



17<sup>th</sup> December 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](http://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!)

Season's  
greetings and a  
happy New Year  
to you all

# THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME

Showing that we truly care this Christmas,  
thanks to your amazing efforts.

It's known as the season of goodwill and there's been kindness in abundance this year from teams up and down the country.

From carol concerts to charity calendars, you've pulled out all the stops to make it an extra special Christmas for our clients, communities and colleagues.

Many of you have been sharing your stories with us and we've tried to capture as many as we can here in Dignity Inside.

## O Christmas Tree

Nothing says Christmas quite like a brightly decorated tree.

Many of ours are being used to carry messages of remembrance, which clients and family members have written on the back of specially designed tags.

They make poignant displays and in some instances also help to raise money for good causes as people offer donations in exchange for filling out a tag.



There are trees located outside most of our crematoria, like the one pictured above at Charnock Richard in Chorley, Lancashire.

You'll find trees of all shapes and sizes in our branches too, while some teams have supported the installation of one elsewhere in the community.

John Drage Funeral Directors in Wellingborough placed theirs in the local village church, overseen by Business Manager Spencer Matthews.

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Gordon Rodwell



JH Kenyon



## Remembrance and reflection

We know how difficult coping with bereavement can be and Christmas often makes it harder still.

That's why our annual memorial services are so appreciated by clients, whether they attend in person or log in online to view a recording.

It takes a lot of hard work to make these events happen, so a huge thank you to everyone involved.

JH Kenyon, R Brain & G Gamble & Son, Ronald P Sherry & Son and W S Bond held their service at St James's Church, with a live stream also available via the church's website and Facebook page.

Guests held candles to commemorate lost loved ones and more than £200 was collected in donations for London's Air Ambulance Charity.

W S Harrison & Son welcomed nearly 200 people to their service at St Gabriel's Church in Newcastle upon Tyne and the team arranged for a local harpist to play while the names of the people cared for this year were read out.

A second event held at St Bartholomew's Church in partnership with R S Scott Funeral Directors was also a great success.

Funeral Director Kate Eade and the team from Michael Smy organised a service at St Augustine's Church in Ipswich.

As well as remembering those who had passed away, it was also an opportunity to offer condolences to families who were forced to restrict attendance at funerals held earlier in the year because of the pandemic.

## Making a difference

We love to see communities come together at Christmas, especially with the help of our colleagues.



W S Harrison



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J Rymer



Michael Smy

"We love to see communities come together at Christmas, especially with the help of our colleagues."

Samantha Barksby and Carl Cracknell from Gordon Rodwell in Felixstowe hosted an evening of carols played by the local Salvation Army band where Carl is a member. They also provided mince pies and a hot drink to those who came along to watch the show.

More carols were enjoyed at J Rymer in York, this time accompanied by a Victorian-style fairground organ.

Neighbours were invited to join in and have their picture taken next to the branch's 12 foot high outdoor Christmas memorial tree.

Also impressing passers by are the seasonal window displays in our branches, including the one at JH Kenyon in Westminster prepared by Antonio Ayala. The beautiful crib set features figures from Bolivia where Antonio was born.

Many community groups and charitable causes rely on the generosity of others at Christmas.

At head office, we've been collecting items to pass on to food bank charity the Trussell Trust who'll be distributing emergency food parcels to families in time for Christmas.

Several branches have done the same, serving as collection points for toys and gifts as well as food and making sure they get to those in need.

Meanwhile Aberdeen Funeral Directors in Woodside agreed to sponsor a page of a fundraising calendar in aid of North East Sensory Services so the charity can continue its vital work helping those with sensory impairments.

And for CMG, there's a chance for colleagues to nominate a local charity to receive a share of a £23,000 Christmas fund which has been made available through the national metal recycling scheme our crematoria participate in.

Dementia UK, Watch Us Grow, Folkestone Rainbow Centre and Children's Hospice South West are among the beneficiaries put forward so far, receiving £500 each.

## Visit our gallery

Be sure to head over to the Dignity Inside website, where you'll find a picture-perfect gallery that's brimming with festive cheer. We'll keep adding to the gallery in the run up to Christmas, so email any pictures and news snippets to [internal.communications@dignityuk.co.uk](mailto:internal.communications@dignityuk.co.uk) so we can include them.

