the country do everything they can to support our clients in what can be difficult times, ensuring our funeral homes and the teams remain at the heart of their wider community.

We asked our people to nominate their Funeral Professionals of the Year – the team members who showcase our company values of Accepting Responsibility, Professional Standards, Helping People, Respect For Everyone, First Choice For Families and Best In The Profession in everything they do.

Those with the most votes were selected as the winners for their respective regions and our internal panel of judges selected an overall top three. Here's a little bit about our winners and why they were nominated.



Funeral Professional of the Year Winner



Francesca Capaldi
Funeral Arranger
Scotland & North East

Francesca is a worthy winner of our Funeral Professional of the Year award and was nominated by her colleagues at **W. Storey Funeral Service** in Guisborough for her tireless community work.

This includes World Book Day collections for local schools and charities, daffodil donations on Mother's Day, an Easter egg drive and a special bereavement support project where she arranged for dozens of knitted cribs for babies who sadly died prematurely to help grieving families.

She was nominated by a number of colleagues who hailed the difference she has made to her branch, and the Scotland & North East region.

“ It's very overwhelming. It means everything that I do on a day-to-day basis is worth it.

I work for a very small branch and for the work I've done to be recognised on a national level is amazing. It shows that the hard work pays off. ”



Funeral Professional of the Year Runner Up



Celine Jackson
Funeral Service
Operative
Midlands

Celine's dedication to her work at **Dawe Brothers Funeral Directors** in Hereford has made a huge difference to the team she works with.

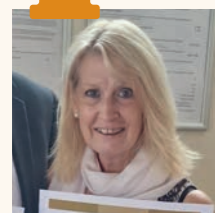
Earlier this year, she started taking on extra shifts, additional responsibilities and taking it upon herself to learn new skills to help progress her career. She is always putting others first, and has even taken time to reorganise and tidy all branch mortuaries.

Celine has also found time to undergo online training to further her career, doing everything with a smile and sunny disposition.

“ I was shocked when I was told it was me – I definitely think there were others more deserving – but to have recognition from the people I work with is great. ”



Funeral Professional of the Year Special Mention



Deborah Kirwan
Devlin
Regional
Administrator
South

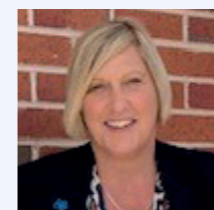
Deborah is universally appreciated and respected by her team and is often described as one of the unsung heroes at Funeral Partners.

She is a key contact for all of our brands in the South of England, and helps ensure deadlines are met, administrative issues are dealt with effectively, and operations run smoothly for our teams and the clients they care for.

Deborah is described as someone who is never too busy to offer support and guidance and is always at the end of the phone for people who need her. Not only is she a respected figure in the South region, she also supports other areas when they need help.

“ Next year, I will have been working in the funeral business for 20 years and there is never a dull day. I'm absolutely thrilled to bits to have won the award – I'm extremely lucky and I love what I do. ”

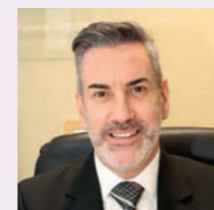
REGIONAL WINNERS



Emma Lowe – Funeral Manager – North

Emma was nominated for her work helping to upskill and train her colleagues in the North region and helping to forge new community links.

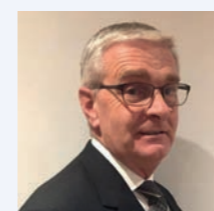
She also played a crucial role in arranging a wedding ceremony on less than 24 hours' notice, for a colleague's mother who was receiving end of life care.



Terry Weir – Senior Funeral Director – Northern Ireland & Merseyside

Terry's hard work and dedication has seen him take more responsibility on over the last 18 months at **James Brown and Sons Funeral Directors**.

He plays a key role in maintaining the high standards expected by families and is described as respectful, professional and always willing to help.



Brian Fish – Diary Manager – Central England

Brian's calm manner and responsive nature is why he has been given this award, such is the appreciation of his colleagues across several funeral brands.

His experience and hard work ensure he is able to give our families the times and dates for funerals which suit them best.



Helen Carr – Senior Funeral Arranger – London South & South East England

A stalwart at **Firmager Funeral Service**, Helen was put forward for her support of colleagues and the fundraising and community activities she organises.

She was also described as a fabulous Funeral Arranger dedicated to supporting families.

SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR



Our funeral professionals are assisted in their work by our support teams, whose tireless work behind the scenes ensures all of our funeral homes and services run smoothly.

Teams were also asked to nominate the standout professionals from these departments who deserved recognition and consistently demonstrated the Funeral Partners core values.

Lynne Young, Pre-Need Business Development Manager has been named Support Professional of the Year for leading her team with empathy, dedication and respect, while dealing with the changes to the industry since Government regulation was introduced to the funeral plan industry a year ago.

Runners-up in this category were Operational Support Manager **Ian Reynolds**, Head of Financial Operations **Kevin Nicholls** and Payroll Manager **Lorraine Regel**.



ECO-DRIVE CONTINUES WITH NEW FLEET OF HYBRID VEHICLES

New cars are another step towards greater vehicle sustainability



The team at John Clark Funeral Service with their new hybrid vehicles

Two funeral homes within the Funeral Partners family have recently taken delivery of brand-new hybrid Mercedes vehicles.

Quinns Funeral Directors, which has served families in Greasby, Hoylake and West Kirby Wirral for a combined 70 years and John Clark Funeral Service, which has been serving bereaved families in the Bellshill and North Lanarkshire area since 2001, have taken delivery of the vehicles which combine both petrol and electric capabilities.

The hybrid Mercedes hearses and limousines, which are being rolled out across the Funeral Partners network, can run in full electric mode for up to 30 miles, ensuring a silent funeral procession, while producing zero emissions when driving through built-up areas.

Commenting on the investment it has made in the new fleet, Funeral Partners Chief Executive Sam Kershaw said, "The new fleet reflects our continued drive towards achieving greater sustainability and enables our branches to continue to offer the very best in terms of choice, service and comfort."

Funeral Director John Clark Jr from John Clark Funeral Service, agrees: "We have always taken great pride in our ability to provide our clients with a comfortable and dignified final journey but now, as well as being respectful to those who have passed, we are able to offer even greater respect for the welfare of those we live alongside in our community by offering a more environmentally friendly choice," he said.



The new cars at Quinns Funeral Directors

This is a view echoed by Angela Dallinger, Business Principal at Quinns Funeral Directors, who said: "The new vehicles, which will be available across all three branches, will help us to continue to ensure that our clients' loved ones' final journeys are dignified and serene, as we provide the standard of care which has been synonymous with Quinns since the beginning."

STAN HAD A FUNERAL PLAN... AND THAT'S WHY HIS FUNERAL WENT EXACTLY HOW HE WANTED IT TO GO

If you would like your family to know what you want at your final goodbye, then a Choice Funeral Plan could be for you.

You might have seen best friends Maureen and Brenda starring in television adverts for Choice Funeral Plans, provided by Alternative Planning Company Limited - part of the Funeral Partners Group.

The beloved pair made wry comments about the interesting choices taken by family members who guessed what their loved ones wanted, because they didn't have a funeral plan in place.

But their friend Stan had a plan which Maureen and Brenda approved of, saying it had given peace of mind to his relatives and ensured he'd got exactly what he had wanted.

So if you want to be like Stan, then a Choice plan could be worth considering.

There's a lot to think about when arranging a funeral. It might be a formal service, or something more low-key and celebratory, there might be certain flowers or music which are must-haves and others to avoid entirely.

With a funeral plan you can ensure your wishes are recorded, to help your family make the arrangements and be safe in the knowledge there could be less financial burden on your nearest and dearest.

It is now more than a year since the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) started regulating the pre-paid funeral plan industry.

Since the regulations came in, more than 600 members of the Funeral Partners family have been trained to offer the plan, ensuring they sell plans in a responsible way according to consumer duty guidelines.

The effectiveness of this programme was recognised by the International Compliance Association who nominated the Funeral Plan Regulation training programme for a prestigious ICA Compliance Award.

This provides Funeral Partners with an independent



AS SEEN ON TV

Advert stars Maureen and Brenda

validation of their hard work and commitment to compliance practices.

You can only buy a plan from a regulated provider – and being a regulated product means up to £85,000 of your money is protected by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

With a Choice plan you can pay for elements of your funeral in advance, and fix the costs of Funeral Director Services, protecting you from any price rises. Other voluntary contributions can also be made towards certain third-party fees which must be paid for, in addition to the funeral plan cost, in order for a funeral service to take place.

You can make additional voluntary contributions to help your family towards these costs at the time of purchasing a plan. Depending upon the amount you pay, there may be a shortfall when the plan is redeemed, which would need to be paid for based on prices at that time.

