

BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

RECOMMENDATIONS PRESENTED TO SERVICE LEADS

Overview: In Spring 2022 the Customer Service Programme conducted user research with our customers to understand the current customer experience by targeting high demand services accessed digitally and offline, in order to identify a model customer experience, based on best practice, to increase/improve customer satisfaction.

Code	Original Insight	Original Recommendation - summary	Original Recommendation - detail Update against recommendation following December 2022 Task and Finish Group Update against recommendation following June 2023 Task and Finish Group Update against recommendation February 2024	Priority Rating	Delivery Accountability R = issues / blockers A = underway and on track G = completed
A	Citizens find the process of laying their loved one to rest complicated and confusing, at an already difficult time. There is a lack of clarity over what choices a family has, who does what and when. Relatives call sites as they don't trust the accuracy of the information on the website, but note our website page view analysis does demonstrate that citizens are visiting the BCC web site pages for the bereavement service guidance and information on the service offerings.	Create clear guidance taking relatives through each step in the process and their options	Create clear guidance taking relatives through each step in the process and their options, detailing who is involved and who is responsible for what, approximate timelines and costs (including BCC service fees and what is/not included), documentation requirements, what to expect and what to do if these expectations are not met. Consider including recommended suppliers. This guidance should start from the point of death and include registering a death. It should include the process if relatives are not using a funeral director. Conduct an audit of the current guidance available online and understand how we can tailor/expand this. This guidance should be available both online and in paper format. Distribute to partners to reach customers as soon as they need that information. Ensure it is available in a range of formats and languages. Status Update 17 Jan: Clear online guidance has now been developed and published: 'What to do after someone dies', A guidance booklet has been produced and is awaiting sign off. From April 2023, a medical examiner will investigate and authorise all Medical Certificates of Cause of Death. This will result in a further change to the documentation being required which will impact all services. Hold print run until after update to ensure accuracy. Status update 7 June: Improved content has been published. The introduction of the requirement for Medical Certificates of Cause of Death issues by GPs (non hospital deaths) to be authorised by a Medical Examiner (a national directive providing an additional layer of governance) has now been delayed until April 2024. Therefore more detailed information regarding Coroners Service is to be included in online guidance and a small print run of the offline guidance (along with posters and QR code) will now proceed ahead of an update and reprint for April 2024 when the Medical Examiner requirement is expected. Status update 20 Feb: Improved content completed. Action will be marked as completed but will be revisited when the update regarding the Medical Examiner process and how the services are changed in response is available at some point during 2024.	Medium	Programme Work in progress COMPLETED
B	Wildlife can have a negative impact on grave sites, which can be distressing for the family.	Communicate with relatives that wildlife can be an issue in graveyards	Communicate with relatives that this can be an issue and recommend particular plants and flowers that wildlife will not disturb (e.g. deer and rabbit resistant herbaceous plants) Status Update 17 Jan: Damage caused by wildlife is an on-going issue across a number of sites and is being managed by the service - adding information to information boards and signage with QR codes (linking to webpage information on wildlife); community meeting in Yardley Chapel to involve local Cllrs to educate public regarding badger activity. Online content around types of wildlife and impact on the sites - Content Manager to pick up requirements with Activities Manager and capture positive aspects of the wildlife (e.g. Bham SpringWatch Trailcams / webcams). Status update 7 June: Website content has been updated. A review of all signage is to be completed - see update against insight / recommendation Q. ACTION COMPLETED	Medium	Service - with support from Programme COMPLETED
C	Some grave sites are not well maintained over time.	Communicate with relatives their responsibility of maintaining a grave	Communicate with relatives their responsibility of maintaining a grave, including the rules/requirements around plastic flowers. Recommend ways of establishing a low maintenance grave and the grave maintenance service offering. Status Update 17 Jan: Work in progress to articulate clear guidelines for people, e.g.; plastic fading flowers, look at signage in the graveyards etc. Activities Manager reviewed signage at all sites to prioritise replacements and noticeboard - website needs to be aligned, Content Manager to work with Activities Manager to promote existing grave maintenance service from April 2023 when service is likely to be fully staffed. Status update 7 June: "Looking after a Grave" page on website updated in March 2023. A review of all signage is to be completed - see update against insight / recommendation Q. BCC also has a responsibility for maintaining sites (grass cutting). Grass cutting is currently based on a city wide contract managed by Parks. The grass cutting schedule for each site will be reviewed with Parks to and supported by clear communication back to customers. Status update 20 Feb: This action has not been progressed due to the s114 notice. It is anticipated that the grass cutting schedule will remain unchanged.	Low	Service - with support from programme Held due to s114 notice

