

5th November 2021

Welcome to our latest news round-up from across the Dignity Group. Can't wait for the next issue? Then go to www.dignityinside.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!)

IT PAYS TO BE PREPARED



Regular meetings and coordinated action plans mean we'll be ready to tackle whatever winter has in store.

One of the world's most famous industrialists* once said that working together is success.



It's a sentiment we're fully embracing as Dignity prepares for the months ahead and the challenges we may face during the winter.

Activities are being led by a newly formed working group with representation from Funeral Operations, CMG, Dignity Manufacturing, the Client Service Centre, Procurement, People and Resourcing.



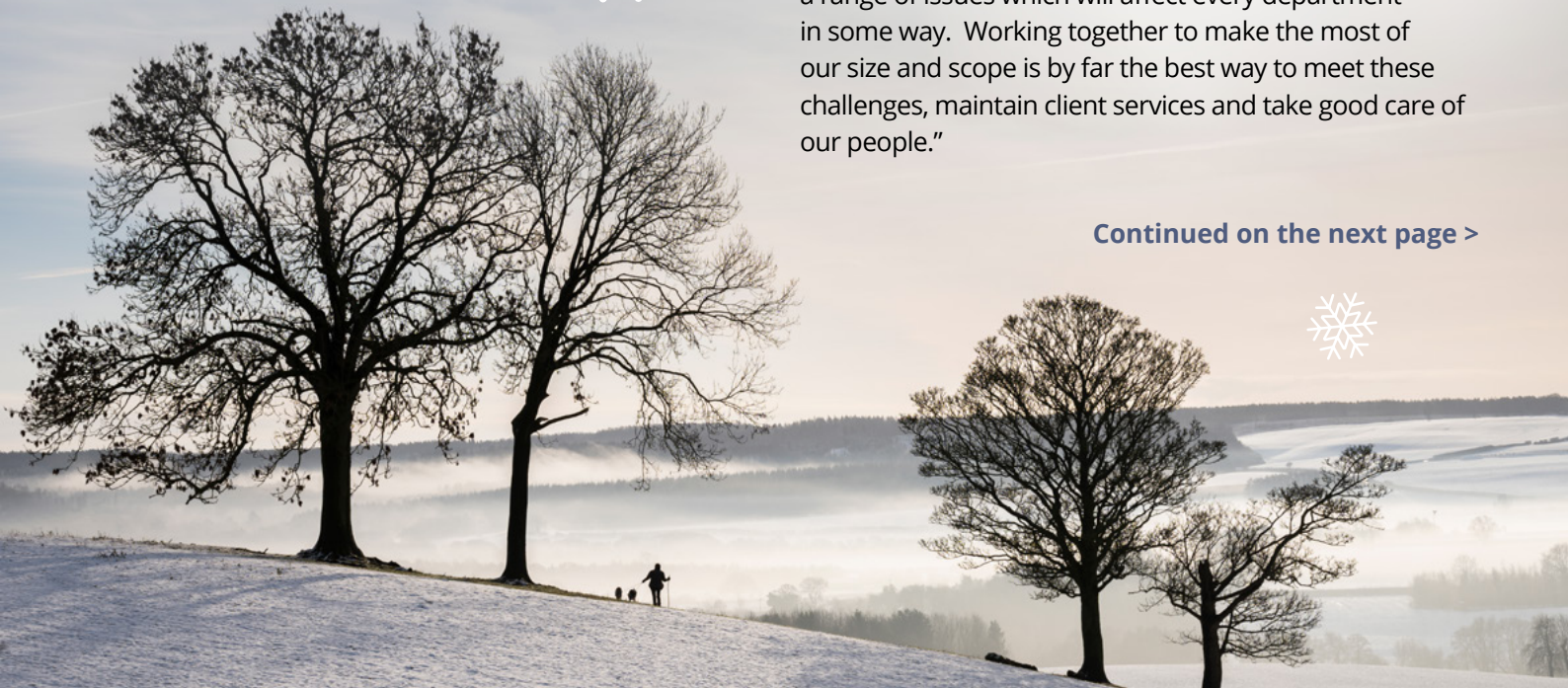
The goal is to ensure all departments have everything they need to cover what we expect to be another busy winter period.

Group coordinator Jennifer Goldie said: "We know winter can place increased demand on our services, but there are other factors to consider this year, not least COVID-19 and potentially higher flu rates.

"Our response to the pandemic has shown how we can manage challenging situations more effectively when we pool resources, so the intention here is to carry this forward and make it our standard approach to problem solving.

