

14 August 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](http://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!)



## THANK YOU

Last week the Exec Team posted a Thank You card and gift voucher to Dignity employees and casuals.

**The team wanted to thank you with a gesture for your efforts over the past few months. The COVID-19 pandemic has been like nothing we've ever seen before. And your dedication, commitment and loyalty to Dignity - whether working or shielding - has been exemplary.**

If for any reason you haven't received your gift card, please contact HR Shared Service either by email (**HR.Sharedservices** [dignityuk.co.uk](mailto:dignityuk.co.uk)) or **0121 726 4615**.



## THE FUTURE OF FUNERALS

The CMA has published provisional conclusions from its market investigation into funeral services.

**As you know, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) is carrying out an in-depth investigation into our sector, specifically the supply of services by funeral directors and crematoria.**

Today we have reached an important milestone in the process after the CMA published its findings and initial conclusions in a Provisional Decision report. Within the report are a number of proposed remedies the CMA believes the industry should adopt in order to ensure better outcomes for consumers who are planning and arranging funerals.

Like all affected parties, we need time to study this announcement in detail, but we are broadly supportive of the messaging around protecting vulnerable customers, clear pricing and encouraging comparisons. We have said throughout the investigation that our business is open to change – we certainly didn't wait for the CMA's report to start making improvements under the Good to Great transformation programme.

We have also been one of the main voices calling for increased regulation so that consumers are properly protected and experience consistently high standards of service and care.

### **What happens next?**

The measures laid out today require careful consideration. Along with other providers, we have an opportunity to submit feedback to the CMA and we will definitely be having our say. There may be some areas where we choose to speak

collectively as a sector via a trade organisation for greater impact.

Responses to the CMA must be received by 10 September. Final outcomes need to be agreed and published by a statutory deadline of 27 March 2021. However, the CMA has said today that this could happen sooner in light of the ongoing situation created by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

### **Keeping you informed**

No doubt some of you will have questions about the report and how it might affect the way we care for our clients. We are publishing FAQs on the Good to Great website and we'll keep adding to these as we work our way through the findings in full.

It is likely this issue will be covered in the media and could result in queries from clients. Our frontline teams are being briefed to help with their responses. In due course there will be further communications from us regarding the CMA investigation and where we go from here.

We appreciate it might be a little unsettling to see our sector in the spotlight, yet it's important to remember the value and trust clients place in us.

Indeed what COVID-19 has reinforced is that we are here to help the bereaved at their greatest time of need and in that sense we absolutely support the CMA's efforts to strengthen the funerals market as a whole. In touch with [healthandsafety@dignityuk.co.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@dignityuk.co.uk).



## WE'RE BRINGING YOU SOME FESTIVE CHEER!

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We're relaxing the rules for time off during the festive period for colleagues in Funeral Operations.

**The sun may be blazing, the temperatures may be soaring, but our minds are already turning to Christmas.**

We're not quite decking the halls or putting the sprouts on yet, but we have decided to relax the rules and let colleagues in Funeral Operations to take up to two days annual leave from mid-December to mid-January, in addition to public holidays.

While we haven't normally allowed time off during this busy period, the extraordinary events of this year mean we want you to spend time with your loved ones and enjoy some well-deserved rest at this special time.

### **How will this work?**

We will still need to make sure we have the right level of resources, so your line manager will consider how to make this work locally. We'll consider all annual leave requests fairly, making sure we have enough cover to keep the business going. Colleagues who didn't get time off last year will get priority, and everyone else's requests will be considered on a first come, first served basis.

Please make sure you submit your festive holiday requests to your managers no later than 31st October.

If you have any queries, please ask your line manager.

## LOCAL LOCKDOWNS

With spikes in coronavirus appearing, we take a look at what localised lockdowns mean for us.

**On 30th July the government announced immediate localised lockdowns for large areas of Northern England, including Greater Manchester, parts of West Yorkshire and East Lancashire. Since then, we've also seen other towns and cities restricted, such as Aberdeen.**

With localised spikes in coronavirus infections, the clampdowns are intended to stop the spread and protect communities.

We know that this will pose lots of questions for those of you living and working in these areas, so we've tried to answer as many of them as we can here:

### **Can funerals continue?**

Yes, the government's guidance specifically states that funerals with a maximum of 30 mourners can continue. It's important that mourners from different households maintain a 2m social distance and adhere to COVID-secure guidelines.

### **Can people travel into these areas?**

Yes, people living outside of the localised lockdown areas can travel in to attend funerals.

