

26th March 2021

Welcome to our latest news round-up from across the Dignity Group. Can't wait for the next issue? Then go to www.dignitygoodtgreat.co.uk to see the news, comment and get involved.

(P.S. Don't forget to print out a copy for any colleagues who don't have email!)



PREPARE TO ENROL

We'll soon be getting a new online Learning Management System to help take our training to the next level.

Earlier this month lots of weary parents breathed a sigh of relief as children returned to their classrooms, heralding the end of months of home-schooling.

We can probably agree that the experience has been, well... an education, bringing back memories of times tables, long division, grammar and spelling tests!

It's certainly put a renewed focus on learning at all levels, making this an appropriate time to share some news about how we develop ourselves in the workplace.

Introducing the **Dignity Academy Portal**, our new Learning Management System (LMS) that marks the start of a major step-change in our approach to learning and development.

What is an LMS?

A software application for delivering learning courses and other training items online. All the administration, deployment, tracking and reporting related to personal development is also done via the LMS.

This doesn't mean the end of face to face learning, but it does [Continued on the next page >](#)

allow us to utilise lots of different methods. It also creates more opportunities for self-study to support those who want to broaden their skillsets and progress in their careers.

When will it arrive?

The exact launch date is still to be finalised, but we expect around mid-May.

In the meantime, we are progressing with a pilot scheme involving funeral operations, CMG and some head office functions, including the CSC.

Their feedback will be vital in shaping the final offering before we make the Academy available to all colleagues.

Do I need to do anything now?

Not, yet (unless you are involved in the pilot).

There will be more detailed communications as we get closer to go-live so everyone knows how the system works, but for now we just want you to be aware of the LMS and understand what it is.

We'll leave you with FIVE reasons to be excited about the Dignity Academy Portal:

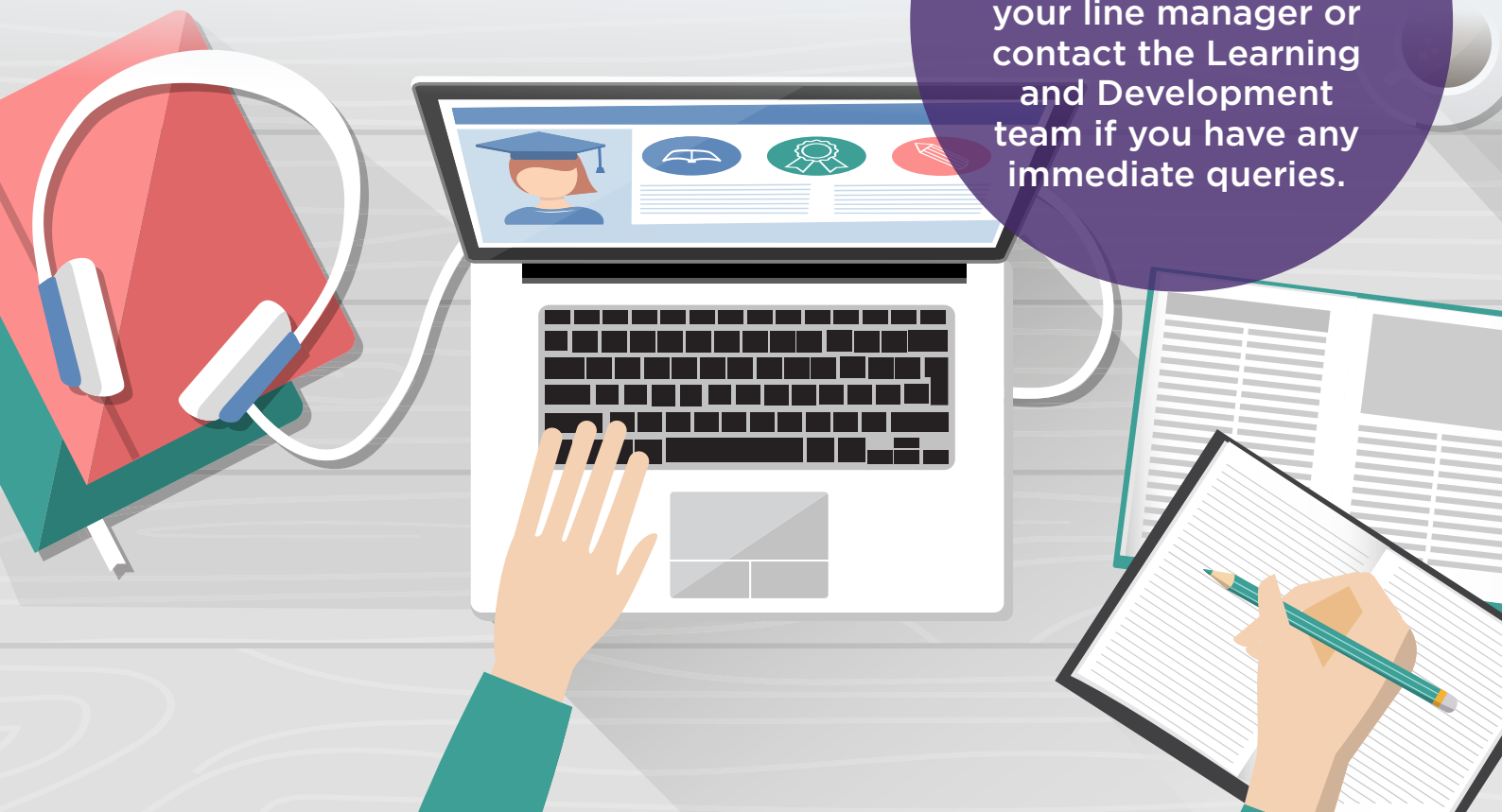
- 1 Access for all.** The system is for everyone who has a Dignity payroll number.
- 2 New laptops.** More than 130 laptops are due to be installed across the network for use as shared learning resources. Alternatively, use your own device and log in securely from home (just like home-schooling!).