D	Documentation is often paper based and time consuming to manage for bereavement staff and partners. There is often duplication of forms, missing information and the need to scan in documents or manually input details.	Eliminate as much of the physical paperwork as possible as part of the new system	<p>Eliminate as much of the physical paperwork as possible by ensuring the new bereavement system has capability to upload, share and view documentation for all partners, as well as input data via forms directly and make use of digital signatures. Ensure this is possible for all types of funerals. Offer support to those partners that need it to adopt new system.</p> <p>Note: Can only build online forms for non-statutory docs, all statutory docs need to remain on paper with the new system having ability to upload a scanned version / attachment to support digital record.</p> <p>Status Update 17 Jan: Need to establish the timeline for this BACAS replacement and full digitised applications. Soft market testing is underway to produce an analysis of options for new system. A lot of paperwork printing has already been eliminated but manual entry still being carried out where necessary. Digitisation of Bereavement forms in progress (a true copy of signature that complies with the e-signature requirements is needed).</p> <p>This activity may link to Register Office digitisation of records (DRS) Limited trials are in place in another Registration Authority before wider roll out for full replacement of Registration Online (RON) and NHS Digital (EMCD element - no physical medical certificates required no scanning/printing). All Register Officer digitisation is out of scope for this programme.</p> <p>Status update 7 June: Ongoing - The programme and service have currently prioritised the top 20 paper forms which have now been re-designed to digital forms including advanced payment features. The forms have now been tested by the service and all budget codes have been configured into solution. In line with the new forms the programme has reviewed all information, advice and guidance for these forms which have all been signed off. The remaining activities include configuration of the payments into the right fund codes in Oracle (awaiting a timeline for completion) and back office training for the new system to action any requests. Once the Oracle configuration is completed shortly, there will be a phased go-live of the forms on birmingham.gov.uk. The forms will allow customers to complete their request in a simple and easy way, allow them to add additional documents, status updates and pay for the service. The forms should improve the customer experience, reduce some admin in processing times and reduce delays in delivery due to lapse time for payments to be made.</p>	High	Programme Work in progress	
E	Burials are complex and have many variations, so bookings need to be taken via phone currently. This is time consuming for bereavement staff and funeral directors, and limits when bookings can be made.	Review the process for booking burials to understand how we could simplify the service	<p>Review the process for booking burials (including statutory and non-statutory requirements) to understand how we could simplify the service. Ensure the new bereavement system has the capability to take bookings for burials online. There is an opportunity to learn from Solihull Council about their system that allows for this.</p> <p>Status Update 17 Jan: Process for booking burials, looking at putting this all online. Research with Solihull MBC to review their system for burials (parameters that control bookings), links to BACAS replacement and potential RPA options and ensure scope to include faith/religious burials can be accommodated. Requires support from the programme for soft market testing and maybe some support for implementation.</p> <p>Status update 7 June: The intention is to put the process for booking burials online. The demonstration of the Funeral Directors portal used at Solihull MBC has been completed. Positive user feedback was provided on the portal. A further meeting with Solihull MBC is scheduled for 15th June to view the back end of the system. Once this has taken place, the service / programme will explore further options with DTS on how to progress. A specification of requirements will be developed over the following three months, ahead of procurement.</p> <p>Status update 20 Feb: The service is expecting to make a limited number of online burial bookings available online by April 2024. This will not be possible for short notice burials due to the very quick turnaround requiring office involvement from the point of booking to ensure that urgent instructions are passed to cemetery teams without delay.</p>	High	Service - with support from programme Work in progress	
