



Memorial Bench Safety Testing Procedure

01 November V1

This procedure is intended for Maldon District Council cemetery staff looking to undertake the memorial bench testing procedure.

Frequency

An inspection programme has been drawn up and is in place for all benches on Maldon District land. This is a yearly ongoing programme, taking place in the spring. The check sheets for the inspection process can be found under *Inspection Check Sheet* in the relevant folder.

Notification and signage

We will help families to understand when the testing will take place and how it will happen.

- Information signage will be on display where there are notice boards (eg within the cemetery). This will provide details of what is happening and, should a bench be deemed unsafe, what the next steps are. The notices will only be displayed during the inspection period.
- If a bench fails the testing process, a laminated sign will be attached and warning tape around the bench to advise visitors and staff not to use until the bench is removed.
- Where we are unable to contact bench owners if no memorial plaque is attached to the bench, we will endeavour to establish the family owning the bench by word of mouth and neighbouring graves.
- If a memorial bench is deemed unsafe outside of the testing inspection time, the process will remain the same in action taking and contacting the grave owner.

Testing process

- All benches will be included in the testing process.
- A visual test will be carried out first to consider if there are signs that the bench is showing evidence of damage or if the joints are giving way (cracks). This will include the slats, the legs and the arm rests.
- After the visual inspection, a gentle hand push test will be used to identify any movement between components. The seating slats will be tested by applying pressure to the seating area.
- The inspection can be carried out by one member of staff.
- A check sheet will be completed during the testing process, documenting the outcome and next steps, if required. The check sheet will also document any plaque details relating to the family that provided the bench.

- The testing will result in one of two categories:
 1. Category 1 'UNSAFE' Action required.
 2. Category 2 'SAFE' No action required (revisit in 1 year).
- Where a bench is classified as 'unsafe', immediate action will be taken. A photograph of the bench will be taken, then the bench will be taped off with warning tape and a laminated sign informing visitors and staff of the reason for taping the bench and who to contact for further information.
- After this, the information is passed to the Cemeteries Service office for contact to be made with the owner.
- The memorial bench will remain in situ for a 14 day period whilst we attempt to contact the bench owner. If we have not received a response in this time period, the memorial plaque will be removed from the bench and kept, with the bench being disposed of. All benches will be photographed prior to the bench being removed from site. The plaque can then be collected by the family for safe keeping.
- If contact is made with the family, a replacement option will be discussed. If the family do not want to proceed with a replacement memorial bench, MDC will decide if we wish to instal a new bench in the location or arrange for the base to be removed.

Appendix

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	Cemetery Inspecting:			Date of Inspection:				
2	Name on Bench	Location of Bench	Visual Condition of Bench	Hand Push Test (Back & Arm Rest)	Hand Push Test (Seating Section)	Pass / Fail	Immediate Action Taken	Photo Taken?
3								
4								
5								

1. Inspection checksheet.



2a. general weathering of bench. This includes peeling paint and exposed timber.



2b. cracking of wood and loose joints within the assembly of the bench.



2c. seating slats come loose or removed from bench.