

24 April 2020

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



BUILDING A DIGNITY RAINBOW

Would your children or family members like to draw us a Dignity rainbow?

We've had a phenomenal reaction to the Dignity rainbow drawn by 10 year old Alex, son of Gene Wallser, Funeral Director at Zealley Funeral Service in Newton Abbot... and let's face it, we could all do with a few more rainbows in our lives at the moment.

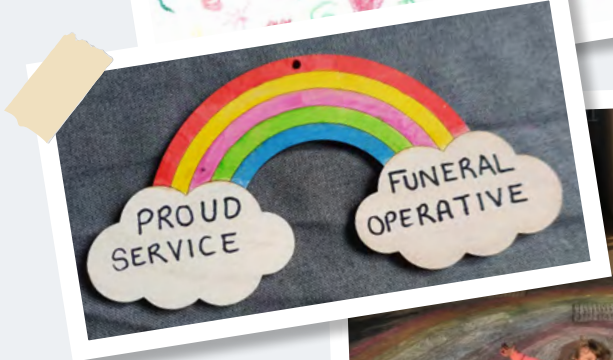
So, if you've got a budding Picasso at home, or just need an extra activity to fill the time with the kids, we'd love to see your original Dignity rainbow artwork. Every drawing we receive will get a prize (think along the lines of colouring books - but keep that to yourself for now), and will feature on our employee website for all of our colleagues to admire. Our lucky first few are pictured here.

All you need to do is take a picture and email it to internal.communications@dignityuk.co.uk - along with the names of the people who drew it and an address we can send a prize to. Oh, and we may feature the drawings on our social media channels too. Let us know if that's OK when you get in touch.

Happy drawing!



MORE DIGNITY RAINBOWS





UPDATED FUNERAL OPERATIONS INSTRUCTIONS

We've made further updates to the instructions to help you care for our clients and the deceased.

New instructions include:

- Instructions for preparation and embalming of the deceased, including guidance for those who may have died from the virus, or be infected by the virus but died from something else, and a new viewing indemnity form.
- Clarity over funeral gathering size in Northern Ireland

Please keep safe by following these new instructions, which replace the guidance issued previously:

- [Updated Operational Guidelines](#)

- [Handling Deceased Guidelines](#)
- [Viewing Indemnity Form](#)
- [Disposable Masks](#)

Will the guidelines change again?

Our aim is to keep you and our clients safe, so we are continually reviewing and updating the guidelines in line with official advice from the government and industry organisations.

What if I can't find what I'm looking for?

The guidelines are by no means exhaustive, so if you need help, ask your area and regional managers. They are there to help you and we are all in this together as we work through this crisis.

AN UPDATE ON CASH COLLECTION

All cash collection locations should by now have received a welcome pack from security company G4S, who will be undertaking cash collections for Dignity.

On 1st April we announced that G4S would be contacting selected locations to arrange cash collections. Whilst this service was already being explored it was fast-tracked due to local bank opening hours being reduced during the pandemic, and our wish to

reduce unnecessary face-to-face interaction.

If your branch is a cash collection location, you will have received an email from your line manager outlining the new steps you need to take to ensure your cash collection goes smoothly and into our accounts.

You can download the [G4S welcome pack](#) and guidance on [preparing your cash collection](#).

If you need to contact G4S customer services to make any amends to services or order additional cash collection bags, please call 0844 800 4205. You must quote the following reference numbers when asked:

Dignity Funerals Ltd – 343 2486
Dignity Funerals No.3 Ltd – 343 2487

You can also contact [Jason Barnes](#), Ledger Manager for any queries



SUPPORTING THE FRONT LINE

Here we take a glimpse at how some support services at head office have adapted how they work and embraced technology to continue giving our operations colleagues the support they need.

It's been a challenging few weeks for everybody as we continue to give the greatest care to families and their loved ones. There's been a fantastic team effort behind the scenes to make sure everyone can do their jobs - even if it may look a little different these days.