To find out more about how you can plan and pay for your funeral in advance, call 0808 2586 160, go online to choiceplan.co.uk or visit one of the team in branch. To find your local Funeral Partners funeral home visit funeralpartners.co.uk

Be like Stan, and get yourself a plan!

Choice Funeral Plans are provided by Alternative Planning Company Ltd which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FRN 965282) and belong to Funeral Partners Group.

These details can be found on the Financial Services Register at <https://register.fca.org.uk/s/>

choice
from Funeral Partners

choiceplan.co.uk

COMMUNITY FUNDS MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO CHARITIES CLOSE TO OUR HEARTS

Following the success of the James Brown & Sons Community Fund which launched last year, two more funeral homes are now able to support good causes with grants.



James Brown and Sons Funeral Home Manager Andrew Neale, with Jim McGardle and Philip Edgerton from Compassion Belfast

Young people from a variety of backgrounds will get the chance to make new friendships and integrate into their community through football, thanks to the latest grants from the James Brown & Sons Community Fund.

Charities representing communities within two miles of their funeral homes in Belfast have had the chance to apply for payments between £300 and £1,500 since the inaugural community fund launched last year.

Cregagh Wanderers are among the latest beneficiaries and have been given £1,000 to help fund their ten-week introduction to football camp, for children aged between 9 and 15 from minority backgrounds.

The scheme ran throughout the summer, allowing children and their families to find out about what the club offers, with the hope they continue to play in the coming seasons.

Kim McLennan, Club Secretary and Coach said: "Several members of our club are from ethnic minorities, and they and their parents have told us that when they first arrived, they felt that they did not know where to turn or who to speak to when it came to accessing sporting opportunities.

"One of our teams now has eight different nationalities in it. It's great to see so many people from different backgrounds coming together.

"We're so grateful for the £1,000 which will help us continue to attract new people and integrate them properly into the club."

Elsewhere, £1,000 was given to The Toolbox – a project run by charity **Compassion Belfast** in Donegall Pass – which helps both men and women who experience mental health problems keep active and engaged via woodworking.

More than 20 people per week regularly attend, with completed items, including log figure garden ornaments, dog-themed garden planters and much more either sold to raise money for the charity or kept by participants.

Grants from the community fund has allowed them to upgrade their tools and will ensure more people can participate.

Project Co-ordinator at Compassion Belfast Jim McGardle said: "I know from my own experience with mental health issues that keeping busy, and doing something with your hands, can be beneficial because it stops your mind racing.

"We have people attending regularly but have had more and more interest from wellbeing groups who want to come as a collective.

"This is where the money from the fund will help us so much – we can get more tools and increase our capacity on offer."

James Brown, said: "These schemes from Cregagh Wanderers and Compassion Belfast are exactly the sort of projects we are keen to support.

"It's great to see the fund continuing to make a real difference in the communities we are so proud to support.

"I'd encourage anyone with a suitable project in need of funding to get in touch."

To apply for a grant, or for more details about qualifying criteria visit www.jamesbrownfuneraldirectors.com

FIRST JOHN BLENKIRON COMMUNITY FUND SUPPORTS TEN CHARITABLE CAUSES



A Funeral Directors which has been proudly supporting the community for more than 50 years has given grants to ten local causes following the launch of their first ever community fund.

The £20,000 John Blenkiron & Sons Community Fund launched earlier this year with the aim of supporting charities within a three-mile radius of John Blenkiron & Sons Funeral Directors branches in Richmond, Barnard Castle and Catterick.

The successful applicants have now been awarded their grants following an application window in the spring.

These include Richmond Refugee Support Group who are using the money for welcome packs for people arriving into the country, 1st Richmond Scout Group who will be spending their grant on outdoor cooking equipment, and Richmondshire Dales Amateur Swimming Club who will use it support their disabled team with travel to compete at home and abroad.

Senior Funeral Director Rebekah Elliott has been co-ordinating the fund and is pleased to have created

relationships with the groups they have supported.

"Working with these charities has been absolutely amazing," she said.

"I've always been passionate about supporting the community. We have a lot to offer, not only as a business but also as individuals.

"We hope that the community fund will enable us to forge lasting relationships where we can offer support and assistance long term.

"We're not purely donating money, we are also showing these causes that we care about our local community."

"It's been great to get to know more about charities we didn't know about before we launched the fund."

James Blenkiron is Business Principal for the Funeral Directors which his father set up back in 1968.