"We are sharing ideas and developing action plans across a range of issues which will affect every department in some way. Working together to make the most of our size and scope is by far the best way to meet these challenges, maintain client services and take good care of our people."

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What's on the agenda?

Among the topics being discussed within the group are:

- Recruitment and how we can bring new candidates on board more quickly to help fill vacancies
- Being ready for the forthcoming double vaccination requirement for care home entry in England
- Monitoring our mix of coffins and ensuring we have the materials and people we need to meet demand
- Managing incoming call volumes to the CSC and utilising our agency partner Equinity where necessary.

Case study: COP26

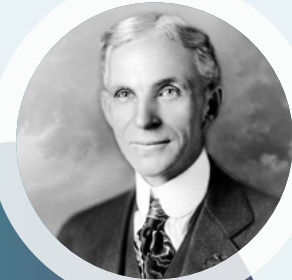
Expertise within the group is being put to good use to prepare for one-off events too.

A current example is the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) taking place in Glasgow. While it may not immediately sound relevant to our business, the conference could impact us in a number of ways.

Road closures, parking restrictions and the likelihood of mass gatherings and demonstrations mean we have to consider how colleagues get to and from work, client appointments, travel arrangements for funerals and getting essential items such as coffins delivered on time.

A detailed briefing document, complete with action plan and checklist, has been in circulation and will help form a template for future events on a similar scale, including next year's Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

* Did you recognise the quote? One of many pearls of wisdom from Henry Ford, founder of the Ford Motor Company.



“
Coming together is
the beginning. Keeping
together is progress.
Working together is
success.”



COLLABORATION IS KEY

Jayne Ackrill and Annie Pamplin take on new Group-focused roles.

We've been talking a lot lately about bringing the two sides of our business closer together.

You've heard about the organisational restructure which affects our regional teams, but we're also looking at how we operate centrally too.

As a result, Jayne Ackrill and Annie Pamplin's roles will be moving into Kate Davidson's team and given a new focus to drive collaboration across the whole Group.

Jayne will be Performance and Support Manager in a permanent position, while Annie takes on a 12-month secondment as Performance and Development Manager.

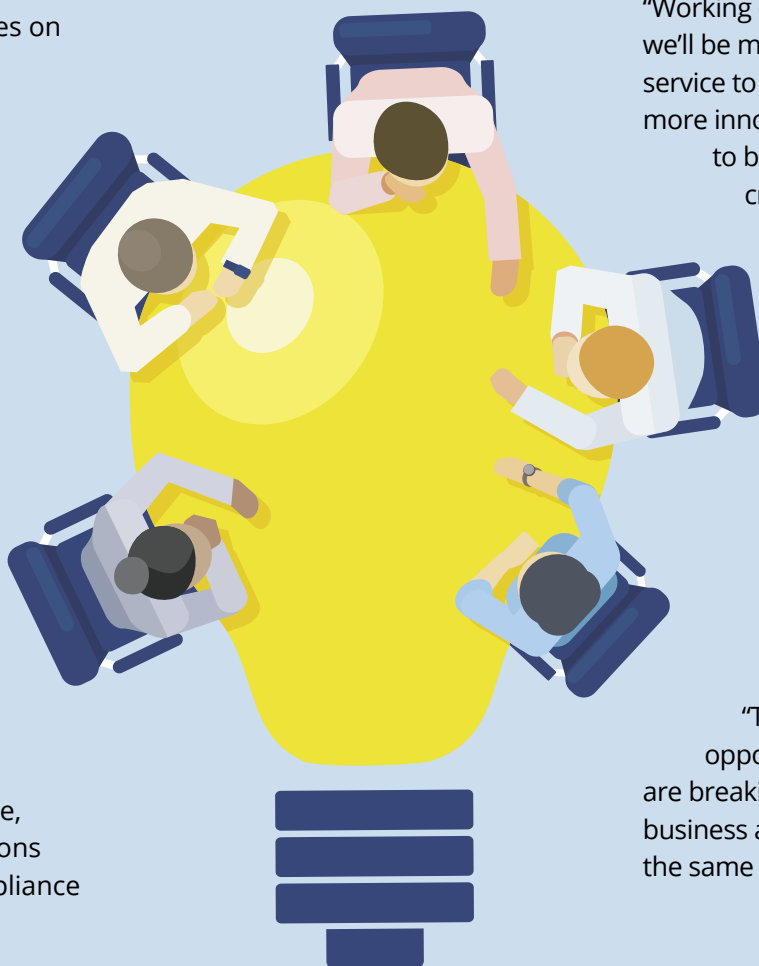
These new roles mean that Annie and Jayne will be readily able to support the business on a wide variety of projects and programmes. Their roles will be flexible so they can be deployed to support us in many exciting ways.