## BRINGING IN PLAN B

As the government acts to help tackle rising COVID-19 infection rates, here's what the changes mean for you.

The discovery of the new Omicron virus variant, and subsequent confirmation of cases in the UK, has prompted some changes to the government's COVID-19 guidelines.

The government has announced a number of measures and restrictions in response to increasing case numbers of the COVID-19 Omicron variant.

This means invoking 'Plan B' in England, a step previously outlined in the government's Winter Plan to keep the spread of coronavirus under control.

There are elements of the plan that affect us directly in our work, so in response we've introduced a set of guidelines which are applicable to the whole business under what we're calling our safe working framework.

### KEY CHANGES UNDER PLAN B

Wearing face coverings is once again a legal requirement in most indoor public venues, which are listed [here](#).

We already knew that shops and public transport were included; among the settings added under Plan B are places of worship and crematoria and burial ground chapels.



This applies to members of the public and staff in public facing areas.

As of this week, people should be working from home if they can and their job role supports it, while the NHS COVID Pass is required to gain entry to certain venues and events.

Similar restrictions are already in place in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

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## WORKING SAFELY TOGETHER

Developed by our Health and Safety team, the **Safe Working Framework** is designed for just the sort of situation we're facing now.

It has a sliding scale of protective measures which can be applied depending on the prevalence of COVID-19, case numbers and any formal guidance or restrictions from the government.

The Framework ensures we take a consistent approach to COVID-19 protection across the organisation, no matter where you work. And above all, it's about keeping you and our clients safe.

Our Protection Level 2 aligns well to England's Plan B and the various measures across each of the devolved nations. It says:

- Face coverings are to be worn away from desks
- Stay socially distanced at 1m+ in communal areas
- Make use of protective screens in all areas
- Work from home where it's appropriate to your role.

In addition, we're restating the following advice which was circulated when the **Omicron variant** first emerged:

- Avoid unnecessary face to face meetings; if it's effective for your needs, meet virtually
- If you must attend a meeting in person, or are visiting a funeral branch or crematorium, take a Lateral Flow Test before you leave
- If you are eligible and able to do so, colleagues are encouraged to book seasonal vaccinations – flu jabs, COVID-19 vaccinations and COVID-19 boosters. Don't forget to share your **vaccination** status with HR Shared Services.



"We must help clients by informing them of the need to wear face coverings."



## IMPACT ON FUNERAL SERVICES

The Safe Working Framework works in tandem with our usual detailed operational guidance for colleagues in Funeral Operations. It does not replace it.

We expect to move our current Operational Guidance to Level 2 very soon, so please keep checking Dignity Inside so you have access to the latest information.

In terms of Plan B having any wider impact on funeral services, there has been no indication from the government that this will happen, for example limiting numbers for funeral attendance.

However, we must help clients by informing them of the need to wear face coverings in places of worship and chapels when making arrangements for services.

One final point to clarify is that all our guidance and protection measures remain under constant review.

While the nation isn't returning to more stringent restrictions or a formal lockdown, we've seen how quickly things can escalate when a new variant appears.

We are committed to acting in a way that keeps you safe and avoids any risk of disruption to the services we provide to families.



# NEW PREMISES ACCESS POLICY LAUNCHED

It means we can maintain a consistent approach to managing who has access to Dignity's premises.



**Every day we open our doors to families and members of the public.**

We are entrusted with a huge responsibility to care for loved ones, and approach every process with the same high levels of standards and compassion.



Much of what we do at our funeral homes or crematoria might happen behind the scenes away from visitors, but it doesn't go unnoticed. And the integrity of our colleagues means that we do deliver incredibly high standards.

We regularly review our policies and procedures to ensure that they are robust and consistent so we can confidently say we are providing a sector-leading approach to care.

## **A new policy, but not a new concept**

Protecting who has access to our premises clearly isn't a new idea

for the business. There are already a number of ways to ensure certain areas are only accessible by permitted individuals.

The purpose of our new policy isn't to reinvent the wheel or to prevent necessary work being carried out through strict measures, rather it is to ensure a consistent approach across the Dignity estate.

This means effectively managing who can gain access to our premises, being clear on the purposes of this access, and maintaining an accurate record of all access arrangements.