### **Are places of worship closing?**

No, places of worship can remain open, although it is probably a good idea to check with your local ministers for any specific arrangements for funerals. The guidance encourages services to take place outside where

possible. Worshippers must socially distance from people outside of their household. This means maintaining a distance of 2 metres, or 1 metre with mitigations (e.g. face coverings).

### **Do our funeral homes and crematoria have to close?**

No, you can still travel within and into the lockdown areas for work and our funeral homes and crematoria are still allowed to open, providing we follow social distancing and hygiene measures.

### **Can we still provide our current range of services to the clients we serve in these areas?**

Yes, just as we do in non-locked down areas – but please consult with the [current guidance](#) for further information how we are able to meet the needs of our clients, including the provision of limousines and other services.

### **Where can I find the government guidance?**

You can read the official government guidance [here](#). If you have any questions about what this means for you, please speak to your line manager in the first instance.

With government guidance changing all the time, make sure you keep up to date with the latest Operational Guidance. You can find it in the [Useful Documents-Operational Guidance area](#) of the Good to Great website.





**Leaving our details for the Test & Trace programme has become second nature. We remind you what to do if you're contacted.**

**With restaurants, bars and attractions now open, many of us will have got used to leaving our details for the Government's Test & Trace programme.**

Aiming to halt the spread of COVID-19, the programme helps authorities see if there are any local spikes in cases – just like we've recently seen in Greater Manchester and Aberdeen.

#### **What if I get contacted by Test & Trace?**

If the government's Test & Trace team confirm you've been in contact with someone who has tested positive, you must self-isolate at home for the next 14 days. Our policy is to pay you full company sick pay for those 14 days.

#### **What if I work with someone who has been contacted?**

If you work with someone who has gone for a test or has been contacted by the Test & Trace programme, you should carry on as normal. However, if you develop symptoms, you should seek a test and self-isolate for 14 days. We will pay you full company sick pay for those 14 days.

#### **What if I'm waiting for test results?**

You should remain at home and self-isolate, then follow the guidelines below depending on your result.

#### **What should I do if my test result is negative?**

If your test did not find coronavirus, you should continue to self-isolate for 14 days from when you were last in contact with the person who as COVID-19. This is because you could still get symptoms after being tested. People you live with, or who are in your support bubble, can stop self-isolating if they do not have symptoms.

#### **What should I do if my test result is positive?**

If your test confirms you have coronavirus, you must self-isolate for at least 10 days from when your symptoms started – even if it means you're self-isolating for longer than 14 days. People you live with, or who are in your support bubble, must also self-isolate for 14 days from when your symptoms started.



#### **Stay alert – stay distanced**

To help us reduce the effect if one of our colleagues becomes ill, there must be no unnecessary, non-essential travel between branches, offices or third party locations (such as a crematorium).

Instead use technology such as Microsoft Teams, email or a phone call to check in with people. By limiting our contacts as much as possible, we in turn limit the amount of people potentially infected.

#### **Be aware of scammers**

We've already been made aware that cyber criminals are taking advantage of people's anxieties under the guise of the Test & Trace programme. Remember that the Government will never ask you for bank details or payments, details of social media accounts, a password or pin number, or ask you to call a premium rate number.

#### **Locally managed**

We are hopeful that our operations will not be greatly impacted by the Test & Trace system and have got robust plans ready to deal with any incidents on a local level.

If you have any queries, get contacted by the Government Test & Trace scheme or become aware of being in contact with someone who has tested positive, please get in touch with your Regional Manager in the first instance.



Avoid unsightly smudges and keep hidden nasties at bay with our new sneeze screen cleaning process.

**They've become a familiar sight at supermarkets, banks and takeaways and now they're coming to a Dignity location near you.**

New Perspex screens are on their way to hundreds of our properties following a rigorous risk assessment at every one of our sites.

Just one part of our plans to make our business as COVID-19 secure as possible, they're there to provide a clear divide and prevent the spread of the virus.

With good hygiene front of mind for everyone, we need to make sure we keep our new sneeze screens clean. **[Our new one-page guide](#)** outlines the steps you need to take to keep the screens not only looking sparkly, but well disinfected to reduce the potential risk of contamination.

We hope the new screens will provide confidence to both you and our clients at our funeral homes, reception areas and where desks are harder to space out.

Please take the greatest care to keep up the good work making sure your work and public areas are as clean and hygienic as possible.

If you have any questions about the screens please get in touch with **[healthandsafety@dignityuk.co.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@dignityuk.co.uk)**.



