

Norfolk & Suffolk Police

Crime Prevention - Guidance Note

Reducing Cemetery Vandalism



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Our Priority is You

Keeping your Cemetery free from Vandalism and Crime

Every year reports of vandalism in cemeteries alarm the community and particularly relatives and friends of the deceased.

This Guidance Note offers ideas about how to limit vandalism and how to respond for the best possible outcome.

Good maintenance helps prevent vandalism.

To the best of your ability, maintain the grounds and keep the grave stones, memorials, buildings and other features in good repair. An unkempt cemetery draws more vandalism than those in good repair.

Education

Education is the single-most important factor in vandalism prevention. The more people know about the cemetery, the more they will care. There are a number of basic types of information you can provide.

For Further Crime Prevention Advice:-

For Norfolk dial 101 and ask to speak to your local Architectural Liaison Officer (ALO)

For Suffolk dial 101 and ask to speak to your local Safer Neighbourhood Team

Signs

A good start is a Cemetery sign. This should be a simple, visible sign with the name of the cemetery. A place with a name has more stature and value. A sign also shows that there are active caretakers, people who look after and care for the cemetery.

Also include basic information such as contact phone numbers and email addresses. Again, this emphasises that there are people caring for the cemetery. Ask neighbours to look out for and report any damage or vandalism they discover.

Include any rules or regulations relating to the cemetery, including those for items left on graves, monument rubbing and cleaning, access hours and anything related to burials.

Informative facts indicate a positive use of the cemetery for either paying respects and for genealogical research. Let offenders know that the cemetery is busy and that users are encouraged to report crime and vandalism.

Young People and Cemeteries

Encourage cemetery field trips for young people. These can be the start of a lifelong interest in historic preservation, art, folklore, or wildlife habitat studies. A graveyard can serve as an outdoor laboratory to study geology, chemistry, biology, and botany. Teachers of math, writing, literature, and social studies all can find creative outlets by utilising local cemeteries for lesson planning. Art students will have a tremendous variety of gravestones with which to study sculpture, photography, and drawing.

Community Involvement

Have clean-up days and events at the cemetery and invite the community. The more people who work on it, the more people will protect it.

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Create a secure environment.

If people who are there for the right reasons feel safe and secure, they will stay longer. If people who are there for the wrong reasons feel exposed, they will leave. A few simple tactics will increase security.

Good lighting with clear views deters inappropriate behaviour. Trim trees to 2m up from the ground. Keep ground cover and shrubs low to around 1m.

Providing seating encourages people to visit and enjoy the surroundings. Many people find this helpful in the grieving process.

Surrounding Neighbours

Contact surrounding neighbours and request their assistance in overseeing what goes on in the cemetery. They can be extra eyes and ears. Ask them to call the police if they see any suspicious behaviour and to notify you of any damage.

If Vandalism Occurs Act Quickly

If vandalism occurs, act quickly to repair the damage. Leaving damage unattended will only lead to further damage occurring.

Report any damage immediately to the Police and Local Authority. This will give those responsible a better chance of catching the offenders. Establishing a single point of contact for cemetery vandalism and crime will fast track the process. If possible safeguard the crime scene immediately. It is important that you leave everything intact and untouched. If damage occurs the site will become a crime scene and the correct processes need to be put into place. You need to ensure all the evidence is protected and collected. Evidence may include tyre or foot prints in the soil, discarded cans of spray paint, or rubbish that might contain a name or DNA.

Establish a media outlet. Let the community know as soon as possible what has happened and encourage them to report any useful information. This sends a

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message to offenders that they are being targeted. Take photos of the damage both for evidence and to demonstrate to others the mindless nature of these offences. Tell people about the penalties offenders will receive if caught.

Place signs in the Cemetery to say that vandalism has occurred and ask people to be extra vigilant. You can also include Crime Stoppers signs which offer a reward for any information leading to an arrest.

When the vandals are caught, consider the punishment options and work with the Criminal Justice Service to ensure that the punishment is appropriate. Restorative Justice ensures that the offender is responsible for helping to make good any damage and also for apologising to the victims be they friends or relatives.

Use the media to report successful outcomes and give messages to potential offenders.

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