It is important that we manage this access for health and safety

purposes, fulfilling our obligations for client confidentiality, and more poignantly, to ensure the security and dignity of the deceased and their ashes is maintained.

## **Who does the policy apply to?**

The new guidelines apply to all employees, contractors, clients and visitors whilst on any company premises.

This could be contractors, sub contractors, employees from other areas or departments i.e. Regional Health & Safety Officers, Internal Audit, HR Business Partners.

We must all ensure that we are familiar with what the policy outlines.

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## What does it cover?

Key areas are:

- **Security.** We must only allow authorised individuals to have access to sensitive areas, accompanied by a Dignity colleague at all times.

- **Visitor records.** All visitors, including clients, must sign in and out of the premises on all occasions. As visitor books have not yet been issued, please keep a written record in the interim

- **Induction and identification.** We must confirm the identity of a third party (non-client), such as a contractor, minister or trade embalmer, and they must also complete the required induction. This includes an introduction to COVID-19 safe working practices, fire safety procedures and welfare facilities.

- **Access codes.** A new system has been introduced to manage access to our buildings by third parties, including the provision of access codes for certain areas.

## What do I need to do?

The new policy can be found [here](#) and it has been published on the Dignity Academy Portal as a mandatory policy read.

It's important that you take the time to fully understand the policy and what it means for you.

We are also currently undergoing an audit of existing security and access requirements with the help of our teams in funeral and crematoria operations.

The purpose is to identify any specific gaps in security and access to facilities, including the requirement for new locks, lockable storage and cabinets, or issues with doors.

## The Dignity Standard

We are proud of how we care for families, and as a sector leader will continue to develop our approach to delivering high quality services and standards.

We've also continued to support the development of a new Code of Practice for the funeral sector, and the ambitions of government for consistent guidelines across all providers.

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**“The purpose is to identify any specific gaps in security and access to facilities.”**

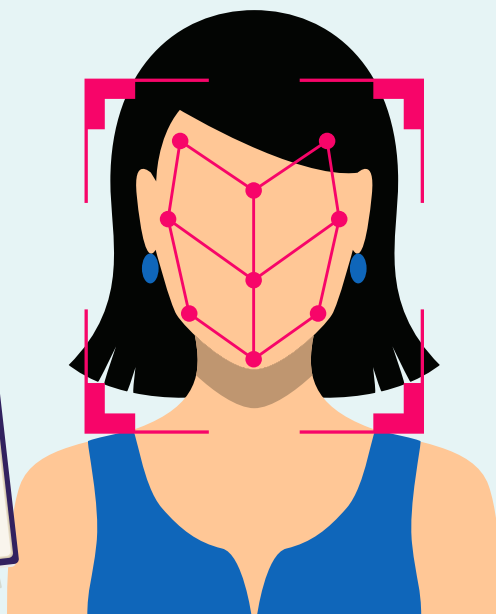
Dignity's long term aim is to develop our own suite of policies that will make up our Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), that not only meet the expectations set out for the sector, but exceed them.

This will be at the core of everything we do with regard to caring for clients and facilities.

Due to the scale of what this will cover, we're seeking to launch the SOP in phases to ensure each element is given the right degree of focus and priority.

We've already seen the first phase of this with the recent fire safety audit and update across the network.

A steering group has been tasked with developing the guidelines, and includes a cross-section of operational, property and health and safety colleagues. Keep an eye out for more on this in the New Year.



# USE IT BUT DON'T LOSE IT

You can carry over 10 days of annual leave into 2022,  
or exchange up to five for the equivalent pay.



All our colleagues have been working extremely hard this past 18 months, and one thing that's clear is the unwavering commitment to delivering a great service to our clients.

We know it has been difficult for some of you to take time off for much needed rest or time with loved ones, due to continued resource constraints and particularly busy periods.

The Executive Committee is keen to ensure colleagues don't lose out, so we're pleased to confirm the following options.

## Carrying over 10 days

You can carry over up to 10 days of your leave into 2022. This can be used up until the end of the year, but please ensure you discuss with your manager about spreading your leave across the year to ensure resource isn't impacted within your team.

Don't forget if you carried over any leave from 2020 this will still be counted towards your leave entitlement for 2022 and will be reflected on Perform early next year.

## Exchange five days for equivalent pay

You can also exchange up to five days of your leave for the equivalent pay. This will be paid through payroll and is subject to the usual NI and tax requirements.