## FLOOR SIGNAGE GUIDANCE



We're providing floor stickers to help you and our clients maintain a safe social distance in all our properties.

**Social distancing is now a way of life, and while many restrictions are easing, we still need to be alert to minimise the risk of transmission.**

In fact, UK law requires us to establish suitable measures to help achieve social distancing, so like many other businesses, we're introducing floor signs to help remind us and our clients to keep our distance.

Every Dignity location has been allocated a set of 10 x directional

and 20 x distancing floor stickers, available from your local PPE distribution centre.

With a mixture of flooring types in our buildings, we've produced **a handy guide** showing how best to apply the stickers to different surfaces and examples of good places to put them.

If you have any questions about the stickers or the guidance, please get in touch with [healthandsafety@dignityuk.co.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@dignityuk.co.uk).



## TAKE PART IN OUR IT SURVEY

We're offering you the chance to win one of three shopping vouchers by taking part in our annual IT survey.

**The COVID-19 pandemic has changed how we all work at Dignity. The IT team want to capture this change and find out how you're feeling about the kit you have and the support you've been given from the department (amongst a few other topics).**

To be in with a chance of winning a **£50, £25 or £10** shopping voucher of your choice, all you have to do is give your contact details, i.e. your name and number on the last page of the survey. You'll then go into a prize draw. And the good news is, the survey will only take a few minutes to complete.

If you're not interested in being entered into the prize draw, that's OK too. We'd still love to hear what you think of IT and how you've found the tech support over the past few months.

And with a drumroll please.... **[Click here to take the 2020 annual IT survey.](#)**



## SUE'S SUCCESS REALLY STANDS OUT

Having gained her apprenticeship, Sue Cruxton is now in the running for a special award.

### **Sue Cruxton is familiar with the world of apprenticeships – she used one to get her first job after leaving school.**

But it wasn't quite what she envisaged many years later when it came to furthering her career with Dignity, which started in the Client Service Centre (CSC) working as an agent in 2011. Nevertheless, she recently gained her Level 3 apprenticeship as a Learning and Development Practitioner and is busy applying those newly honed skills to support CSC colleagues with their own training needs.

"The apprenticeship was recommended by my manager, Annette Smith, as a development opportunity," said Sue.

"I was already a Learning and Development Specialist in the CSC but to that point I had been relying on shadowing other people and on the job coaching to build up my skills. This was a way of accessing formal training and gaining a recognised qualification.

"I'll admit to being apprehensive about studying again after so long, but age should never be a barrier to achieving your goals. I really enjoy learning and so I was happy to take on the apprenticeship."

The programme ran for two years, led by training company Performance Through People (PTP). Twenty per cent of Sue's working week was devoted to studying and all the materials were accessed online, with a PTP assessor visiting her at head office. Sue said: "We usually met once a month, but I could always contact the assessor if I had any queries. My team were also really helpful, offering plenty of advice and encouragement.

"Learning in the workplace was fine and very convenient, but my advice to anyone else doing it would be to find somewhere quiet and private where you can focus on your studies.

"If you're visible in a busy office then it's easy to get distracted by work related discussions instead of concentrating on a particular module or assignment."

### **AWARD**

There was a pleasant surprise after Sue completed her apprenticeship when PTP put her forward for Outstanding Apprentice of the Year in the Birmingham Apprenticeship Awards taking place this November.

And while she won't get to attend a glitzy awards ceremony (the event is being held virtually because of COVID-19), the nomination has given Sue an opportunity to reflect on her experiences completing the programme.

"It is helping me take a more rounded approach to the way I train other people," she said.

"I already had good technical knowledge of our products, but now I appreciate the need to adapt my style depending on who I'm training and ensure I always give regular feedback. I'm also making time for self reflection and thinking about how I've performed during a session, or more importantly how I could improve.

"Overall I'm proud of what I've achieved. I've gained new skills, but more than that it has boosted my self esteem.

"As you get older, it's nice to know you're still willing to take on additional challenges and that's a message I try to pass on to other people, including my children."







## IMPROVING OUR WELLBEING

It only takes five to look after our mental health – five steps that is, according to this new guide.

**We care about your health and wellbeing, which is why this simple but effective guide caught our eye.**

Produced by the Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland, it captures five steps towards achieving better mental health while we're still coping with the coronavirus pandemic.



Connect with the people around you, face to face where restrictions allow, or via the phone and social media.



Be active to feel good, both physically and mentally.



Take notice of what's around you and limit exposure to things that cause you concern.