“
Our HR Business Partners have been busier than ever. Unable to travel to meet colleagues face to face, you'll find them on the phone or on video calls providing support to those that need it.
”



Awesome Agents

The Client Service Centre (CSC) implemented a speedy roll-out plan to get over 100 call agents working from home in just ten days so they could continue to care for our clients in their time of need. That meant, for the first time, getting used to working on laptops (and their significantly smaller screens) instead of desktops, and dealing with a huge increase in calls. Operating 24/7 as usual, calls are being taken from home using the Mitel telephony system that was introduced late last year as part of the transformation programme. As a close-knit team used to working together, they have done a great job in getting used to a new way of working.



Online Operations

Our Marketing and Branch Development Management Team have joined forces to move our brochures, arrangement forms and payment forms online to make it easier for operational colleagues to serve our clients. This has been a huge (and swift) project as many branches had customised forms and printed brochures.



People Power

The whole HR team can access all the usual systems, software and processes and are working tirelessly behind the scenes to answer questions that are coming in thick and fast. Our HR Business Partners have been busier than ever. Unable to travel to meet colleagues face to face, you'll find them on the phone or on video calls providing support to those that need it. Our HR Shared Service Team - who continue to ensure you receive your pay and any changes are processed - are working remotely to ensure that we all get paid on time.





Processing Post

Speaking of paying bills, we've also needed to make sure we continue processing invoices for payment. There is a rota for opening incoming post, which is being batched and collected by colleagues in order to process (many thanks to the KEC reception team for assisting with this). In a time where many small and large businesses are struggling to cope with the financial impact of COVID-19, this has been important to ensure we pay our suppliers promptly.



The IT Crowd

And of course, IT has provided the backbone of all the above and more – providing the technology and guidance to help all support functions work remotely where possible and make the most of our technology. Many colleagues in support functions have been using Microsoft Teams, which is an online collaboration tool that lets you call, video call and work on documents with your colleagues as well as attend online meetings. To show just how integral this has been to the business, here are a few stats for you:

Microsoft Teams Usage	Before lockdown (28 th February)	During lockdown (16 th April)
Active users	108	429
1:1 team meetings	13	256
Group meetings	0	261
Team messages	592	5,343
Active chat groups	26	420



We know we haven't mentioned everyone (it would be a humungous article if we did!) but we'd like to say a big thank you to every single person who has adapted the way they usually work to support colleagues and clients alike. We know those of you on the frontline have the hardest, most fundamental job, but we hope this gives some insight into how the business is supporting you behind the scenes.



DID YOU KNOW?

We have a new email address – internal.communications@dignityuk.co.uk – but don't worry, we're still keeping an eye on the Good to Great inbox. It would be great if you could update your contact details for Dignity's Internal Communications. But rest assured we'll be reading all of your emails, whichever email address you're using.



INTRODUCING StayWell



A new series of regular articles focusing on your wellbeing during these troubled times

Have you noticed how often people are saying this to each other at the moment? 'Stay well' is the new 'best wishes' or 'see you later.' We're saying it on the phone; we're writing it in our text messages and emails.

In the context of this article, and future posts under the same banner, we don't just mean it in the medical sense. We want you to look after your mental health too.

Coronavirus is making us adjust to a markedly different way of life, both at work and home. People are concerned about family and friends and we know how hard colleagues are working to take good care of our clients. However, this shouldn't be at the expense of our own wellbeing.

We'd urge you to spend some time reading these features over the coming weeks and checking out the additional resources we'll be signposting along the way.

And most importantly, remember the simple message that it's **OK not to be OK**. Don't bottle up your feelings and please ask for help if you need it.



The first of our articles on wellbeing looks at the importance of staying in touch and keeping informed.

Thanks to technology, self isolation needn't equate to social isolation. We can contact the people we care about using a range of devices and apps, while getting a window on their respective worlds through the power of social media.

Many of the companies and service providers we rely on are also active on social media (and yes, that includes Dignity!). Follow them and you should find helpful information like opening / trading hours, stock levels and capacity for deliveries.



Things to enjoy

Video calls. We can't meet face to face with anyone outside our immediate household, so a natter via the video camera on our phone is the next best thing.

And people aren't just chatting. How about a virtual coffee morning or dinner party? Hook up with a friend and watch your favourite TV show together. Grab a drink and pay a visit to the virtual pub – you could even stage your own online quiz!

