



Environmental Health, Consumer & Bereavement Services

Memorial Safety Policy

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Historically, health & safety concerns in cemeteries have focused on the risks arising from grave digging. In recent years there has been increasing attention on the stability of memorials and the risks these present to cemetery staff and visitors.
- 1.2 Tameside MBC has been pro-active in taking measures to deal with head stone safety. A Memorial Masons Registration Scheme was introduced in January 2001 to prevent further risks within Tameside Cemeteries.
- 1.3 An accident to a member of the public at Dukinfield Cemetery and a later fatality in a Salford Churchyard led to Enforcement Notices being served on Tameside MBC to make safe any headstones found to be 'in immediate danger of falling'. The notices related to Dukinfield and Droylsden Cemeteries. Tameside MBC complied with the terms of the notice and carried out the necessary tests at the six other Tameside Cemeteries.

2.0 Duties

- 2.1 Primary responsibility for health and safety in Council owned cemeteries lies with Tameside MBC as the burial authority in control of the cemetery. Tameside MBC is required to control the risks associated with any cemetery for which they have responsibility.
- 2.2 Whilst Tameside MBC has overall responsibility for the safety of the cemetery, including risks from unstable memorials, it does not own the memorials. The owner of the memorial will be the grave owner. In many cases there is no identifiable owner.
- 2.3 The Council has a responsibility to staff (Section 2 Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and a responsibility to visitors (Section 3 Health & Safety at Work Act 1974). The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 places a legal duty on the Council to assess the risks from cemetery structures and work activities and ensure that the risks are controlled.

3.0 Immediate Danger

- 3.1 In cases of immediate danger, the Council is empowered under the provision of the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 (LACO) Article 6 (1) to take immediate action to make safe dangerous memorials.
- 3.2 **The Council is prohibited from taking direct action to remove anunstable memorial which presents no immediate risk without following the strict procedures laid down in LACO.** Posting public

notices, seeking the permission of owners (if they can be contacted) before taking action.

- 3.3 For work on consecrated areas, the Council have to apply to the bishop of the Diocese of Chester or Manchester. **The responsibility for ongoing maintenance of individual memorials rests with the grave owners.**

4.0 Guidance

- 4.1 The guidance, Management of Memorials was published in the Institute of Burial and Cremation Authorities (IBCA) Dec 2000 is recommended in the HSE Local Authority Circular LAC Number: 23/18 Aug 2001. The guidance recommends the following actions that will form part of Tameside MBC policy with regard to Memorial Safety in Tameside MBC operated cemeteries:

- 4.2 This policy has been designed to mirror the HSE and IBCA guidance. The first recommendation being that ***'a clear policy should be in place with set standards for management of memorial stability'***. Further recommendations (HSE guidance is highlighted in bold italics) on training, inspections are covered in the following paragraphs of this policy document.

5.0 Training

- 5.1 ***'All staff should be trained to carry out inspection of unstable memorials'*** A specific training course has been designed for Tameside MBC employees. The content of the course was formulated by Bereavement Services Staff, Health & Safety Officers and Structural Engineers.
- 5.3 Topics covered during the training course include: Testing Method, Consistency, Marking and Record Keeping, Manual Handling and Personal Protective Clothing.
- 5.4 Training is provided prior to all checks and working in teams ensures consistency.

6.0 Initial Inspection Programme

- 6.1 ***An initial inspection should be carried out to identify any memorials posing an immediate danger to the public.*** This inspection has been completed in all Tameside MBC cemeteries (see Section * for closed churchyards). All memorials posing an immediate danger to the public have been carefully laid flat. Actions in relation to the initial tests have been recorded (information fixed to individual headstones and letters to last known grave owner).

7.0 Fuller Inspection Programme & Frequency

7.1 Inspection

'A fuller inspection should be carried out to ensure that memorials in cemeteries are safe and that actions taken are properly recorded and maintained'. An inspection programme has been drawn up and is in place for all Cemeteries. This is a 'rolling programme approach' which the HSE describe as a ***'reasonable'***.