This option is only available for up to five days.

### What do I need to do?

To take advantage of these options, please follow these steps:

- 1 Check your leave is up to date on Perform by speaking to your manager.
- 2 If you're a manager, update any leave as required by your team. You may have to complete a Perform Change Request if you need to back-date and update any annual leave.
- 3 Once you're aware of your remaining holiday entitlement, choose one of the options above.
- 4 If you would like to exchange up to five of your days for payback, please email [HR Shared Services](#) to confirm your request. We will validate this with your line manager and payments will be processed in January's pay run.





# ONE CALL FOR ALL

Making things easier for our drivers by routing all services through a single contact number.

Searching for a particular telephone number can be a real faff, especially if you're in a hurry.

So we hope our driver colleagues will welcome this change from the Fleet department, which is designed to quickly put them in touch with the right people should they require assistance.

Previously there were five different numbers to remember depending on the situation, but we've not condensed this down to just one.

Callers will be presented with six different options so they can be directed to the relevant expert, whether that's one of our preferred suppliers or a member of the Fleet team.

## Choose your service

Make a note of this all-important number – **0808 196 9684**. We've issued new contact cards like the one opposite to help.

After a brief introductory message, you'll be able to choose from:

- Option 1 – accidents
- Option 2 – breakdown services (via RAC)
- Option 3 – tyres (via ATS)
- Option 4 – glass replacement (via Mobile Windscreens)
- Option 5 – maintenance authorisation (this is for repair garages)
- Option 6 – to speak to a colleague from Fleet

This type of call routing is fairly commonplace in many contact centres (indeed, we use something similar in



"We're expecting an enhanced experience for colleagues."



the Client Service Centre) and is sometimes referred to as an interactive voice response, or IVR system.

What's great with the new Fleet line is that it's a solution we've been able to develop ourselves by the Fleet and IT departments working together.

## Finding a new partner

One additional change this month from Fleet is the introduction of a new partner firm for accident management.

We're moving from WNS Assistance to KINTO and this is who you'll be dealing with in the event of any incidents or damage repair work.

Fleet Manager Nick Yates said: "We're expecting an enhanced experience for colleagues who need to use this service.

"KINTO have more repair locations, which should in turn reduce the amount of downtime for our vehicles.

"Their repair costs are lower and we'll see improved reporting when a repair is underway, including live updates via an online portal for the Fleet team."

# RESTART REQUIRED

Automatic restarts following Windows updates will ensure our computers stay fully protected.



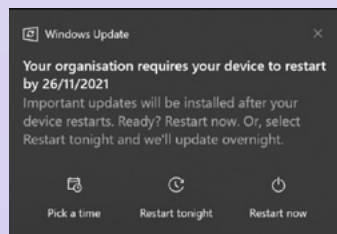
Technology can be frustrating, never more so than when it's trying to tell us what to do.

But on this occasion, we need to listen up because when it comes to installing vital updates, your PC really does know best.

Over the next few months, you'll notice some changes to the way Windows updates are carried out.

The updates themselves will download and install as normal, however when the time comes to restart your machine, this following pop-up message will appear.

It's essentially a warning that you have a seven-day deadline to complete the restart. When you see the message, don't delay and choose one of the following options:



- Pick a specific time that suits you and doesn't clash with your work or any online meetings you need to attend. Another reminder will appear 15 minutes ahead of the planned restart time (including the option to reschedule if you need to)
- Restart tonight, which means the update will complete overnight
- Restart now if it's convenient to do so.

Unfortunately, ignoring this warning isn't one of the available options!

If you do, a final pop-up alert will arrive 12 hours before the deadline, after which the restart will happen automatically.

## Why do we need to restart?

It's an integral part of the update process. There are a range of supporting Windows operating system files which need to be replaced, but this can't happen while a PC is in use.

Continuing to use your computer while updates are pending or in progress can result in the system becoming unstable or unpredictable.

Perhaps most important of all is the need to fix any vulnerabilities. The longer you leave it to restart and complete the update, the higher the risk of a vulnerability being exploited.

That could cause harm to your computer and worse still it could compromise Dignity's wider systems and our ability to keep company and customer data fully protected.

So please don't leave anything to chance and complete updates as soon as you can – before technology beats you to it!