F	In some cultures back filling graves (i.e. by hand) after the burial is a tradition and a sign of respect. Often a back fill is a lengthy process, and requires a staff member to stay on site at the grave whilst this is being done. Currently relatives can only choose to back fill themselves or have a manual fill using a digger, and are not always aware that they can change their minds part way through.	Offer a partial back fill/ partial manual fill option for relatives	<p>Offer a partial back fill/ partial manual fill option for relatives, so they can honour their loved ones in this way, but relieve the burden of time spent by the staff overseeing the process. Consider different charging options to accommodate these traditions. Ensure relatives are aware of what their choice entails before the funeral (e.g. the average time it takes for 2 people to fill an adult grave).</p> <p>Status Update 17 Jan: The service has always provided a manual backfill option but some bereaved families wish to have a partial backfill option. A partial backfill has risks associated with it relating to potential accidents on site with both mourners and heavy plant machinery operating in close proximity, which is increased where there are large numbers of mourners. The service has now overcome this by offering barriers for crowd control, but this is time intensive and requires additional resources to provide this level of service, which may impact upon scheduling of other funerals if partial backfill is required and the machines are requested (H&S and timing issues). Where resources are available this service will be available upon request. Resolution in place to offer partial backfill where the access and resources are available.</p> <p>Status update 7 Jun: The service recognises and is sensitive to the requirements in some cultures around backfilling of graves. A partial manual/mechanical back fill option is available to relatives on request where the resources to enable this are available. Resources to increase availability will be considered as part of any future operating model.</p>	Medium	Service: COMPLETED	
G	Some funerals run over time, which has a knock on impact for later bookings and for staff.	Communicate to citizens the overrun charge, ensure they are aware of where responsibility lies	<p>Communicate to citizens the overrun charge and ensure they are aware of where responsibility for this penalty lies (i.e. funeral directors)</p> <p>Status Update 17 Jan: All Funeral Directors are advised when an additional charge for the overrunning of the funeral is being applied, which has been in place for many years.</p> <p>Status update 7 Jun: Mitigating circumstances will always be considered before any charge is applied. An interval exists between cremations / burials in the event of an overrun. Any instance of an overrun will be looked at on a case by case basis.</p>	Medium	Service COMPLETED	
H	Some burials are well attended by mourners. This can mean that graves already in use in the vicinity are stood on by mourners. This is viewed as disrespectful by some.	Clearly demarcate graves, ask ministers to request mourners are mindful of where they stand	<p>Clearly demarcate where graves are, create narrow paths between rows of graves to help show where citizens should stand. Ask ministers to request that mourners are mindful of where they are standing at the start of graveside ceremonies.</p> <p>Status Update 17 Jan: Graves that are being opened are demarcated by boarding and matting around the grave. Traditional type graves, with kerb sets, are also demarcated when a memorial is placed. Grave owners are permitted to lay slabs between the graves if they wish. It is not feasible to demarcate a lawn type section without a significant increase in grounds maintenance costs due to the obstacles created by pathways preventing the ride on mowers from cutting the lawns.</p>	Low	Service COMPLETED	

I	The current system is unable to notify funeral directors of updates and changes to their bookings.	Ensure the new digital system has the capability to keep funeral directors updated	Ensure the new bereavement system has the capability to keep funeral directors updated without having to make manual checks on the system. Status Update 17 Jan: as rows - E, H, J & L. Soft market testing underway and feature to be incorporated into functionality of new system. FDs will have access to own bookings Status update 7 June: See Update against insight / recommendation E. This feature will be incorporated into the specifications for the new bereavement system / funeral directors portal. Status update 20 Feb: It is unlikely that a new digital system will be developed/installed as part of the Customer Services Improvement Programme due to the cost/saving identified as unfeasible. Bereavement Services will continue to explore options updating technology within the service.	High	Service - with support from programme Work in progress
J	The current system has no high-level view of all bookings a particular funeral director has with BCC. Currently in order to get this view, the funeral director needs to click through to 'cancel' all bookings.	Ensure the new system can provide funeral directors with a view of all current bookings	Ensure the new bereavement system has the capability to provide funeral directors with a view of all current bookings with the council. Status Update 17 Jan: as rows - E, H, I & L. Soft market testing underway and feature to be incorporated into functionality of new system. FDs will have access to own bookings Status update 7 June: See Update against insight / recommendation E. This feature will be incorporated into the specifications for the new bereavement system / funeral directors portal. Status update 20 Feb: (As per comment I) It is unlikely that a new digital system will be developed/installed as part of the Customer Services Improvement Programme due to the cost/saving identified as unfeasible. Bereavement Services will continue to explore options updating technology within the service.	High	Service - with support from programme Work in progress