"It is really rewarding to know we are giving back to the community," he said.

"I'm so proud we've been able to do this."

MILES & DAUGHTERS FUNERAL DIRECTORS LAUNCH THIRD FUNERAL PARTNERS COMMUNITY FUND

Respected Berkshire business **Miles & Daughters Funeral Directors** is set to become the third Funeral Partners brand to launch their own community fund when they invite applications from charities in September.

The team has a £20,000 fund which good causes who are situated close to their funeral homes in Winnersh, Reading, Twyford, Bracknell, Crowthorne, Maidenhead and Tadley can apply for.

Area Development Manager Sarah White said: "I think it's going to be absolutely amazing. It's a huge pot of money which is going to make such a difference to the smaller charities that so often get overlooked.

"The team here are feeling really positive and excited about it because we really value being able to support our local community. When the opportunity arose to be the third brand of Funeral Partners to launch a community fund, I thought we would be a great fit."

To apply for a grant, or for more details about qualifying criteria visit www.milesfunerals.com/community-fund



Miles & Daughters

Community Fund

CONNECTING WITH OUR COMMUNITIES

By being active in our local communities and supporting causes that matter, we're able to break down barriers about death and bereavement and help people get to know Funeral Directors better. Here's how Funeral Partners connect with the communities we serve.



E Sargeant in Slough have donated a TV to St John the Baptist Manor Park

All of our funeral homes value their reputation in the local community, and actively work with numerous local charities and community organisations. We are happy to offer support in a variety of ways, from placing advertising in community magazines, getting involved with a fundraising project, volunteering or simply offering to promote an appropriate local charity through a window display.

Every year our Community Calendar highlights key national charities who we seek to support. With the help of our network of local Community Champions we work closely with many local groups, good causes and charities in the community as well as local branches of national charities, such as the Royal British Legion, to promote appropriate events such as Remembrance Day in November.

In the run-up to Christmas, many of our funeral homes organise a Memorial Service in a local church or community venue to celebrate the lives of loved ones that have been lost during the year. These are greatly appreciated and well-attended by our clients and families.

Speak to your local Funeral Partners funeral home today to find out how we can support your charity or community organisation.

You can find your nearest Funeral Partners branch by visiting funeralpartners.co.uk.



Peter Mulholland from Mulhollands Funeral Directors recently supported local charity Hope House Ireland

Objectives

- Encourage our communities to open up about bereavement and funerals
- Carry out community activities to get more people acquainted with their local Funeral Directors
- Support the causes that matter to our local communities
- Be available and there to support - always at the heart of our local community

Achievements

- Raised more than £125k last year to support local good causes and charities
- Launched three community funds to support local causes. (P14)
- Enabled clients, families and friends to raise £10m for their chosen charities via our online tribute and donation service, provided by MuchLoved since the partnership began in 2014

Commitments

- Update our training resources which our teams provide to local groups, care homes and hospices to provide a greater understanding of the care of the deceased
- Provide more toolkits for our teams to engage with the local community, taking into account new regulatory requirements
- Introduce more Community Funds into local areas to give back to communities

FUNERAL PARTNERS PAY TRIBUTE TO STEVE COYLE

Tributes have been paid to Funeral Partners Director of PreNeed Steve Coyle who has sadly passed away following a brave battle with cancer.

Steve had been in remission following his original diagnosis in 2016 and fought the disease with strength and positivity when it returned to ensure he made as many memories as possible with his beloved wife and two teenage sons.

He passed away at the end of August, shortly after his 53rd birthday, at Thames Hospice surrounded by his family.

Steve was a paragon of professionalism, wholeheartedly committed to the continued success of Funeral Partners. His skill and dedication earned him a position as a Director, cementing his status as an indispensable and respected member of the Senior Management Team.

Chief Executive Sam Kershaw said: "Steve was incredibly dedicated to Funeral Partners and continued working throughout his treatment, with fierce commitment to driving through change and innovation, not only in the



delivery of our PreNeed strategy for Choice Funeral Plans, but to the overall success of the Funeral Partners business.

"At this sad time our thoughts and prayers are not only with his wife and family, but also his many friends and colleagues within Funeral Partners and the wider industry.

"Steve was rightfully proud of his personal and professional achievements.

"A special thanks to Thames Hospice, Frimley Health Charity, The Royal Marsden and St George's Hospital who have all played a huge role in caring for Steve and his family throughout his treatment – these organisations do amazing things every day to support the physical, social and emotional well-being of individuals and families impacted by cancer.