3 Market leading. We've partnered with a recognised specialist to ensure our LMS is simple to use and packed with valuable content.

4 Track progress. See at a glance what activities you have done and where you still have modules or courses to complete.

5 Embracing remote learning. We've seen how it can work during the pandemic. Taking more of our learning online will make us more time-efficient.

Look out for updates as we get closer to enrolment day, but speak to your line manager or contact the Learning and Development team if you have any immediate queries.





ANNOUNCEMENT OF PRELIMINARY RESULTS

A message to all colleagues from Clive Whiley, Executive Chairman of Dignity plc.

Last week we announced our preliminary results for the 52 week period ended 25 December 2020.

A copy of the announcement has been posted on Dignity's [corporate website](#), however the financial highlights (below) include:

- **Underlying revenue (£million):** 314.1 (2019: 301.3)
- **Underlying operating profit (£million):** 55.7 (2019: 63.3)
- **Underlying profit before tax (£million):** 30.7 (2019: 37.7)
- **Underlying earnings per share (pence):** 46.6 (2019: 60.6)
- **Underlying cash generated from operations (£million):** 76.4 (2019: 71.8)

I wanted to take this opportunity to offer more insight into our performance, which also represents my first full year as Chairman, and draw attention to some wider achievements which

are testament to your incredible hard work and commitment.

We consider these results to be robust given the unique and challenging events we have faced, not least the outbreak of COVID-19. The pandemic impacted three quarters of our financial year, putting significant stress on our operations as the annual death toll increased to its highest level (663,000) since 1918.

Like many businesses, we needed to manage related issues such as sourcing and distributing sufficient quantities of PPE, adapting our working environments to make them COVID-secure and supporting those who needed to isolate or shield.

Resilience is perhaps the word that best summarises our collective approach to handling the pandemic, while figures such as these illustrate how we continued to provide vital services and respond to the needs of our clients:

- **80,300** funerals conducted in 2020 (2019: 69,400)
- **74,500** cremations conducted (2019: 64,800)

It is the dedication of our colleagues across all roles and business areas, not just those who are client-facing, that has enabled delivery of our services on such a scale. And you continue to respond appropriately to people losing loved ones at a time when their ability to grieve and gain closure remains adversely affected.

From an overall performance perspective, we can see that underlying operating profit for the year has fallen and it is fair to question why this is the case when demand has been so high. At its peak, the pandemic led to a constricted service offering and reduced our average income per funeral. Many such restrictions, for example those regarding funeral attendance, are still in place now. Nevertheless, our quality of care has never wavered. We should [Continued on the next page >](#)

be immensely proud of our role as essential frontline responders throughout this period alongside other valued professions and public services such as medics and care workers.