They will be taking on cross-functional and specialist projects, supporting the organisational restructure, working on new innovations and also regulatory compliance programmes.



In essence, they will enable us, as a business, to be able to move more quickly, be more innovative and ensure we maintain excellence in everything we do.

Both Jayne and Annie have been with Dignity for many years and have a wealth of experience to bring to the new roles.



For almost two years, Jayne has worked closely with Andrew Judd in the Funeral Operations team, and before that was a key member of the Finance team.

Annie was instrumental in getting the Dignity Academy Portal off the ground and ensuring that all colleagues across our business were able to access development opportunities.

Jayne said: "I'm really excited about taking on a new challenge. Dignity is entering a period of change, but the results of that change are going to be great.

"Working collaboratively means we'll be more efficient, offer a better service to our customers and be more innovative. I'm really pleased to be involved in this new cross-functional way of working."

Annie also added: "I still have some very important projects to look after such as the Dignity Academy Portal, Onboarding, Apprenticeships, Health and Safety training and FCA eLearning, to name but a few.

"This new role will be a great opportunity to make sure we are breaking down divisions in our business and giving all colleagues the same opportunities."



UPDATES TO COVID-19 GUIDANCE

With restrictions continuing to ease, we're ready to move to a lower level of guidance for operational colleagues.

Back in May, we introduced a framework to set the COVID-19 operational guidance used to keep our colleagues and clients safe.

It works across five different levels and the stringency of the control measures reflects key factors such as government restrictions, case numbers and infection rates.

Given the current situation, we now consider it appropriate to apply Level 1 guidance across all our regions. In doing so, we open up more of our services and facilities for clients.

Where can I find the new guidance?

Our COVID-19 Operational Guidance is for use by all client facing colleagues, operational colleagues and those working in the Client Service Centre.

Click [here](#) for the latest Level 1 version, or download a copy from the Useful Documents section of Dignity Inside.

Please make sure you read and understand the changes from our previous Level 2, which we've summarised below.

Operational Guidance – what's changed?

- Section 3 (Funeral Arrangement / Things of note) – Reference to Cancelling a funeral removed
- Section 4 – Previous section titled Death Administrative Process Changes removed as no longer applicable
- Section 4 (now titled Prior to the Funeral) – Guidance on Resting of Deceased at Home updated.

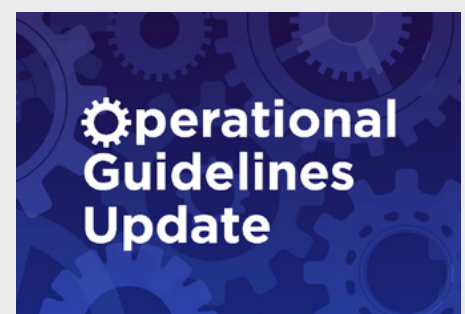
What happens next?

Level 1 guidance is effective immediately. Please remember that

adherence to operational guidance is **mandatory** for the safety of our colleagues, clients and communities.

While we may be working at a lower level, this does not mean the risks posed by COVID-19 have gone away completely. We're keeping the situation under constant review and will inform you if further changes are required.

If you have any queries about operational guidance and our services for clients, simply ask your Area or Regional Manager for help.





KEEPING TABS ON THE COMPETITION JUST GOT EASIER

See how the IT team's new Competitor Pricing tool will help us stay competitive locally.

They say that knowledge is power.

Our strategic plans hinge around empowering our local teams, and that means a 'one size fits all' approach just won't work when it comes to things like pricing.

We know that frontline colleagues have a wealth of local knowledge when it comes to competitor analysis and we need a way to harness that.

Many of you have done a fantastic job of capturing information and posting it in Slack, but we wanted to take it one step further.

It was a challenge for the IT team, and they've got just the solution!

Working alongside stakeholders from across the business, and following the Agile methodology, they have been able to rapidly develop and roll out the first iteration of a Competitor Pricing tool.

This tool will enable you and your teams to log competitor pricing information via a form in RDS.

This has been made available to everyone with log in credentials and is designed to ensure that colleagues in branches can contribute towards building up a database of local pricing information.

It's so important to us to understand where our business fits into the competitive landscape, both locally and nationally, because we know clients will shop around for funeral services.

We're also seeking to understand the competitive response to trials we are running, and most recently to our CMA price changes.

Capturing such information has had its difficulties, including ensuring we are comparing like for like services and having access to the information, but this is something the CMA Standardised Price List and the increasing availability of funeral pricing online has made much easier.

Huge congratulations goes to the IT team who turned around this project very quickly.