Popular video chat apps:



Skype



FaceTime



Facebook Messenger



House party
(which includes built-in games you can play with other callers)

zoom

Things to watch out for

Sharing is great, but sharing too much **personal information** can be dangerous and leave you vulnerable to fraudsters. Think carefully before you post.

Social media usage can get addictive. Be especially mindful about how much **screen-time** your children are getting. Encourage regular breaks, as psychologist and wellbeing expert **Suzy Reading** explains:

“We need variety in our visual diet and what we take in through our senses. Our screens are a great way of staying connected at this time of isolation, but also make time for movement, being outdoors and other creative pursuits.”

Have you heard of FOMO? It's the **fear of missing out** and in social media terms that means we start believing that other people are having more fun or doing more interesting things than we are. Remember it isn't a competition or a popularity contest, just be comfortable being yourself.

There's more information about social media and wellbeing [here](#).

Read all about it

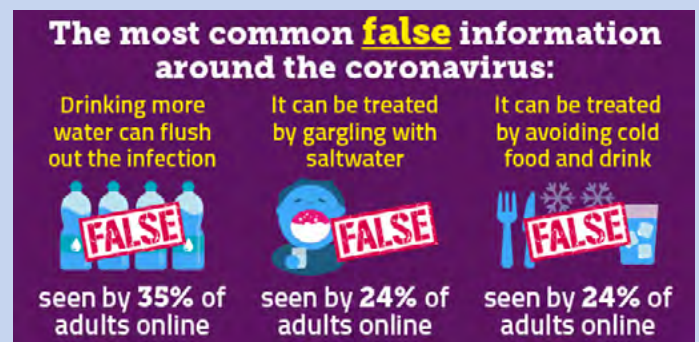
With rolling news channels and platforms like Twitter, you genuinely can – but should you? It's important to stay informed, however coronavirus is dominating the news agenda and the coverage is pretty bleak in its tone.

Following every detail will soon become draining, so it's advisable to limit your consumption and check in at regular intervals instead.

Fact or fiction?

Social networks are awash with theories, predictions and powerful accounts from those at the frontline. Some could well be genuine; others sadly are fake and merely serve to build hype. In short, don't believe everything you see or read.

A study released by Ofcom found that 46% of adult internet users in the UK saw false or misleading information about coronavirus during the week when social distancing measures were first introduced.



Follow trusted sources such as:

Government

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

NHS

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

World Health Organization

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>



the 2.6 challenge

UP FOR THE CHALLENGE



Our kind-hearted colleagues are always keen to help charitable causes; are you taking on a 2.6 Challenge this weekend?

Sunday would have been the 40th London Marathon, a race unfortunately made impossible because of coronavirus.

While it's understandably disappointing for the tens of thousands of runners who were due to tackle the famous 26.2 mile course, the cancellation is also a significant blow for UK charities.

The marathon raised a staggering £66.4m last year and it's far from being the only major fundraising event to be postponed during the pandemic. As a result,

charities are suffering and their vital support services to vulnerable members of society are under threat.

“

The marathon raised a staggering £66.4m last year and it's far from being the only major fundraising event to be postponed during the pandemic

”

In its place, the marathon organisers have dreamt up something new - **the 2.6 Challenge**, and you don't have to be an endurance athlete to get involved!

Help save the UK's charities

On 26 April, people across the country are being encouraged to complete their own sponsored 2.6 Challenge.

Money can be donated to any UK charity, with the initiative supported by both JustGiving and Virgin Money Giving.

Running is still an option (perhaps for 2.6 miles or kilometres), but by no means the only one. The **official website** is packed with family-friendly fundraising ideas, most of which can be done safely from home while we're still in lockdown.

How about 26 press-ups, or doing an online workout for 26 minutes? Complete 26 laps of the garden, or climb the stairs 26 times. Cycle 2.6 miles, take the dog for a 2.6 mile walk, or put some music on and dance non-stop for 26 minutes.

If you've signed up for a 2.6 Challenge, or have been inspired to think of one for your favourite charity, then we'd love to hear about it. We can even try and raise awareness of your efforts through our social media channels.