Around the business

Our growth in traditional funeral and cremation volumes is clear to see, but you may not realise that we also delivered a record number of direct cremation based services during 2020 through Simplicity Cremations, which increased by 106 per cent to 4,300. This has reinforced our determination to ultimately become the sector leader.

Another record is the number of people who have taken the opportunity to pre-arrange their funerals with Dignity, which now stands at 558,000, as we continue to strive to set the industry standard.

I would also like to recognise the efforts of the team at Dignity Manufacturing. Demand for coffins increased dramatically in 2020, peaking at a production volume of around 2,000 units a week. By the end of the year, the team had crafted and distributed 75,000 coffins, a year on year increase of 20 per cent.

There are achievements worthy of praise from all corners of our organisation: agents in the CSC



copied with higher numbers of inbound calls; HR colleagues ensuring essential functions such as payroll have continued without disruption; IT keeping the business connected through remote access and the rapid deployment of video conferencing software; and many more besides.

A time of change

COVID-19 is not the only challenge facing us and our sector peers. The final outcome and conclusion of the CMA's investigation is now determined and preparations for regulation of the funeral plan market are progressing. These will both drive change to many important aspects of our service proposition over time. However, change also has to come from within, something which

was integral to our decision last year to pause the Transformation programme indefinitely. The scope of this programme was too narrowly focused upon one element of the Group and did not recognise the capacity to grow the business organically across its full bandwidth.

I am leading a review of the business that challenges every aspect of our operations so that we can continue to evolve and strengthen our position. This is what it means when we refer in our external dialogue to a 'root and branch' review and we look forward to sharing the findings and strategic objectives with you during the coming months.

The difference is you

Professionalism, strength and compassion have been vital in the face of the unprecedented challenges and change during 2020. You have worked tirelessly throughout what has been the busiest year in Dignity's history in terms of funerals conducted, while showing tremendous adaptability to deliver services to the highest standards.

Our achievements are absolutely down to you, our valued colleagues, so on behalf of the Board and the senior leadership team, please accept our most sincere thanks.



WHAT DO YOU GET WORKING FOR DIGNITY?

Check out all the great employee benefits you're entitled to.

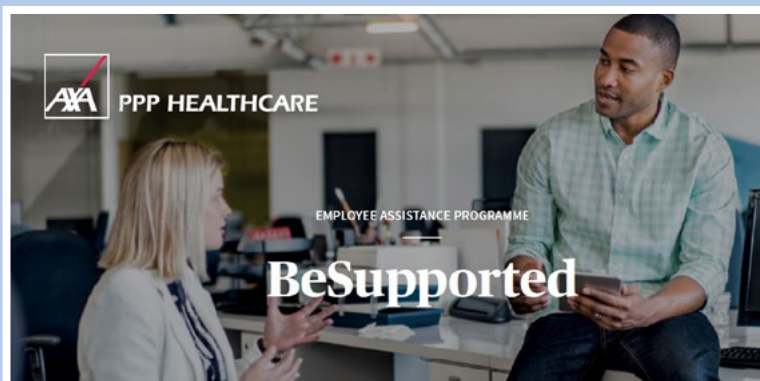
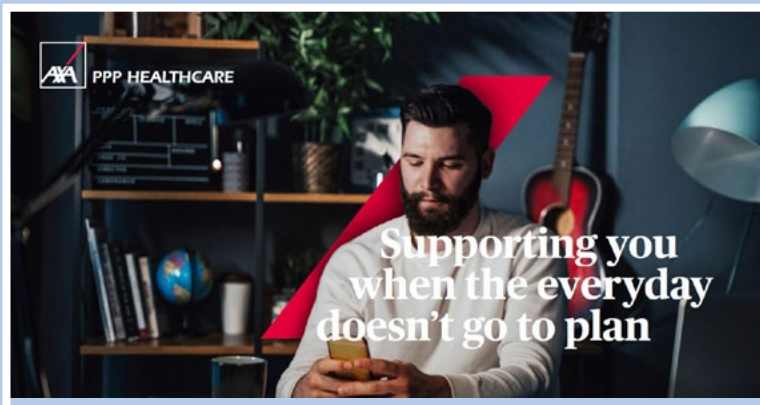
Did you know that being a Dignity employee means you can get discounts on days out?