K	The process for delivering a burial or cremation differs across BCC's bereavement sites. This creates additional confusion for funeral directors and staff that may work across multiple sites.	Consider which sites are most streamlined and effective and how to standardise across all sites	Consider which sites are most streamlined and effective. Consider how to standardise the process across all sites based on best practice. Status Update 17 Jan: The service has merged teams in response to business continuity issues. There will always be some differences as not every site offers the same services as another. There are standardised processes, based upon best practice, in place across all sites. There are also individual standardised processes for particular sites which are based upon the specific needs of the site.	Low	Service COMPLETED
L	Some funeral directors give incorrect information to citizens about BCC's availability to conduct funerals.	Have online view of ceremony availability across all sites for citizens	Host an online view of ceremony availability across all sites so citizens are able to book the slot that works best for them. Ensure this view reflects when sites are expected to be temporarily closed down due to short staffing, due to annual leave for example. Ideally this would be additional functionality as part of the new bereavement system. Status Update 17 Jan: as rows - E, H, I & L. Soft market testing underway and feature to be incorporated into functionality of new system for online and digitisation, better guidance. Status update 7 June: See Update against insight / recommendation E. This feature will be incorporated into the specifications for the new bereavement system / funeral directors portal. Status update 20 Feb: (As per comment I)	High	Service - with support from programme Work in progress
M	The process of reassigning ownership of a grave is complicated, lengthy, and requires a lot of time from staff to support customers through this process. Often customers lose copies of deeds.	Review the current process of reassigning grave ownership	Review the current process of reassigning grave ownership. Consider how to better inform citizens about the process and what is needed at each stage - this could be written guidance, or something more interactive like a video. Status Update 17 Jan: Process has been streamlined and information will be developed to provide more details relating to the process on the BCC website as part of the work currently being carried out by the web content team and Bereavement Services. Status update 7 June: Overview details have been updated on the BCC website. More detailed information required to explain the process will be made available over the next 3 months.	Low	Service - with support from programme Work in progress
N	There is some disconnection between the various bodies that need to be made aware of a death, both within BCC and across the system. This results in citizens having to tell multiple agencies that someone has died and repeat information to different parts of the same organisation.	Explore how we can better join up and share information internally between Bereavement and Registrars	Explore how we can better join up and share information internally between Bereavement and Registrars. Consider the 'Tell us once' scheme and how we can bolster existing information, advice and guidance. Establish an open dialogue between other partners across the system (e.g. coroner, funeral directors etc) to explore opportunities to become more joined up. Status Update 17 Jan: National 'Tell us once' function, the service is also in the process of appointing a HOS for both Bereavement and Registrars which will join the process up better. Some information may not be available to share due to legislative restrictions so need to review the use of TUO. Status update 7 June: The Head of Bereavement and Registration Service was appointed 1 May 2023. A review of working processes is being carried out to develop a more joined up approach where possible and where BCC holds responsibility. It is expected that this review will conclude within 3 months. Status update 20 Feb: The Registration Service only provides a signposting introduction to the TUO process which is a government database. Information can't legally be shared between services. A more joined up approach between services has been adopted by the Bereavement and Registration Services team to enable short notice burials to be accepted in shorter timescales than previously available, upon receipt of the confirmation of the Registration Appointment rather than the production of the Registrar's Certificate.	Medium	Service - COMPLETED
O	The process of applying for a permit for a headstone is lengthy and time consuming for bereavement staff, stone masons and relatives.	Review the process and timelines of putting a headstone on a grave and how requests are currently prioritised	Review the current process and timelines of putting a headstone on a grave and how requests are currently prioritised. Provide access to the new bereavement system for stone masons and use that portal for all documentation. Provide guidance on the process and timelines to relatives. Status Update 17 Jan: Process and timelines have improved since new recruits have started within the service. Further improvements will include considering an automated checking process and improved information on website as part of the work being carried out with the web content team and Bereavement Services. Customers need to know what to deal with, what to do and when - support users through the process with simple online guidance. Status update 7 June: The backlog for approval of memorial permits has been cleared. The online portal for memorial permit applications is still to be developed. It is anticipated that the specification for this will be developed within the next 3 months. The possibility of automation will be explored. Status update 20 Feb: Permit applications are being received electronically and processed more efficiently, using a shared drive to enable officers to access and approve remotely. There is still scope for automating this process using an online application and checking process.	High	Service - with support from programme Work in progress