# DEVELOPMENT THROUGH APPRENTICESHIPS

Exciting new qualifications for Funeral Team Members and Funeral Directors are coming soon.

**We don't just want our colleagues to work at Dignity; we want to help them build lasting careers.**

Learning and personal development is integral to this, but fitting everything in alongside the day to day responsibilities of your role can feel a little daunting.

This is where apprenticeships show their value. They help people gain extra skills and work towards recognised qualifications while continuing to be hands-on in their job and earn a salary.

We're huge advocates of apprenticeships and have wanted to make industry specific ones available to colleagues in Funeral Operations for some time.

Just over a year ago we thought we'd made it happen, until our training provider unexpectedly withdrew their support shortly after the programme had launched.


Now with a new partner in place called Connect2Care (a division of HIT Training), we're pleased to say funeral apprenticeships are back! And you can register interest to take part from today.

## What's available?

There are two qualifications within the funeral apprenticeship programme.

### Funeral Team Member

This is a Level 2 apprenticeship (intermediate, equivalent to the educational level of GCSE) and is



**"They help people gain extra skills and work towards recognised qualifications while continuing to be hands-on in their job and earn a salary."**

suitable to those in roles such as Funeral Service Operative and Funeral Service Arranger.

### Funeral Director

This is a Level 3 apprenticeship (advanced, equivalent to A level)

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“Those candidates who were due to start the programme last year have already been notified should they wish to reapply.”



and is suited to those already in a Funeral Director role, those who have achieved the Funeral Team Member apprenticeship, or those with at least 12 months of industry experience.

The programme is due to commence at the end of February 2022 and we can accommodate up to 70 people in this initial cohort.

For full time colleagues, the funeral apprenticeships will last around 12 months, culminating in an end point assessment. Those working part-time may need a little longer to finish.

Funding is being provided through Dignity's participation in the government's Apprenticeship Levy.

Please note this means that applicants must live in England in order to take part – unfortunately colleagues in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland or Jersey are not able to use the levy for apprenticeships.

### How do people apply?

There is a four week window for



making an application, which closes on 14 January, 2022.

It works on a first come, first served basis and you'll need to discuss the opportunity with your line manager so they can provide an endorsement.

Those candidates who were due to start the programme last year have already been notified should they wish to reapply.

Before going any further, we'd strongly suggest reading through the following materials so you understand what's involved:

- Factsheets for **Funeral Team Member** and **Funeral Director** Apprenticeships
- **Eligibility criteria**
- **FAQs**
- 'Learning something new' – our **guide** to learning requirements for apprentices.

Ready to sign up? Please complete this **expression of interest form** and the project team will contact you to discuss next steps.

You'll also be invited to attend one of our online drop in sessions, which start from 10 January. Bookings are done via the Dignity Academy Portal.

Best of luck!



# STAYING WELL THIS WINTER



Here are AXA's top tips for staying healthy through the winter.

For some of us, the winter months hold a special kind of magic – picturesque snowy scenes, seasonal festivities and cosying up indoors.

But it's not everyone's favourite season. The cold weather and lack of daylight, coupled with lurking viruses and sick bugs, can take their toll on both our physical and mental health.

However, there are a few simple things we can do to help ourselves stay well during the winter months, which could help prevent, or lessen the symptoms of, common ailments such as a cold or the flu.

Lane Wells, Registered Nurse in AXA Health's Health at Hand team shares some top tips for keeping you and your family healthy this winter:

## 1 EAT WELL

Wintery weather conditions inevitably lead to cravings for stodgy comfort foods, which is triggered by a change in our body's hormones. Carbohydrates often satisfy the hunger pang, but there's no need to feel guilty about tucking in – carbohydrates give us energy, with many sources also containing high levels of fibre that aid our digestive system too.

It's important to ensure you're eating at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day to absorb as much vitamin C as possible to protect your immune system. Why not make the most of delicious seasonal produce, such as carrots, pumpkin, swede and turnips to create healthy, warming dishes like soups and stews?

**Vitamin D** is also really important during the winter months due to the lack of natural sunlight. Therefore, enjoying oily fish, red meat and eggs as part of a balanced diet will ensure you receive the necessary nutrients.