Or money off cinema tickets? And even cheaper meals at your favourite restaurants?



As restrictions ease and the country opens up again in the next few weeks, we wanted to remind you of all the fantastic benefits you get from being a Dignity colleague.

So from National Trust to Filmpass, and from Taste Card to gym membership with Huggle, take a look at this handy guide to your benefits on the next page.



Coming soon

On 1 April we're launching a brand new Employee Assistance Programme with leading healthcare provider, AXA.

Committed to supporting and helping companies like ours to change for the better, the new Be Supported programme will offer both practical and personal support for when life's challenges get in the way.

From managing work-life balance, coping with anxiety, better budgeting and more, this is just another way we're looking out for your wellbeing.

Watch this space to find out how to access it.

YOUR BENEFITS

It's easy to forget what benefits you get being a Dignity colleague, so check out our handy guide to all the great things you're entitled to.

- Excluding casual workers
- ┌ Dependent on grade & performance
- Junior Manager and above

 Paid holidays	 Paid sickness	 Mental Health First Aiders	 Employee Assistance Programme – Free, confidential advice for you and your family, 24/7			
 AXA Portal – Helpful guidance and information to manage wellbeing	 Counselling – Face-to-Face counselling with independent experts	 Occupational Health – Keeping you healthy at work				
 BUPA – Private Medical insurance and healthcare	 Death in Service Life Insurance (subject to eligibility)	 Eye Care – Up to £25 for eye tests and £60 for glasses	 Christmas Celebrations - £15 contribution per head			
 FilmPass Club – Discounted cinema tickets	 Bonus	 Taste Card – Discounted meals out	 Share Save – Three year savings plan			
 Pension – 4% company contribution	 Neyber - Loans and savings options	Welfare Trust - Individual financial support 				
 National Trust – Discounted membership for you and the family	 Gym Membership – Discounted membership	 Funeral Arrangements – Help and family discount	 Training, Learning & Development			
 Health Screening	 Trauma Counsellors	 Thank You Vouchers	 Coaching	 Mediation Services	 Flu vaccines	 Long Service Awards

HOLIDAYS ON THE HORIZON

Are you thinking of taking time off? Make sure you get agreement first.

The UK is slowly but surely starting to open up as coronavirus cases drop, vaccinations soar and schools return.

As a result, many of us will be turning our thoughts to holidays and taking some well-deserved time off.

With restrictions still in place for a few more months, you may be thinking about waiting until all the fun stuff reopens, but we'd really encourage you to look after your physical and mental wellbeing and take some time away from work sooner rather than later.

Here's why...

- You need a proper break. A few days off, even if spent

pottering around at home, is good for the soul, can reduce anxiety and depression and will help recharge those batteries.

- You'll be better at your job. If you're properly rested, you'll be more productive and less likely to make mistakes – being tired isn't any good for anyone at home or at work.
- You'll be healthier. Studies have shown that taking annual leave can boost your immune system and make you less likely to get rundown and ill.

Don't forget

When it comes to planning annual leave, we need to make sure we balance business needs with our own.

As we don't want anyone to be disappointed when planning time away from work, please remember to:

- Get your manager's agreement before booking time off – especially before booking any hotels or travel.
- Try and minimise any holiday clashes with others in your team.
- Correctly log your holiday dates in the PerForm system.



If you have any questions, please ask your line manager or your HR Business Partner for advice.

CONTACTING THE CSC



[Click on the image \(above\) to play.](#)

A few weeks ago we asked for your help in easing the pressure on colleagues in the Client Service Centre (CSC) so they can always be available to deal with new enquiries from people after a bereavement.

The response has been great, but it's still important to continue minimising the number of inbound calls being made to the CSC.

In this new video message, Andrew Judd, Executive Director of Funeral Operations, summarises what we need you to do.

CELEBRATING MORE AMAZING WOMEN

We're continuing to celebrate the remarkable women in our business for International Women's Day.



The theme of this year's International Women's Day is 'Choose to Challenge', which is appropriate for the funeral sector as it copes with the demands of COVID-19.

Following the great feedback on the feature story in the last edition of Dignity Digest about some of the incredible women in our business, we've taken the opportunity to celebrate even more of our brilliant ladies.



Angela Eames

In her 31 years at Dignity, Angela is pleased with the number of female role models at head office, recalling how different it was for women when she first joined the business.