P	Stone masons are often posted invoices from BCC for each individual permit, which creates a lot of manual paperwork for both parties.	Explore possibility of sending invoices to stone masons via BCC's current finance system	Explore the possibility of sending invoices to stone masons via BCC's current finance system or using the new finance system for this. Investigate if an integration can be added between the current / new finance system and the new Bereavement system to output the invoice. Status Update 17 Jan: Service is raising invoices via Oracle and will process in batches instead of individual invoices. Full integration of automated invoices will be included in specification for new system. Also investigating option for online payment at point of request for service. Status update 7 June: Integration of automated invoices is not available using current system as this raises invoices to the appropriate funeral director recorded on the funeral record. The monumental mason is usually a different company, hence this is not possible at present. The requirement for invoices to be raised to both funeral directors and masons where these are different companies will be incorporated into the specifications for the new bereavement system / funeral directors portal (see update against insight / recommendation E). There will be a dependency on the interface with Oracle. Status update 20 Feb: The potential for online payments is to be explored if an online application can be developed.	Medium	Service - with support from programme Work in progress
Q	Some sites are confusing to get around, for example finding appropriate parking and the right location for ceremonies. Some locations have names that are similar to other local sites, meaning citizens go to the wrong site. All of this adds to the stress on the day of a funeral.	Consider how to make sites easier to navigate around, including signage and site maps	Consider how to make sites easier to navigate around, including signage and site maps. Consider how we could name sites in a way that removes confusion for visitors. Consider including all site information on the BCC service web site pages and new system. Could it be included as part of the booking confirmation for funeral directors that they could send on to relatives, or could relatives view this information on the system. Status Update 17 Jan: Agreed that website is useful but signage could be better, so reviewing all signage across sites and also including better information for users on the website as part of the review that is currently taking place by the web content team and Bereavement Services. Dependency of the new bereavement system for some website changes. Status update 7 June: Service to commission a review of signage across all sites. Contact to made with the Comms team to identify company to deliver. Identification of an appropriate company and procurement route to be made in next 2 months. All contents and directories for each site have been updated on the website. Status Update 20 Feb: Postponed due to s114 notice. However, the service will explore options to improve the current cemetery maps and to publish online for ease of access, which may be achieved at nil cost.	Low	Service - with support from programme Work in progress
R	The service generally operates during core hours (Monday – Friday 8:30am – 4:30pm). Sutton New Hall does operate seven days a week. In some cases, partners need to contact Bereavement services outside of these hours, but are unable to (e.g. Muslim burials over the weekend in other areas of the city).	Consider establishing an out of hours process to enable Muslim burials to proceed at pace	Where there is appropriate lighting, services could be conducted into the early evening in the winter. Consider if there is demand to establish an out of hours process to enable Muslim burials to proceed at pace across the whole of Birmingham, for example could we offer an out of hours service for Muslim burials that cannot wait at a premium charge? Status Update 17 Jan: The service already provides a very successful out of hours emergency burial service at Sutton New Hall Cemetery. Floodlighting has also been introduced to enable later burials up to 6pm through the darker winter months, which has been welcomed by the communities that utilise the later burial times. A planning restriction restricts the use of lighting after 8pm. When Kings Norton Cemetery extension is developed this will increase the options and a similar approach may be adopted at that site too. The booking service operates every day except Christmas day to accept short notice bookings both during the week and at weekends. Status update 7 June: The service monitors demand and is currently providing burials for short notice funerals within 24 hours of request. When Kings Norton Cemetery extension is developed this could increase the options and demand will be reviewed when the extension is completed. However, this is not expected to be completed until 2025.	Medium	Service COMPLETED