The Competitor Pricing tool is now live and ready to use and hopefully we will see some useful data coming through that will directly influence our local decision making when it comes to pricing.

"Huge congratulations goes to the IT team who turned around this project very quickly."



MAKING IT CLEAR

Think you might need glasses for work?
Our Eye Care policy will see you right!

In a short space of time, video calling has gone from being a bit of a novelty to an essential business tool.

Virtual meetings (and the obligatory cries of 'you're on mute!') are now part and parcel of our daily routine.

Convenient and practical, but it does mean people are potentially spending more of their working day using a PC monitor, laptop screen or mobile device.

As such, it's a good idea to have regular eye tests and that's something Dignity can help you with.

Arranging a test

If you use display screen equipment (DSE) at work, then we'll help cover the cost of an eye test, whether it's your first one, or a subsequent check up.

Many opticians actually provide the test free of charge, but if you have to pay then we'll reimburse you up to a maximum amount of £25.

The same benefit is available if you drive as part of your job role for reasons other than just commuting.

What if I need glasses or contact lenses?

If the test shows that eyewear is necessary for the purposes of driving and/or DSE work, we'll contribute up to £60 towards the cost of frames and prescription lenses.

You'll need to meet any costs above this level yourself.

How do I access this contribution?

Both eye test charges and contributions towards frames and lenses need to be submitted as expenses claims.

Follow the usual procedure, however it's really important that you obtain a prescription receipt from the optician confirming what your eyewear is required for.

This is to ensure we are complying with HMRC guidelines. Without it, the expenses team cannot process your claim or issue a reimbursement.

For more information, please refer to the Eye Care and Eye Test Policy. You'll find a copy in the HR section of our Intranet (see HR Topic Areas and then Benefits).



ALL THINGS HEALTH AND WELLNESS

For our new wellbeing guide,
we're covering exercising safely in
winter and Seasonal Affective Disorder.




Health and wellbeing is a fundamental part of life, whether we're aware of it or not.

When our mental health is good it's usually the last thing on our mind, but when it's not so good, it can be hard to bring up the topic with others.

Since one in four of us is known to suffer with mental health issues at some point in our lives, it's so important to break down the stigma around mental health and to enable conversations.

That's why we're bringing you a regular wellbeing check-in that offers tips, resources and guidance on all things health and wellbeing.

On Dignity Inside, we're calling it Wellbeing Wednesday, so keep a


Get as much natural sunlight as possible, exercise regularly and manage your stress levels."

close eye on the site for the latest updates. We'll also continue to share everything through your newsletter every fortnight.

Staying active

Last week the clocks went back, which means our evenings are darker and this can have an impact on our health and wellbeing in many ways.

Exercising through the autumn and winter months can be difficult. It's darker, colder and wetter – not all that desirable!

If you do fancy venturing outside for a run or a cycle though, make sure you're taking some steps to stay safe:

- Be seen – get some high-vis clothing to make yourself more visible in the dark
- Light up – lights are a legal requirement on bikes when cycling in the dark but it's also worth considering a head torch to light up your path on a run
- Prepare for adverse weather – make sure you have good grip on your trainers and plenty of tread on your bike tyres
- Kit yourself out – waterproofs, woolly hats and base layers are essential gear to keep you warm and dry.

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Feeling SAD

Some people may be affected by the reduced exposure to sunlight, a condition known as SAD.

SAD stands for Seasonal Affective Disorder and the exact cause is not fully understood. It's sometimes known as 'winter depression' as the symptoms are usually more apparent and severe during the winter months.

The main theory is that a lack of sunlight impacts the body's production of melatonin (producing higher levels than normal which makes a person tired and lethargic), serotonin (lower than usual levels affecting mood, appetite and sleep), and circadian rhythm (disruption to our body clock).

You may have been affected by SAD before but not been aware of it. It's very common and the symptoms are easily overlooked.

If you notice that you're suffering from low mood, lethargy, irritability and lack of motivation, and this only gets more noticeable around autumn and winter, it's possible that you could be suffering from Seasonal Affective Disorder.



Thankfully, being aware of this means you can do something about it!

Get as much natural sunlight as possible, exercise regularly and

manage your stress levels. Easier said than done – we know – but these things can all help reduce the effects of SAD.

The NHS has information you can read [online](#) about SAD and, of course, if you're really struggling with symptoms then it's important to see your GP and get some professional advice.

There are also more tips on staying healthy through winter on the [AXA website](#) and a terrific toolkit of wellbeing ideas on Dignity Inside.

Need help now?

Our Employee Assistance Programme is available 24/7 if you need someone independent to talk to.