"Steve will leave a big gap in our team and our hearts and will be sorely missed by us all."

Steve, who was a chartered accountant by trade, advanced his career working in organisations including HSBC Trust Group, Avon Cosmetics, Which Legal, Equini Group, and Lifetime Legal.

£50,000 HOSPICE PLEDGE COMPLETE

E Sargeant & Son Funeral Directors has completed an amazing fundraising pledge to donate £50,000 over five years to help support people needing end of life care.

Supported by sister brands Miles & Daughters Funeral Directors and Richard Lloyd Funeral Services, they have now presented their fifth £10,000 cheque to Thames Hospice.

Over the years, team members from the three Funeral Directors have held sponsored events including a climb over the O2 Arena, and swimming, cycling and hiking challenges on behalf of the hospice which cares for people in East Berkshire and South Buckinghamshire.

There have also been more than £150,000 of donations from clients who have been supported by the hospice, or their family and friends who have given in memory of a loved one via the partnership between the Funeral Directors and online tribute and donation portal MuchLoved.

Funeral Partners pledged to donate £10,000 each year from 2018, making a total of £50,000 for the hospice to continue to provide their outstanding care to a project Steve was passionate about.

Jane Symmons, Major Gifts Associate Director at Thames Hospice said: "Thank you for your wonderful support over the past five years. The funds raised for our hospice will help us continue to provide compassionate care and support."

Going forward, Funeral Partners' homes in the area will continue to support Thames Hospice initiatives such as their annual Light up a Life service and other charity events.



Steve Coyle presents a cheque to Thames Hospice in April



Thank you messages



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

E Sargeant & Sons Funeral Directors, Slough

We had a very warm and caring experience with E Sargeant & Sons Funeral Directors. Pam looked after me during a very difficult time and walked me through all of the steps leading up to the funeral service

GK

CL Birkett & Son Funeral Directors, Manchester

On behalf of our family, I'd like to say a huge thank you to all the staff at CL Birkett & Son Funeral Directors. They have made a truly difficult time so much easier. A big thank you as well to Paul who handled the whole funeral process with such professionalism and care.

EB

Hemming & Peace Funeral Services, Henley-in-Arden, Warwickshire

The whole team at Hemming & Peace provided an exemplary service for the funeral of my father. We were kept fully informed of each stage of the process and they were always there if we needed a chat. I cannot recommend them highly enough.

PS

John G Hogg Funeral Directors, Sunderland

Claire, Kenneth and the team dealt with a particularly difficult set of circumstances with sympathy, a great deal of insight and with professionalism, smoothing the way for us all. Our grateful thanks from us to you all.

SC

Frank Dooley & Sons Funeral Directors, Widnes

Thank you, Martin, Steph, Alex and the team for a seamless and very dignified funeral. The whole process was full of dignity and compassion. Dooley's said that they have a reputation for Catholic funerals, and they delivered on their promise. All our wishes were arranged with both the church and the crematorium. They were also very competitively priced, costs were transparent and fully explained. I would highly recommend them.

SM

Eaves Funeral Service, Whitehaven, Cumbria

We received a fantastic service from start to finish in the most difficult of times. Michael was a true gentleman and nothing was too much trouble. I couldn't have been happier with the care and compassion he showed my family.

CM

Payne & Sons Funeral Directors, Eastbourne

We cannot praise Mark & Lee's team enough.

We were fortunate to have someone recommend them to us when our mother passed. From our very first telephone conversation they were compassionate, respectful and so kind. This continued through the entire process of collecting our mother, arranging the service and for the service itself.

They explained what needed to happen and helped us. They answered questions we didn't even realise we needed to ask. They stayed in contact while it was all being organised, to keep us updated and check that all our and our mother's wishes were fulfilled.

If ever we or our friends are in this sad situation again, I would use their services and recommend them with 100 per cent peace of mind.

Thank you so much for caring so respectfully for our mother on behalf of all our family.

SD

G & M Gould Funeral Directors, Chester

I would like to express my sincere thanks to everyone for a first-class service regarding the funeral arrangements for my dear auntie. All the staff were very supportive, giving me advice and appropriate guidance during this difficult time.

This included the celebrant who delivered the service and eulogy in a sensitive manner. The whole funeral service was conducted to a very high standard, including a webcast to enable family living abroad to see the funeral.