S	The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the local staffing issue. Some of the staff working in the service long term are agency staff, which carries a higher cost than permanent staff.	Consider how we could bring some of the long-term agency staff into the service as permanent staff	Consider how we could bring some of the long-term agency staff into the service as permanent members of staff, reducing costs and the negative impact of short notice periods on the service. Consider how to make the service (and wider council) attractive as a career path. Update and improve guidance documentation for new staff, ensure staff have online access to remain connected to their colleagues across sites. Status Update 17 Jan: Three new office staff and three cemetery operatives have been recruited to vacant posts and more cemetery operatives interviews are taking place from 1st Feb. If the required amount of new starters are not identified in this round of interviews, then the post will be readvertised for a third time. There are another four vacancies that have occurred since the previous update. Following a wider advertising campaign, more interest has been shown following the more recent job advertisement. Staff have access to e-mails via smartphones and access to laptops in offices. Status update 7 June: 2 rounds of recruitment have now taken place since the original insight and recommendation. 5 permanent staff have been recruited. However, vacancies remain. Recruitment remains an issue within the service with a lack of suitable candidates coming through the recruitment process and hence a lack of appropriate applicants to fill the vacancies that have been advertised. Some of those recruited to permanent posts were previously long term agency staff working in the service. There is no corporate process / strategy to make temporary agency staff permanent, therefore effectively any of these staff who become permanent are interviewed twice. There needs to be a corporate response to provide a process to more easily recruit agency to permanent. This has been fed back to corporate HR as a matter to consider when reviewing processes, given the impact on services. The Customer Service Programme will also raise through its governance. Status Update 20 Feb: Recruitment has improved and a number of vacant posts have or are being filled. For future recruitment, priority will be given to internal movers in BCC who have been identified as being at risk.	Medium	Service - Recruitment of long term agency staff to permanent staff - COMPLETED People Services - Corporate Temp to Perm HR policy - OUTSTANDING
T	There are a number of phone numbers and email addresses that the service must manage	Consider moving to one main service contact number and mailbox with a triage team handling general enquiries - opportunity to use the Corporate Contact Centre	Move to one main service contact number and mailbox. There is an opportunity in the Customer Services Programme for this service to use the corporate contact centre to help log, triage, track and report all enquiries received, in one place. This would help to reduce the volume of enquiries the Bereavement service receive via the triage process, leveraging best practice technologies for voice, IVR, routing of calls & omni handling of non-voice contacts like email, chat, social media all managed via a single process & technology. This would support the single phone number/email strategy. Status Update 17 Jan: Bereavement Services now has one published telephone number and e-mail address. Further programme work is required in the background, but the customer now has one point of contact. Customer also has an online contact form that they can complete for enquiries. The forms are directed through to the appropriate service area for action/response. Status update 7 June: One single email address and one telephone number are now being used across the service. Menus on the telephone system have been updated (6th June) to direct calls to the most appropriate teams within Bereavement Services. The very early indication is that this has introduced further improvements with calls being managed more effectively and queue times being reduced and in target. This will be monitored over time.	High	Programme COMPLETED

U	No key performance indicators available	Consider moving to one main service contact number and mailbox with a triage team handling general enquiries - opportunity to use the Corporate Contact Centre	<p>Identify key service operational and financial KPIs so that the service can get an overview of how the service is performing on a regular basis. Consider using power BI to report from BACAS data to create visual, dynamic dashboards. The dashboards can also be used to setup service KPIs.</p> <p>Status Update 17 Jan: Service is using Outlook and not omni-mail, so some work remains outstanding for the IT to be developed by the team to support the service to produce BI data. In addition, the programme team is working with Bereavement Services to review and re-introduce the Service User Questionnaire that was in place prior to the pandemic and sent to every service user following a funeral. The responses were used to shape service improvements within the service to meet customer needs.</p> <p>Status update 7 June: As per the update for the recommendation against code T, one single email address and one telephone number is now published and being used across the service.</p> <p>We have allowed some time to embed the telephony solution and analyse the data and contact themes before we look to implement the Omni channel technology / capability within the service to handle all non-voice contacts (email, webchat etc) via a single process & technology. The next step will be a "Go" decision to stand up a delivery team to bring in this Omni Channel capability within the service as it will result in operational changes, as did the telephony implementation. Omni will produce BI data for performance measures for all non-voice channels.</p> <p>Status Update 20 Feb: The option to move to omnimail has been placed on hold due to savings not being identified. However, the service now operates one number and one e-mail address, utilising Outlook. KPIs have been developed by Bereavement Services.</p>	High	Service - with support from programme Work in progress