## 2 KEEP MOVING

The wet and cold weather means it can be hard to muster up the energy to go outside and stay active – particularly when there are fewer daylight hours to squeeze it in to! But being active has many immune system and mood boosting benefits, so it's worth keeping it up.



Simple activities like brisk walking or a **home workout** from the comfort of your living room can be both enjoyable and worthwhile for our physical and mental health. Why not recruit an exercise buddy to help keep you motivated?

If you do feel you're coming down with the lurgy, listen to your body. If you're keen to continue exercising, stay hydrated – keeping moving can actually help in breaking up congestion in the nose and throat. Moderate exercise won't prolong or worsen your symptoms necessarily, but if you're feeling run down, rest and recuperation is really important to aid your recovery.

### 3 KEEP WARM

This may sound like an obvious point, but to help prevent illness and promote wellbeing, avoid getting too chilly. Long term exposure to cold and drier air can weaken our immune systems, so don't stay out in the cold for longer than you have to.



Layering up is an effective way to retain body heat and therefore keep warm. So, prepare for wintry conditions by regularly checking the weather forecast.

Multiple thin layers will keep you warmer than a single thicker layer, as warm air gets trapped between the layers, acting as an insulator. You'll also feel more comfortable moving between indoor and outdoor temperatures. It's also wise to wear a hat, as this is where our bodies lose most heat.

Don't forget to keep your home at a suitable temperature – at least **18 degrees** is advised – so you stay toasty through winter.

### 4 GET OUTDOORS

Reduced sunlight during winter can disrupt our **sleep** and waking hours, leaving us feeling sluggish and tired.



The lack of daylight causes our brain to produce excess melatonin – the hormone that makes us feel sleepy. After all, we rely on the sun for vitamin D to boost our energy levels.

It may, therefore, be tempting to stay in bed for longer to make up for it – but don't hibernate, as this may only increase these feelings of lethargy. Instead, spend as much time outside as possible to help beat winter fatigue, whether it's a short walk at lunchtime or a quick jog after work.

### 5 FLU VACCINATION

To prevent the dreaded winter virus, getting a flu jab is one of the most reliable preventatives. Cold and flu symptoms can be very similar; however, the flu tends to be more severe, affecting more than just the nose and throat. Instead, it leaves us feeling exhausted and unable to function as normal. Other common symptoms include body aches, a sudden fever, diarrhoea and vomiting.



Certain groups of vulnerable people are entitled to the flu vaccination free on the **NHS**. These include the over 50s, people with certain medical conditions like asthma, children aged between two and 11 years old, as well as frontline health or social workers. If you're not entitled to the flu jab on the NHS then we'll help cover the cost – see our **previous article on getting your vaccinations**.





## IT'S QUIZMAS!

Get your team together for our fun and festive Christmas Quiz!

To paraphrase the great  
noddy holder... IT'S  
QUIIIIIIIIIIZMAAAAAAAS!

Have we got some fun in store for you. Get your team together and take part in our Big Dignity Christmas Quiz.

There are eight rounds in store including everything from trivia, to Christmas jokes, film, music and more...

Here's how it works:

1 Download the **Quiz Question Pack** and **Answer Form** and print them off

- 2 Fill in the answer form as a team – you have up to an hour to complete the quiz
- 3 When you've finished, **email internal.communications@dignityuk.co.uk** and request the answer key
- 4 We'll send this over to you so you can mark your answers and see how you did

Then, if you want to take part in the Dignity Christmas Quiz leaderboard – send us a copy of your answer sheet and score and we'll add you to our table. The winner will be announced on Christmas Eve.

Happy Quizzing!

## A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

And, that's it for another year, our final newsletter of 2021.

We hope you've enjoyed reading them as much as we've enjoyed writing them!

You can still catch our updates on Dignity Inside and we'll be posting all over Christmas and the New Year. Make sure you check in online as we've got some great things still to come.

• **Christmas Awards.** If you've been mentioned on the Good Deed Feed this year, you could be in the running for a Christmas Award. There are prizes to be won and we'll be announcing the winners before Christmas.

• **Wellbeing Wednesday.** There's plenty more Wellbeing content coming your way including advice on taking care of your mental health over Christmas and a tale of burnt toast and the power of words.

All that's left for us to say, is have a wonderful Christmas and a very happy New Year. We'll see you again in 2022!

