

Bereaved families find peace of mind with new UK funeral technology

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Interactive tours of UK crematoria are being rolled out to help grieving families understand what happens ahead of a loved-one's funeral.

New technology, already embraced by the hospitality industry, to give the most realistic virtual experience, has now been adapted by a leading funeral company.

In a worldwide first, all five senses are targeted by 'immersive' show-round experiences – from seeing the layout of a chapel of rest, to hearing planned music and smelling flowers with scents made available ahead of the service.

Children and first-time funeral attendees can particularly benefit from an opportunity to get such a realistic taste of how a ceremony all fits together, says Frank Meilack, Director of Community Engagement at Memoria UK. (<https://www.memoria.org.uk/>)

"This is so much more than a virtual tour and brings greater peace of mind," said Frank.

"When you are in the middle of such a difficult time in planning for a loved one's funeral, we hope that being able to experience the surroundings in great HD detail before the day will allow a better sense of comfort and peace of mind.

"When we first saw this new technology, we could see that it was a clear extension of our ethos.

Attending a venue for the first time on the day of a service, for close family can be quite overwhelming.

A prior visit when your expectations are managed by experienced staff often eases that distress on the day. If this can be done from the comfort of your own home, it makes it more accessible for more people.

"Never before have events such as the pandemic and the overwhelming influence of the internet created such diverse choices for people planning a funeral.

"With the country being united in grief in recent days, this has underlined how much witnessing an actual funeral ceremony can start a process of grieving fully and working towards closure", Frank added.

He said: "There is a real human need to be able to experience a proper, dignified, high quality end of life celebration with a fully attended service. We do everything we can to make this happen, remembering at all times that funerals are for the living, so they can mourn. This is what the last days of remembrance and reflection have meant on a world stage, it is vital we ease the way for all families who turn to us in whatever way is needed.

"We continually research and find ways to help families at the most difficult time in their lives, including investing in new technology."

"Attending a venue for the first time on the day of a service, for close family can be quite overwhelming, Frank added.

“Being supported by this technology means we are adding to our already exceptional service, beautifully landscaped settings and manicured gardens.”

“A prior visit when your expectations are managed by experienced staff often eases that distress on the day.

“Being able to glide through virtually offers this in the comfort and safety of your own environment, which we do believe will be significantly helpful for the bereaved.

“No other UK facility offers this virtual option to manage the expectations of families and loved ones.

“Therefore we are investing in this very high-quality platform.

This move has been supported by Ann Chalmers, Chief Executive of Child Bereavement UK, (<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/>) a charity which supports families and trains professionals when a child grieves and when a child dies. She said:

“We know from the families we support at Child Bereavement UK that thinking about a funeral is one of many difficult things they have to face after someone important to them has died. Having the technology to enable families to familiarise themselves with a crematorium and its surroundings will undoubtedly go some way to helping them to feel more mentally prepared for what will happen on the day.

For bereaved children, Child Bereavement UK advocates that the adults caring for them explain clearly and simply what to expect at a funeral, giving them choice and an opportunity to feel included. This technology will be a useful tool for parents to help their children feel as prepared and comfortable as possible for the funeral, easing some of the anxiety and stress at what can be an extremely difficult time for everyone in the family.

Memoria has crematoria and memorial gardens at 11 sites, in North and Southern England, and in Wales and with a headquarters in Bicester, Oxfordshire. It recently led a drop-in sessions for MPs at Westminster after Prime Minister’s Questions.

Its groundbreaking technology allowing mourners to experience the surroundings of a cremation, has been supplied by Snowdonia-based hyybab, <https://hyybab.com/> launched last year by hyybab pioneers Leo and Paul Lloyd as they pivoted from their hospitality marketing business.

Leo said: “We knew that hyybab works wonderfully to bring places to life and we are honoured that our innovation has been embraced by Memoria.

As well as the hi-tech tour, mourners will also receive a pack of items to help gain insights into their intended site for a final goodbye.

“We are touched to think such sensitive and unforgettable times can be made easier by hyybab and that our technology is bringing some peace of mind to mourners.

“This is the first time this interactive and immersive software has been made available for those who are grieving. People may not imagine that a crematorium is a place for such a hands-on, virtual experience but it’s a perfect way to really help prepare for what can be such a tough day.”

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Issued by Linda Aitchison (07867 420803 linda@nurturemedia.co.uk) at Nurture Media on behalf of hyybab.
For more information please contact Leo on 07711 046645 or Frank on 07784 358188.