"Times really have changed over the years. On my very first day at Dignity I was pulled to one side for wearing trousers, it was not allowed as a female! The office manager at the time was a woman, so it wasn't discriminatory, just old fashioned. Thankfully we have moved out of the dark ages."

Maria Connolly

Maria has worked for us for six years, enjoying a promotion from HR Business Partner to HR Ops Manager in that time. She feels that Dignity could become a more attractive workplace for women.

“
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”
Maria Connolly

"I think we should create a more positive, engaging environment – one which supports diversity and working women with kids. Whilst it has never held me back, I have felt guilty about taking time off work when I have needed to for my daughter."



Helen McNeil

Helen has worked at P B Wright & Sons Funeral Directors in Greenock and Port Glasgow for 26 years.

"I've always found my colleagues to be very supportive in sharing their knowledge. I think being a

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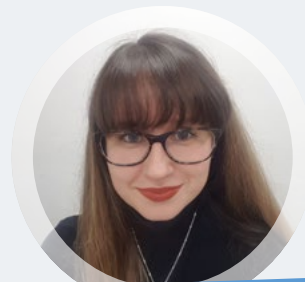
female in our industry, especially in Inverclyde, was quite rare, but I found folks actually like the female touch so never had any problems. At home, my husband was always very encouraging and supportive about my job.”



Sue Newbold

Sue has worked at Lancaster & Morecambe Crematorium for over 23 years, progressing from Administrator to Memorial Consultant and Crematorium Manager, before recently becoming Business Development Manager.

“My gender has never presented any barriers to my ambitions. When people discover that I work at a crematorium they are initially surprised to find a woman in such a role, but after that initial shock they often have lots of questions about how it operates.”



Beth Millward

Beth started her journey with us more than seven years ago at Loughborough Crematorium and is now Simplicity Team Manager in the CSC.

As one of our youngest managers, she’s keen to see more visible female senior managers and directors to inspire and attract more women to our business.

“In my experience if you work hard and prove yourself you can become successful, but there aren’t many woman above middle management level to aspire to. While the funeral industry is a very difficult industry to work in, it is also one of the most rewarding roles I have ever had.”



Victoria Millross

Victoria has worked at Philip Ford & Son in Stroud for five years, joining the profession after being inspired by the care of a funeral director after a close bereavement.

Following work experience at a local funeral business,

she applied and got a role as a Funeral Service Operative with Philip Ford & Son – a role typically done by a man as it involves carrying the coffin and driving the hearse or limousine.

“I was determined to show I could do it. I was just 21 years old and the only female in Gloucestershire working as an FSO, so I did have to overcome some unintended prejudices to prove that a young woman could do the role as well as a man.”

Victoria was promoted to Funeral Director two and a half years ago.



Debbie Leah

Debbie has worked at H J Dawson and W G Rathbone Funeral Directors in Leamington Spa for nearly 10 years, after 20 years working as a paralegal. First joining as a Funeral Service Arranger, Debbie now looks after eight funeral homes in her role as Funeral Manager.

“The role of Funeral Director is still widely regarded as being a man’s job. I had a supportive network of family and friends, but I did face some challenges in the beginning to gain respect and trust in a male-dominated team.”

“
I would encourage any woman to join the funeral profession, but my advice would be don't limit yourself to any one role.

Debbie Leah

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In turn, Debbie has tried to encourage female staff to progress and not see their gender as any sort of barrier to their progress.

“I would encourage any woman to join the funeral profession, but my advice would be don’t limit yourself to any one role,” she said. “You can gain valuable experience as a chauffeur or bearer as well as being a Funeral Service Arranger.”



Amanda Conway

Twelve years ago, Amanda took a dramatic career change, giving up being a Beauty Therapist for passengers on cruise liners to care for the bereaved as a Trainee Funeral Director in Middlesbrough.

Amanda joined Relph’s Funeral Directors in 2009, studying and successfully passing her qualifications to become a professional embalmer. She has since been promoted to Funeral Manager.

“The funeral profession has historically been very male-dominated, but I’ve never experienced any barriers to what I wanted to achieve. At first my family and friends were quite sceptical about a woman being a funeral director, however my colleagues and managers have always been supportive.

“There have been challenges as a woman balancing work and home life. An important part of our role is bringing the deceased person into our care and this is a service we provide day or night, seven days a week.