V	Citizens make general enquires about the condition of cemeteries and ask for help in completing deed replacements and transfers. Some of these calls can take a long time and can result in repeated calls from the same citizens.	Look at ways to promote the creation of Cemetery Friends groups to help provide general information and news relating to local cemeteries	<p>Look at ways to promote the creation of Cemetery Friends groups to help provide general information and news relating to local cemeteries. Work with existing Friends groups to spread awareness including the benefits of having a Friends group can make by raising funds or applying for government funding to improve the condition of cemeteries.</p> <p>Status Update 17 Jan: Agreed - work already ongoing - Bereavement Services Activities Manager working with numerous volunteer groups to organise activities across cemeteries. Since working with the service in July, a number of attempts have been made to gain interest in developing a Friends group at Handsworth Cemetery, but the interest has been low to date, so will keep trying. There is more interest in the ad-hoc volunteer task groups for litter picks etc.</p> <p>Status update 7 June: There are now Cemetery Friends groups for Handsworth, Key hill, Warstone Lane and Brandwood End cemeteries. The website has been updated to inform people about how they can become involved and communication will also be reviewed under update against insight / recommendation Q, relating to review of signage. An activity manager to support the coordination and organising involved in establishing Cemetery Friends groups at other sites will be considered as part of any future operating model.</p>	Low	Service COMPLETED
W	User feedback is not available – this was suspended during the pandemic to enable the service to prioritise core services (funerals and memorials).	Consider restarting service customer feedback (make available in online and offline) - opportunity to use corporate solution to measure satisfaction levels already in place	<p>Restart capturing customer feedback in both online and offline formats. There is an opportunity to work with the Customer Service Programme to repurpose the corporate solution for customer satisfaction to log, monitor, review and report. Signposting to service feedback, could also be added to the existing service web pages and form part of a service request in the new Bereavement system. This will ensure we have a consistent measure of satisfaction and will allow us to benchmark/measure at intervals of the end-to-end journey.</p> <p>Status Update 17 Jan: Agreed - Linked with item U. Assistance needed from the programme on what the service can do - need to scope activity and identify points at which customer gives feedback end2end and build in satisfaction form based on corporate model. Questionnaire under review, customer complaints through corporate system being monitored. Customer contact form now available on website to enable service users to make request for assistance directly to the service as an alternative to phoning.</p> <p>Status update 7 June: The programme has supported by providing project management resources to review and develop the customer satisfaction questionnaire, Quality assurance has been completed by the programme to ensure it meets best practice and design principles. The service can implement the satisfaction survey offline to customers now. Further work is needed on the technical implementation of the questionnaire and digital solution capability is to be identified as the next step TIMELINE. If a go decision is "given to stand up a delivery team to bring in Omni Channel capability within the service (see update against insight / recommendation U), then customer satisfaction can be 'plugged in' as part of this. The need to be sensitive to the customer's situation when gathering feedback is paramount and recognised.</p> <p>Status update 20 Feb: A customer service questionnaire has been developed and added to all e-mails that Bereavement Services sends out. However, the format is not usable online so work is underway to transfer this questionnaire to BeHeard so it can also be published on the Service's web pages.</p>	High	Service - with support from programme Work in progress
X	The complaints data shows the most common root cause problems to be: 'Not the quality or standard expected' 'Failure to deliver a service' 'Disagree with policy or procedure'	Regularly review the complaints data to identify repeat complaints and common trends	<p>Regularly review the complaints data to identify repeat complaints and common trends. Work with the complaints leads to see how they can be avoided through service improvement plans.</p> <p>Status Update 17 Jan: Agreed - work started/ongoing. The service area has no access to complaint data. Programme supporting the service with obtaining raw data and providing a summary report to inform the service's action plan.