SS

Pinks Funeral Directors, Hamsey Green, Surrey

Pinks were extremely professional and very helpful. Lorraine in particular went out of her way to help me with every step from beginning to end. I can't thank you enough for your support.

GM

John G Hogg Funeral Directors, Sunderland

First class service. Mum was insistent that we use the services of John Hogg and his team as they have looked after our family for years. They did her proud as we knew they would. Thanks to all, especially Claire.

JC

Drakes of Torbay, Torquay

I just wanted to thank both Stuart and Chas for how marvellously they managed a very difficult time for our family. They treated us with respect and empathy at all times and could not have done more to make the process happen as painlessly as possible. Chas steered us very well on the eulogy or tribute to my father-in-law's life. He delivered it with great warmth, poignancy and respect. We could not recommend Drakes highly enough.

AN

Blackheath Funeral Service, London

I'd highly recommend this Funeral Directors, especially Toni at the Blackheath branch who is so caring and empathetic. They are all very caring people.

AA

Roy Quinton Funeral Directors, Walsall

On behalf of all the family we would like to say that Wendy and her team couldn't have been more helpful during this difficult time. Their compassionate approach was professional throughout the whole process. They guided us every step of the way and we could not fault them. We have used Roy Quinton for previous family funerals and their high standard of service is always consistent whether that be a burial or cremation. A huge thank you to all the staff involved with our most recent family funeral.

LB

Doves Funeral Directors, Maidstone, Kent

Doves took care of my mum's funeral arrangements. We were very happy with the service from start to finish. From Kayleigh in the office to Chris, the Funeral Director on the day, nothing was too much trouble and our wishes were very much respected.

PR

NEWLY RELEASED VIDEOS AND RESOURCES AIM TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE DURING THEIR GRIEF JOURNEY



Members of Cruse Bereavement Support's Youth Advisory Group

As four young people experience the death of a parent every day in Northern Ireland, a partnership between Funeral Partners NI and grief charity Cruse Bereavement Support NI, with assistance from the National Lottery Community Fund, is supporting young people navigating the loss of a loved one.

The Teenage Youth Bereavement Project is a video support resource that has been created by members of Cruse Bereavement Support's, Youth Advisory Group - 'Somewhere For Us'. The short films include testimonies from young people about their own grief journey, discussion of personal experience following loss, and guidance on how to address grief, in a bid to support their peers who find themselves facing the death of someone they loved.

From discussing the individuality of each bereavement journey to the feelings young people have surrounding death, the videos aim to bring a level of understanding to a journey that has been presented so prematurely to many young people across the Province. Entitled 'Coping Immediately After a Death', 'Birthdays and Anniversaries', 'Coping at School or College' and 'How to be a Grief Ally', they offer guidance to help prevent isolation but equally promote self-care and time alone to process the huge life event that is death.

Funeral Homes in Northern Ireland involved in this project include **Adair & Neely, Bairds of Antrim, James Brown & Sons, John Gray & Co, Joseph Poots & Son, Mulhollands Funeral Directors and Shields of Donaghadee.**

Speaking about the new resources, Beverley Brown, Community Relations and Marketing Manager for Funeral

Partners NI said: "Grieving is individual to every single person. Dealing with death is a challenging life event but when it happens to young people, it can be an even more complex event that can be extremely isolating.

"We hope that these resources, created through Funeral Partners' collaboration with Cruse Bereavement NI, are a positive step in supporting young people and those who work with them to help them understand, and live with loss.

"It is important for us to be part of an initiative that reaches out to young people and their peers at a time when they need it most."

Thelma Abernethy, Head of Cruse in NI, said: "We were delighted to be asked by James Brown & Sons to help with this project. Whilst four young people a day experience the death of a parent, many more are bereaved of siblings, grandparents, friends and other family members, so the statistics are a lot higher.

"Support for bereaved children and young people when they need it is vital and we know that these videos will be of great value to them. The Youth Advisory Group at Cruse decided on the topics for the videos and developed the content. They felt it was important to include some guidance for teachers and for other young people who may be supporting their friend who has been bereaved.

"They are an amazing group of bereaved young people who want to ensure that other bereaved young people know they are not alone."

To find out more about the project or to request a pack, please visit: www.jamesbrownfuneraldirectors.com/cruse-bereavement/

For more information about all the funeral homes in the Funeral Partners family visit www.funeralpartners.co.uk or contact Kelly Hailou, Marketing Director: 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 Gemma Taylor, Community & Communications Manager: community@funeralpartners.co.uk.