



MEMORIAL SAFETY POLICY AND PROCEDURES

BACKGROUND

Awareness of the potential dangers of unsafe memorials were heightened in 1995 and 2001 following the deaths of a nine year old girl and six year old boy caused by memorials falling on them.

As a result guidelines were developed for local authorities to ensure memorial inspection procedures were put in place.

Keynsham Town Council has developed a system outlined in this POLICY based on Ministry of Justice guidance and the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM).

RESPONSIBILITY FOR MEMORIAL SAFETY

THE SAFETY TESTING OF MEMORIALS WITHIN CEMETERIES IS A LEGAL REQUIREMENT FOR THE BURIAL AUTHORITY AND SHOULD BE CARRIED OUT EVERY 5 YEARS OR ON A ROLLING PROGRAMME.

Any Action to manage risks in Burial Grounds needs to be sensible, proportionate and undertaken in a sensitive way. A Burial Authority owe a general duty of care to visitors, contractors and other members of the public.

Keynsham Cemetery has been divided into 4 sections and the headstones in one section are tested each year.

All memorials will be visually inspected for defects or signs of instability. Operatives will look for :

- Damaged or eroding bonding
- Joints that are no longer intact
- Movement of parts of a memorial from its original position

- Undermined or unstable foundations
 - Leaning memorials – particularly if there is evidence of recent movement
 - Evidence of structural damage or disturbance (e.g. cracks) and:
1. All monuments will be tested irrespective of size. Headstones are to be tested at one metre above ground level, smaller ones at the 'grab point' at the top.
 2. The memorial will be visually inspected and details recorded on the Inspection Sheet.
 3. A gentle hand push test is then applied as it may be that a memorial is unstable with minimal pressure.
 4. Other memorials (obelisks, crosses etc) will not be tested in the above manner and the Council will arrange for a structural engineer to assess these if required.
 5. Those memorials that fail the test will be classed as High Risk and Low Risk. High Risk memorials will be laid down immediately and a laminated Notice will be placed on the Low Risk memorial failures. A photograph of the High Risk memorials being laid down will be taken before and after the laying down of the memorial.
The Notice will also include the contact details of the Town Council.
 6. Within three working days of the above action taking place the Council will write (if details are known) to the owners of the grave space giving them six weeks to have the memorial made safe (at their expense).
 7. If at the end of that time no action has been taken the Council will write again stating that if the memorial is not made safe within two weeks then the Council staff will reserve the right to carefully lay the memorial flat, if deemed necessary, for which it may make a charge.
 8. Reinstatement of failed memorials must be to NAMM standards and fitted with an approved ground anchor.
 9. Reinstated memorials will be retested within one month (this information will be included in the first letter sent to owners).
 10. Where low risk memorials have failed and we are unable to contact the owners, the memorial will be laid flat when the risk is significant to require this action
 11. The Diocese will then be informed of any memorials that have been laid down, in line with the direction of the Faculty.
 12. These procedures may be amended in line with any future testing limits and discussion with the Diocese.

Full records will be maintained if any are considered to pose a danger to the public .

Public Notification Procedure

A Notice will be displayed on the noticeboards at the Cemetery, the Council Office and on the Town Council's website.

April 2026

Cemetery/safetytesting procedures