</p> <p>Status update 7 June: The Customer Service Programme is currently working with the corporate complaints team to put the summary reports together for the Bereavement Service to have access to all the complaints data to inform the service action plan. This should be in place for July 2023. The most common theme for complaints raised to the service for 22/23 was Service Quality at 74%. The top three problem categories were Not to the quality or standard expected at 47%, efficiency of Service at 29% and failure to deliver a service at 18%. There is still some further work to do in this area which - the Programme will be working with the corporate complaints team and the service to take a deeper dive approach in reviewing some of the themes. A meeting will be scheduled between the Programme, the complaints team and the service area in the month of July to support Bereavement services accessing the data and understanding root cause reasons for complaints to form part of their service action plan.</p> <p>Status update 20 Feb: The Service works closely with the Birmingham Feedback team to identify trends and ensure that complaints are responded to within the corporate timescales and trends are identified. The trends have been skewed recently due to a persistent complainant.</p>	Medium	Service - with support from Programme COMPLETED

Y	The complaints data shows the response target for stage 1 citizen complaints was 73% in 2019, 69% in 2020 and 41% in 2021. This shows a gradual decline in responses provided to citizens within 14 working days and could be attributed to the level of demand experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic. It could also be down to the complaint leads prioritising waste management complaints.	Monitor the dates between complaints being submitted and the bereavement team receiving notification by the complaint leads to ensure there are no internal delays.	<p>Monitor the dates between complaints being submitted and the bereavement team receiving notification by the complaint leads to ensure there are no internal delays. This will ensure the team have enough time to investigate complaints and provide a response within the set number of working days. Request regular reports from the complaint leads to check for the team is improving their stage 1 response times.</p> <p>Status Update 17 Jan: Agreed - work started/ongoing using root cause analysis to improve, complaint volumes very low. All complaints are to be sent to Bereavement.Services@birmingham.gov.uk and not to individual officers to remove the risk of them not being picked up when the person is away from the office.</p> <p>Status update 7 June: Some improvement in the response rates for complaints is being seen. Year to date performance for 22/23 is 52% which is an increase from 41% for 21/22. The Customer Service Programme will be working with the corporate complaints team and the service area to identify any further opportunities for improvement and to review the end to end process on how complaints are assigned and to who (if its an officer or the generic mailbox). A meeting will be scheduled between the programme, the complaints team and the service in the month of July.</p> <p>Status update 20 Feb: The Service works closely with the Birmingham Feedback team to ensure that complaints are responded to within the corporate timescales. The action in response to internal delays is considered to be complete.</p>	Medium	Service - with support from programme COMPLETED
Z	Additional income generation opportunities	<p>a. Review fees of core services to understand where the service makes the most revenue</p> <p>b. Review possible package options to encourage relatives to buy additional services</p>	<p>Review fees of core services to understand where the service makes the most revenue, to understand how the service can maximise income</p> <p>Status Update 17 Jan: Agreed - work already ongoing to review income generation opportunities. There is a review of fees, charges and usage conducted with Finance when reviewing fees and charges each year - completed November 2022.</p> <p>Status update 7 June: Cabinet and Cabinet Member reviewed the fee proposals and it was decided that no increase in fees for 2023/24 would be made.</p> <p>Review possible package options to encourage relatives to buy additional services, e.g. maintenance or borders for graves</p> <p>Status Update 17 Jan: Subject to Rules and Regulations. An increase in current staffing levels will be needed through recruitment to vacant posts ahead of any new packages being considered. A grave maintenance scheme was introduced many years ago but has not been popular and is very resource intensive. The service will work with the Content Manager to promote existing grave maintenance service from April 2023 when the service is likely to be fully staffed.</p> <p>Status update 7 June: The recruitment process has had limited success and the service is still operating with vacancies and absences, impacting upon the ability to identify the resources that would be necessary to consider providing new packages. Resources required for new packages to be provided will be considered as part of any future operating model.</p> <p>Status update 20 Feb: No change since last update, however the service is working with CPS to develop a Mortality Contract tender for future services to explore possible options for developing memorial schemes with new suppliers.</p> <p>Offer longer lease lengths or renewal options for grave leases to generate additional income</p> <p>Status Update 17 Jan: The option to extend a lease from 75 years up to 99 years has been available for a number of years but there has been very limited demand for this. The wording on the fees and charges document is: Exclusive Right of Burial (ERB). NB. An extended lease of 99 years is available upon request - POA</p>	<p>Medium</p> <p>High</p> <p>Medium</p>	<p>Service COMPLETED</p> <p>Service Work in progress</p> <p>Service COMPLETED</p>