Keep learning to discover new ways of enjoying yourself.



Give something back to your community and look out for friends and neighbours in need.

**[Click here to read the leaflet in full.](#)** Over the next month or so, we'll continue to share regular articles and information on mental health under our StayWell banner. It's also an opportunity to remind you of the various benefits available to Dignity employees that can enhance your wellbeing and promote healthy living. So keep reading, keep talking to each other – and StayWell.

## HELP TO STAYWELL

Our Employee Assistance Programme is there to help you.

**Grabbing a cuppa and a biccie with your best friend.**

Chewing the fat over a pint in the pub. Or getting a hug and some of Mum's best wisdom.

They may be our usual ports of call in a crisis, but with movements having been restricted over the last few months and lots of people having a hard time themselves, it can be hard to know who to turn to for some good old-fashioned free advice.

Luckily, our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is here to help.

With a website packed full of articles and videos to help with everything from relationships and self-esteem, to smoking and stress, to legal issues and loss, it's like having your very own agony aunt at the click of a button.

In fact, there's even some friendly folk at the end of a phone call, all ready and willing to talk and help you or your immediate family members with no judgement.

And the best thing is, it's completely confidential - so there's no danger of your private business being passed onto anyone else.

Get free, confidential and professional help at **0800 111 6387** or online at **[www.my-eap.com/login](http://www.my-eap.com/login)**, access code **DFLwell**.



## STAY WELL WITH HUSSLE

Take the hassle out of fitness using our exclusive employee discount with the Hussle network of gyms, pools and spas.

**If you've gained a little lockdown lard (I'm looking at you, biscuit tin) and want to get into shape or just fancy trying out a new gym or class, then why not take a look at Hussle?**

As a Dignity employee you get an exclusive discount with them, and the best part is you're not tied into any one gym!

So, if you'd like to swim on a Saturday, workout on a Wednesday or hit the treadmill on a Thursday, you can do each of those at a participating gym of your choice.

With a network of 1000s of gyms, pools and spas (all easy to find with the Hussle app), they make it easy to fit fitness into your life with monthly passes starting at just £18.

### Stay Fiit

Every pass also includes premium access to over 500 on-demand digital classes with Fiit. Available through the Hussle site, Fiit helps you find more ways to fit fitness in, from cardio to rebalance - perfect if you can't always get to a gym.

Sign up and StayWell at <https://benefits.hussle.com/dignity/join> (You'll need to have your payroll number and preferred email address handy).

Make sure you check out your chosen gym's COVID-19 security measures before you go!



## WHO'S WHO? MEET STEVE WHITTERN

In the latest of our 'getting to know our leadership' features, we have a socially distanced meet up with our Finance Director, Steve Whittern.



**Name:** Steve Whittern

**Role:** Finance Director

**What are you responsible for?**

Finance, Business Intelligence and Pricing

**How long have you worked for Dignity?**

21 years

**How would you describe your job in one sentence?**

I help to determine and execute the business strategy.

**What does a typical day look like for you?**

At present, I have lots of Microsoft Teams calls discussing future plans and strategy, operational performance and our response to the coronavirus crisis.

**What gets you out of bed in the morning?**

My phone alarm and the thought of everything on my to-do list!

**What keeps you awake at night?**

Everything on my to-do list!

**What has been your most memorable day at work?**

15 December 2008 – The public announcement that I was being appointed Finance Director and joining Dignity's board.

**Where have you previously worked?**

In my professional career, at KPMG

**What makes you feel you've done a good day's work?**

Seeing the business change for the better.

**What was your first ever job?** Selling ice creams on Bournemouth sea front.

**What is your biggest challenge at work?**

Thinking about things I've done for 20 years in a different way.

**Tell us something people wouldn't guess about you:**

I used to play the violin and viola to quite a high standard.

**Why do you love your job?** Because I'm part of a business that helps people.

**What do you most want to achieve in your role?**

Whatever I need to in order for the business to be well-positioned for the future.

**How and why did you get into the funeral industry?**

The remit of the role sounded a lot more interesting than the usual first moves after training that I was being offered.

**I would describe myself as...** measured, pragmatic and dedicated.

**About you: are you married, have children, any pets?**

I've been married for 24 years, I have a 17 year old daughter, 15 year old son, one rabbit and some fish.

**What hobbies do you have?**

I read a lot of fiction, try to exercise and enjoy photography.

**What's the first thing you'll do once lockdown is over?**

I'll visit my parents and siblings in Bournemouth – and go for a paddle in the sea!