“When I first joined Relph’s my daughter was only two years old, so caring for a young child and doing my job was something many of my male colleagues didn’t have to worry about.”



Jane Baker

Jane has worked for CMG for nine years after being an arranger and assistant Funeral Director for another business. She now manages both crematoria in Telford and Shrewsbury.

“When I joined the funeral profession it was very male orientated. Comments have been made to me in the past that the Funeral Director role should only be carried out by men, but since working for CMG

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Since working for CMG I have always been accepted and encouraged by all.

Jane Baker

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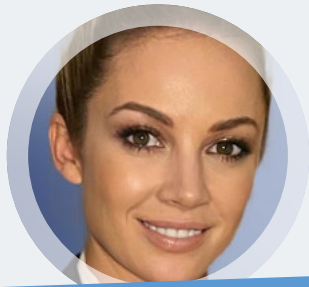
Debbie Avens

With almost a decade of experience at Dignity, Debbie’s hard work has seen her gain promotion during her career, with ambitions to progress further – but she feels her gender can create additional challenges when juggling a busy family and a demanding job.

“Even when the woman is the main income earner for the family, we can’t focus solely on our careers in the same way some men can. We typically carry the mental load of running the family too, so effectively have two full time jobs, often doubting ourselves and feeling like we are doing neither role to the best of our abilities.”

Debbie would like to see more women at the very top of the organisation and attract female talent to our business through having a flexible working policy, a better maternity package, graduate trainee schemes and supported career development plans.

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Robyn Morrison

If Robyn looks like a familiar face, then you may recognise her from her time acting in Australian TV series Neighbours, Home and Away and Heart Break High.

No stranger to working in male-dominated industries after serving for 10 years in the Australian Police Service and reaching the rank of Detective Sergeant, she's worked in the funeral sector for the past two years.

Robyn started as a Funeral Service



Arranger with Charles Wood Funeral Service in Brighouse before being promoted to Funeral Director and then Manager at Highfield Funeral Directors in Huddersfield

“My gender has presented huge challenges during my career. I joined the Police Service at 18 and had to work twice as hard as my male colleagues to achieve any recognition. I've not come across this attitude as much in the UK, but there are still occasions when because my name is Robyn and I'm the Manager, people assume I'm a man.

“There are times when I feel I'm being judged because I'm female, but I have always been taught that women can do anything men can do, so working in the funeral profession is normal to me. I can honestly say I have found my calling and now I wouldn't want any other job.”



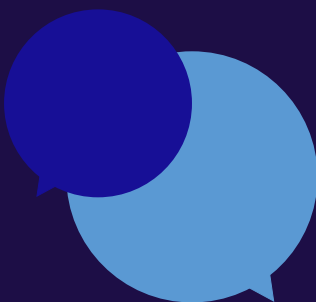
Kerry Wright

With a decade of Dignity experience behind her, Kerry has worked her way up from being a part-time Client Service Advisor to her current role of Customer Experience Team Manager, managing a team of Client Service Specialists.

With the majority of CSC team managers and client service advisors being female, she feels well supported in her career and doesn't feel her gender has held her back.

“My daughter was two when I first joined Dignity. My promotion to Team Co-ordinator came just at the right time, as I was considering returning to full time work with my daughter now being at primary school.”

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK



Have you enjoyed our series celebrating just some of our wonderful women? Why not complete our survey about women in our workplace. We'll use the insight gained to make improvements to the way we do things, and make Dignity an even better place to work, for all. Click [here](#) to take part.

BUILDING CONNECTIONS

In our latest Stay Well wellbeing series, we look at five steps to help feel more positive and to get the best out of life – starting with building relationships.

‘Put your own oxygen mask on first.’ This is what we’re told during safety briefings on flights (remember them?!) but it’s just as important to put yourself first in day-to-day life too.

A year into the pandemic and things are beginning to ease, but as many of us will be feeling fatigued, lonely, confused or downbeat after having to quickly adjust to a new reality, we wanted to look at how we can improve mental health and wellbeing ourselves.

Based on the five recommended steps from mental health charity, MIND, we start by looking at the first – connecting with others.

We’re social animals

Humans are social animals and good relationships are so important to maintaining positive mental health, giving us mutual



emotional support, shared experiences and a sense of belonging.