You can call them in confidence and for free on **0800 072 7072**, or go online at <https://axasupported.co.uk/> (username: **dignity**, password: **supported**).

DISPLAYS TO REMEMBER

Remembrance Day is coming and we want to see your creative window displays.

Every year communities up and down the country gather together for remembrance services.

Whether it's to pay respects to those lost in the World Wars, or to remember family and friends who have lost their lives in more recent conflicts, Remembrance Day holds great significance for many people in Britain.

As pillars of our local communities, it's our duty to show our respects for the armed forces and their families and one way we can do that is to create beautiful and respectful displays to commemorate those who have lost their lives.

In previous years we have seen our funeral branches create many wonderful window displays for Remembrance Day using uniforms, flags and all sorts of memorabilia.

We've also made a selection of marketing materials available this year for those who wish to use them.

Picture perfect

Once you have set up your branch display, we would really like to share your achievements.

Our PR team are on hand to help you get some local press coverage, so if you'd like your branch to be included please send a photo (featuring at least one staff member) to brandm@dignityuk.co.uk before Remembrance Day on 11 November. The team will then contact you for a follow up.

We'll also share any branch photos you send us (with or without staff) on our national Facebook page and Dignity Inside.



The British Legion has lots of suggestions for how to get involved with Remembrance Day on its [website](#), along with details of this year's Poppy appeal.



AWARDS SUCCESS FOR MEL

Congratulations on being Highly Commended in the UK National Contact Centre Awards.

The Client Service Centre (CSC) is an integral part of our business and often the first point of contact for bereaved families.

It was also one of the areas where we really felt the initial impact of the coronavirus pandemic, with a huge uplift in call volumes as more requests for support came in.

Now our response to those unique challenges have been recognised at a national level, and in particular the work of Operations Support Manager Mel Whitefoot.

Her work in helping the CSC adapt its operations against the backdrop of COVID-19 earned a commendation from judges at the UK National Contact Centre Awards in the category of Contact Centre Support Manager of the Year.

Mel identified the need to recruit and train temporary agents so we could manage the increased number of client calls and cope with any absences resulting from illness or self isolation.

By modifying existing processes, she successfully reduced the training period from 23 to just eight highly focused days.

Other achievements included collaborating with IT to implement a home working plan for the department and introducing an automated Interactive Voice Response system for streamlining incoming enquires.

"It was really overwhelming to be nominated and then shortlisted for the award," said Mel, who joined Dignity in 2015.

"The event was a fantastic evening and a great opportunity to learn how other businesses navigated their way through the pandemic.

"Being part of the awards was a genuinely wonderful experience. I'm very grateful to the CSC management team for nominating me and for all the support I have received from my colleagues."



The heart of our team

Gary Kinsella, Dignity's Head of Customer Service, said: "Mel consistently demonstrates her passion for our business and works to achieve the best outcomes for clients who are going through difficult and distressing times.

"I would describe her as the beating heart of our team. She makes things happen and does so with a smile on her face."

The UK Contact Centre Awards have been running for 26 years and recognise outstanding individuals and teams working in contact centre operations across the country.



FEEL GOOD FACTOR

The Good Deed Feed is packed with inspiring success stories from the people who make Dignity great – you!

They say one good turn deserves another, so it's just as well we have the perfect sharing platform on Dignity Inside.

If you come across a colleague adding value in their community, helping out a client, supporting their team or achieving a goal, then pass it on by making a post on our Good Deed Feed.

Maybe you're the one behind the achievement. Don't be shy, upload the details and get the kudos you deserve.

We've showcased nearly 200 Good Deeds since the feature first went live and we feel sure there are plenty more to discover.

Check out these examples, then if you're feeling inspired head over to the site and follow the on-screen instructions to add one of your own.



Our Polish specialist

Slawek Gora, nominated by Philip Smyth.

Slawek has recently taken on the responsibility of serving the extensive Polish Diaspora of London and surrounding areas.

He has already made a wonderful and positive impression upon the clergy and laity alike.

Here Slawek meets with the Administrator of Westminster Cathedral, Fr Slawomir Witon.

Ice cream required

Paul Laker, nominated by Sue Goodwin.

An elderly lady was to be scattered unwitnessed, with the stipulation that she liked ice cream and we needed to have ice cream at the time. One of our gardeners

was sent to purchase ice cream and came back with this van.

A fabulous fundraiser

Sally Underwood and Maggie Parry, nominated by Deborah Leah.

Well done for braving the wet and cold for a branch open day, complete with horse and carriage rides and a raffle. Together they raised £200 for local churches. Great work!



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