7.2 Frequency

'The frequency of inspection is for the Council to decide as part of their assessment and review procedures' It is possible to vary inspection frequency based on age, size and condition of the memorial. To reduce risks and eliminate the potential for errors or omissions Tameside MBC will inspect every memorial within every cemetery on the same frequency as outlined in Section 8.0

7.5 Action

'If memorials are in immediate danger of falling, then cemetery management should take immediate action by either: laying them down, structurally supporting them, cordoning them off; or carrying out immediate repairs. In addition warning signs should be considered throughout the cemetery' see Section 8.0 Options

8.0 Options

8.1 Laying Down Memorials

This is the most effective way to quickly reduce the risk of falling, it is however not without problems which include – damage to memorials, distress to families, tripping/slipping hazards

8.2 Structurally Supporting Memorials

This option reduces some of the problems outlined in paragraph 8.1 however, it is a time consuming and expensive option. Many memorials cannot be supported without presenting tripping hazards from scaffolding etc.

8.3 Cordoning Memorials

This is considered to be the cheapest and quickest option but it is the least effective. Visitors and Funeral Parties are prevented from accessing grave spaces and the integrity of cordons can easily be breached. Yellow memorial covers have been used on a trial basis but serve only as a means of alerting a hazard. These options do not remove the risk and are considered to be useful a temporary emergency measure.

8.4 Immediate Repairs

This option, once favoured by Tameside MBC, has been somewhat ruled out by HSE inspectors and described as a 'Gold Standard' which

takes a blinkered view and is too time consuming to be fully effective in removing risks

9.0 Tameside MBC Approach to Inspection & Repair

Having considered all guidance, industry standards and the options outlined in Section 8 of this policy document, Tameside MBC will implement the following approach

9.1 Inspection

All staff carrying out inspections have been trained by Tameside MBC structural engineers. A hand push test is used and not 'topple tester' device. A current risk assessment and method statement are in place. Cemetery staff should only inspect memorials, which are below 2m high. **Memorials above 2m will require specialist inspections (structural engineers). These memorials will be identified during the routine inspections and a list forwarded to the specialist as soon as the inspection of that Cemetery is complete,**

9.2 Frequency

Year 1 (2003/4) & Year 2 (2004/5) 6 monthly push test of every memorial headstone. Summer and Winter checks.
Year 3 (2005/6) Review of scheme

9.3 Action

Memorials found to be 'in immediate danger of falling' will be carefully lowered to the ground in accordance with the training given. At a later stage, if funding allows and families cannot be traced inlaying of memorials may take place, particularly where access is restricted. This will be dependant on the size and condition of the memorial and availability of lifting equipment.

9.2 Records

A record shall be kept of any action taken in relation to memorial safety, a chronology of meetings, actions is retained by the Senior Registrar. This document provides a true reflection of the Tameside MBC's commitment to memorial safety.

Inspection Records shall be made for every inspection and documents retained by the Senior Registrar for a period of 3 years.

9.3 Signage

Permanent warning signs are on display throughout all cemeteries outlining the potential danger of unstable memorials. Additional signs have been provided and further signs/notice boards are to be displayed to raise awareness among visitors

9.4 Notification

Notification of any action in relation to an individual memorial will be sent to the last known address of the current grave owner. Additional notification will be fixed to memorials following any action taken by Tameside MBC.

9.2 Funding

Monies allocated from Capital Tameside for Year 1 (2003/4) has been partly spent on the initial inspection programme – training, protective clothing etc. £29,000. The remaining monies will be invested in the lease or purchase of lifting equipment to enable inlaying of memorials. This will significantly reduce the problems identified with the options in Section 8, distress to families, tripping hazards etc.

This equipment will enable memorials to be lifted from their original position and sunk into the ground at a depth that will ensure stability. This is an accepted industry approach to repairs of older style large memorials.

9.3 The Memorial Masons Registration Scheme

The success of the scheme was apparent during the initial inspection of all memorials. No memorials fitted since the introduction of the registration scheme failed to pass the initial test. This is attributed to the scheme's requirement to install memorials to the Code of Working Practice issued by the National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM) using an accredited ground anchor system.

10.2 The integrity of the Memorial Masons Registration Scheme will continue to be enforced by the vigilance of all Bereavement Services Staff and members of the scheme.