Clearly, it’s still difficult, but you can still build and strengthen your relationships:

- If you can, **spend some time with your family every day.** Eat dinner together, or if distance means you’re apart, arrange a quick FaceTime or Zoom catch up at a regular time.

- **See a friend you’ve not seen for a while.** In England you can now meet one person from outside for a walk, so why not catch up safely face-to-face?

- **Reduce screen time.** It’s too easy to get into the habit of scrolling through social media or TV and texting or WhatsApping people is no substitute for the real thing. Try switching them off to talk or play a game with people in your household.

- **Have lunch with a colleague.** OK, you may need to be distanced in the local park, but it beats sitting at your desk again.

- **Visit a friend or family member** who needs support or company for a doorstep chat. Just remember to follow restrictions where you live.

- **Think about volunteering** at a local school, hospital or community group once lockdown ends. Find out how to volunteer on the [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk).

- Search and download **online community apps** on the [NHS apps library](https://www.nhs.uk).



TWICE AS NICE

We've enjoyed another successful year at the Marketing Excellence Awards, this time for our promotion of Simplicity Cremations.

It was celebrations at the double for Simplicity Cremations this month with not one, but two prestigious awards received.

The accolades were given in recognition of the outstanding work by our Marketing department and their efforts to build brand awareness for Simplicity since its launch in 2017 and attract new clients looking to arrange an alternative funeral.

Presented by the Chartered Institute of Marketing in their annual Marketing Excellence Awards, the team picked up category wins for Best Advertising Campaign and Best Brand Building Campaign (for SMEs).

There were also shortlistings for Best Innovative New Product or Service (again for Simplicity Cremations) and Best Content



Marketing Campaign (this time for promoting Dignity Funerals).

And in the Marketer of the Year category, our Marketing Director Mark Hull was a finalist for the second consecutive year.

Worth the wait!

It's been a nail-biting few months for our Marketing colleagues, since finalists in the awards were actually announced over a year ago.

The presentation ceremony was then delayed a number of times due to coronavirus, before finally being rearranged as a virtual event hosted by comedian Tom Allen.

Mark Hull said: "The Marketing Excellence Awards showcase the top talent within our industry, both in terms of creativity and how well specific campaigns have met their objectives.

"We collected two awards in 2019 and to follow that up with another double this year is something we are all extremely proud of. It shows the breadth of talent within the team across key disciplines such as advertising, digital marketing and brand development."

Chris Daly, CEO at the Chartered Institute of Marketing, added: "The quality of entrants and winners ought to serve as a vital reminder that marketing is a powerful and critical function of businesses, particularly during challenging times."



"We collected two awards in 2019 and to follow that up with another double this year is something we are all extremely proud of."



THE RIGHT OF ACCESS



Clients can ask us for copies of their personal information at any time.
Would you know what to do?


Following on from the introduction to data protection and information security in our last issue, let's delve more into consumer rights under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Our clients (or anyone for that matter) are able to request all the personal information Dignity holds about them, both current and historical.

This is known as a Subject Access Request (SAR), or a Right of Access. It can be directed to any colleague and made in any form.

What if I receive a SAR by telephone?

1. Take the person's full name, address, account number (if they have one) and contact telephone number.
2. Before the call ends, verify with the client whether their request is in exercise of their right of access to their personal information. This is to avoid any misunderstanding and to ensure we are following the right process.
3. Forward the details of the SAR immediately to privacy@dignityuk.co.uk.



“
Please pass the details on as quickly as you can.
”

What if I receive one via email or in a letter?

1. For emails, send a short reply that acknowledges receipt of the request. Tell the client it will be passed on to the relevant department and a colleague will contact them directly.
2. Forward the SAR immediately to privacy@dignityuk.co.uk.
3. For letters, scan the document and then forward it on as above.

Things to remember

Act promptly. We have an obligation to respond to a SAR without undue delay and return information within one month of receipt, unless the request is particularly complex. So please

pass the details on as quickly as you can.

Also think about how you discuss client matters with colleagues via email and over the phone.

Such material would need to be shared (providing the calls had been recorded and retained) if we later received a SAR from the individual concerned.

Therefore we must always be factually correct in what we are saying, use appropriate language and communicate in a professional, courteous and respectful manner.

If you have any questions about SARs, or other rules under GDPR, please email privacy@dignityuk.co.uk for advice.