Send the details (and any photos or videos) to **internal.communications@dignityuk.co.uk**. You could even post them on our soon-to-be-launched Good Deed Feed - look out for more details.



MANPOWER TO KEEP US MOVING

We've signed a deal with recruiters Manpower, to help us get through these turbulent times.

Recruitment experts, Manpower, will work with us to fill urgent vacancies created by the COVID-19 crisis, in the areas we need help the most.

Funeral Service Operatives (FSOs) are vital cogs that keep the Dignity wheel moving, but with around 20% of our colleagues currently absent due to illness or self-isolation, and hundreds of vacancies across our networks, we realise we need more hands on deck – and fast.

20%
of colleagues
currently absent
due to illness or
self isolation

Initially concentrating in areas that are seeing significantly increased demand for our services, such as London and the Midlands, Manpower will recruit temporary Funeral Service

Operatives on our behalf, to help us plug the gap.

It's essential we make sure we have people of the right calibre coming on board, so acting within our stringent recruitment guidelines and a clear approvals structure via the resourcing team, the agency will provide a seamless service from initial advertisement through to induction and even providing uniform.



Manpower[®]

The first of our new temporary colleagues are expected to join us w/c 27th April, with other regions being phased in as we continually review and understand the COVID-19 data.

If you have a need for FSO resource, please contact your Regional Manager to discuss further.

FUNERAL EXPENSE PAYMENT INCREASE

The amount of money available to assist with funeral costs is now £1,000.

Increased financial support is being offered by the Government to eligible benefit claimants arranging a funeral.

Funeral Expenses Payments have risen from £700 to £1,000, money which can help to cover costs including a coffin, flowers and funeral directors' fees.

Payments are in addition to the existing allowances that pay for funeral necessities such as burial or cremation charges. It is the first time Funeral Expenses Payments have been reviewed since 2003.

The same increase applies to the equivalent scheme in Scotland, known as the Funeral Support Payment. The Payment is made up of three parts, including a Standard Rate for funeral expenses and it is this Standard Rate which has now gone up to £1,000.

Changes to these schemes were first announced towards the end of last year and the increases already scheduled to come into effect by early April.

But while they don't represent a direct response to the coronavirus pandemic, the timing could nevertheless prove significant for families affected by a bereavement at this time.





NEW TEMPORARY PROCESS FOR ORDERING IT KIT

We've adjusted our process for ordering IT kit to speed things up for you.

There has been an obvious increase in requests for new IT kit and software to enable colleagues to continue to deliver the greatest care for our clients.

To speed things up and to help IT prioritise these orders, there is now a new temporary request process in place.

Complete this **IT request form** and email the completed copy to your line manager for review. If approved, your line manager

will email the form to **Edward.Dufty@dignityuk.co.uk**. The request will then be prioritised.

Please note, stocks of new and replacement IT kit are limited, so your request may not be fulfilled immediately.

If you have submitted a request for IT equipment outside of this process within the last two weeks, please re-submit following the process above. This will enable us to ensure your request will be processed.

#YOURSTORY PRIZE DRAW WINNERS

This month (well, technically last month) saw two worthy winners of the monthly #YourStory prize draw.

Susan Osbaldeston, an Arranger in Morecambe and Neil Jones, a Funeral Service Operative working in Lancaster and Morecambe were both relatively new to Dignity when they worked together to go above and beyond for a client whose elderly husband had passed away...

Whilst in our care, Susan arranged for Neil to pick Mrs Smith up from her family home so that she could see her husband before the funeral. On the journey, she told Neil that one of the favourite parts of her week was a fish and chip tea with her husband...

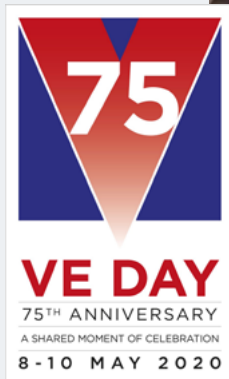
You'll have to wait until the next Little Book of Dignity is published to get the full story.

Susan and Neil have each won a £50 voucher. Thank you for sharing your stories of going above and beyond for clients and colleagues with us – please keep them coming. Just use this **online form**.



COMING SOON

We're launching our very own Good Deed Feed so you can shine a light on colleagues (or even yourself!) in these dark times. Spread a bit of brightness – look out for it on the website soon.



ANIMAL QUACKERS!

What are plastic ducks and a teddy bear doing in the window of one of our branches?

These are just two of the reasons to pause and take a look at the colourful window display at John Bardgett & Sons Funeral Directors in Ponteland, Northumberland.

With other features including a Union Jack, Royal British Legion bunting and a life-size cut out of the Queen, you're probably thinking this is related to the forthcoming VE Day celebrations.

And you'd be partly right. With all public events now cancelled because of the coronavirus pandemic, colleagues Debbie Owens and Jane Derrick want to be sure that the 75th anniversary of VE Day on Friday, 8 May doesn't go unnoticed.

They've pinned the words to Vera Lynn's iconic wartime ballad 'We'll Meet Again' to their display together with Sir Winston Churchill's 'This is Your Victory' speech given after the announcement of the end of the war in Europe.

The ducks are doubly significant – they were donated by services charity the Royal Air Forces Association, but also refer to a popular community event in Ponteland called the Duck Race which raises money for charities of the local Rotary Club.

Remembering our armed forces is important for Debbie and Jane, however there's no getting away from the significant challenges facing the nation today. With this in mind, they've added blue hearts and a rainbow to offer thanks to key workers and the NHS.

So what about the bear? He's called Wilbur and forms part of an initiative to help keep children entertained during lockdown.

The Ponteland bear hunt started out as an idea on Facebook. Teddies are popping up in front windows all across the town ready for children to spot while out on a family walk (at a safe distance, of course) or passing by in a car.

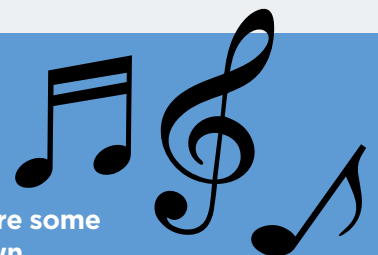
Well done to the team at John Bardgett & Sons for your fantastic creativity and community spirit.

Who else has plans for VE Day? What have you been doing to help support the community during these troubled times?

Send your stories to internalcommunications@dignityuk.co.uk.



#FRIDAYFEELS



This story is part of our new #FridayFeels feature where we share some feel-good stories to help lighten the mood during lockdown.

What will really make #FridayFeels work is your participation. If, after reading this story, you find yourself humming 'We'll Meet Again,' tell us the song that always lifts your mood, and we'll build Dignity's perfect playlist.

Let us know by commenting on the story [here](#).



WORKWEAR TRIALS DEFERRED

With efforts firmly focused on managing the coronavirus pandemic, we'll be picking this up again later in the year.

Right across our business, the numerous challenges presented by the spread of coronavirus are requiring us to be agile and flexible in the way we work.

We're also having to prioritise the things that really matter to our clients at this difficult time, while putting a few other projects temporarily on the back burner.

And that's the message coming from our colleagues in the Procurement Team with regards to trialling new workwear items such as shoes and shirts.

We've made the tough decision to halt any further trials for now and then resume activities once the pressures of COVID-19 have subsided.

There's still a commitment to review aspects of our uniforms as we seek to find the right combination of comfort, practicality and professionalism. With this in mind, none of the progress made so far will go to waste, including the extensive amount of helpful feedback and suggestions you have provided.

We'll keep you informed about when trials are expected to start up again and what the revised timescales for updated uniforms are likely to be, but for now thanks for bearing with us.

As for current workwear, the team would like to advise that a small amount of additional stock is now available in certain locations.

“

We've made the tough decision to halt any further trials for now and then resume activities once the pressures of COVID-19 have subsided.

”

Therefore, if any of our operational colleagues have urgent requirements, please speak to your line manager (also note that if Area Managers need to distribute any workwear by post, DX Bags with the product code 151578 are available for purchase via the Office Team portal).

We're endeavouring to increase our stock levels in response to the pandemic and plan ahead for the coming months knowing that demand is likely to increase.

In the meantime, if you have any questions please send them to purchasing.team@dignityuk.co.uk.



DID YOU KNOW?

We have lots of **COVID-19 FAQs** on the Good to Great website.

IT SERVICE DESK EXTENDS HOURS

The IT Service Desk has extended its opening hours in order to support colleagues who need a virtual helping hand.

The Service Desk is now offering support over the weekend – particularly useful for our colleagues on the front line in operations. You can contact the team on 0800 151 3795 or by email (itservicedesk@dignityuk.co.uk).

- Monday – Friday, 08:00 – 17:30
- Saturday and Sunday, 09:00 – 17:00

The opening hours will be reviewed in line with volumes of calls - watch this space



DID YOU KNOW?

We've published a contingency homeworking policy and a homeworking risk assessment. Check them out in the [Useful Documents](#) section of the website.

MISSED DX COLLECTION?

If your weekly collection has been missed, we need you to post your mail directly to head office.

Things are a little topsy turvy at the moment, and our DX collections service is feeling the strain as it suffers from staff shortages due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a result, we know they may have missed some recent collections. We want to avoid a big backlog of post, so if your normal collection gets missed, we'd like you to send any mail directly to head office so we can deal with it in a timely manner.

Of course, we want you to keep safe, so rather than heading to the post office and standing in a queue, you should order a stock of postage stamps from Office Team and keep them to hand. Then you can simply pop your post in the pillar box when you're passing.



CHANGES TO LAST RESPECTS QUESTION

Funeral Operations will ask clients about last respects, instead of CSC, from Friday 24th April.

Up to now, agents have asked bereaved callers, “Have you had the opportunity to pay your last respects prior to our bringing your loved one into our care?” Normally, this would generate a fairly simple response. But in these changed times, where people have not been able to spend time with their loved ones and issues such as shielding complicate matters, agents are spending much longer on this question, which in turn means our call queues are building up.

While we are training more new agents to come on board, it won't be enough to ease the length of time callers are waiting. So, from start of business this Friday (24th April), Funeral Operations colleagues will ask this question instead, as part of their communication with clients.

During their conversations, they will consider where loved ones have died, whether clients are vulnerable or self-isolating and let them know the options available to them as part of our revised guidelines and service offering.

We hope that not only will this relieve some of the pressure on CSC, but it will also allow us all to continue to take the greatest care of our clients in these unprecedented times.

All CSC agents and Funeral Operations colleagues have been briefed on the new process. If you have any questions, please ask your line manager, or comment here and we will make sure your query is answered.

**Fri 24th
April**

Funeral operations
will ask clients
about last
respects



#bepatient #bekind #oneteam

WAITING FOR DEATH AUTHORISATION?

It's taking longer than usual to process pre-need plan death authorisation forms. We need you to bear with us.

It's a stressful time for many of us. With colleagues absent due to self-isolation or caring responsibilities, and a sad spike in deaths in some areas of the country, it is taking us more time than usual to process the many death authorisation forms coming into the CSC team for our pre-need clients.

Our normal response times have increased, so while you would normally have heard back from the team on the same day, it can now take up to 24 hours to process your queries. We're doing everything we can to improve the response times, including training more colleagues to help and updating our auto-response messages. We know this is far from ideal and we'll certainly aim to process the forms sooner than that if we can.

So how can you help?

1. Make sure all the fields on the form are accurate and completed before you send them to cscdeathauth@dignityuk.co.uk. This helps speed up the process and stops us coming back to you for clarification. Last week 103 of the 245 requests received were incomplete!

2. Please do not call the 0800 number to authorise plans unless absolutely necessary.

3. Stop calling and emailing us multiple times. Chasing the team adds more pressure and time into the system and could stop clients from being able to reach us.

4. Only send one form per email - it makes it harder for us to track and manage requests if you bundle lots together. And make sure you only send the forms to cscdeathauth@dignityuk.co.uk so they don't get lost.

5. Please manage the client's expectations. You can still have a conversation with them about their wishes, obligations and next steps, without starting the formal funeral process. Let them know it could take up to 24 hours for the plan to be authorised.

6. Finally, be kind. We are all one team doing our very best in very unusual circumstances, so before you press send, or pick up the phone, have a think about how you may come across to the colleague on the other end. We need to take the greatest care of each other too.

Thank you for your patience and understanding at this difficult time.