

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration. In all appropriate instances we will need to carry out an equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment.

<b>Directorate:</b> City Development	<b>Service area:</b> Parks and Countryside
<b>Lead person:</b> Joanne Clough	<b>Contact number:</b> 0113 3957400
<b>Date of the equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment:</b> 27 November 2014	

**1. Title:** 4% Price increases for all Cemeteries and Crematoria charges

Is this a:

Strategy   
  Policy   
  Service   
  Function   
  Other

Is this:

New/ proposed   
  Already exists and is being reviewed   
  Is changing

**2. Members of the assessment team**

Name	Organisation	Role on assessment team e.g. service user, manager of service, specialist
Joanne Clough	Leeds City Council, Parks and Countryside	Trading and Operations Manager
Chris Simpson	Leeds City Council Parks and Countryside	Bereavement Service Manager (Acting)
Simon Frosdick	Leeds City Council Parks and Countryside	Business Development Manager
Geoff Turnbull	Leeds City Council, Equality Team	Senior Project Officer

**3. Summary of strategy, policy, service or function that was assessed:**

This equality impact assessment seeks to examine a planned revision to the charges

relating to bereavement services in Leeds. These services relate to burial, cremation and remembrance activities. The proposed charges are set out in appendix 1.

The City Council is a burial and cremation authority, and the Parks and Countryside Service is responsible for the management of 3 crematoria, 24 cemeteries and 23 closed churchyards. On average, the service deals with over 5,000 cremations and 1,000 burials each year and is the fifth busiest burial authority in the country.

#### 4. Scope of the equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment

##### 4a. Strategy, policy or plan

The vision and themes, objectives or outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>
The vision and themes, objectives or outcomes and the supporting guidance	<input type="checkbox"/>
A specific section within the strategy, policy or plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Please provide detail:</b> N/A see below	

##### 4b. Service, function, event

The whole service (including service provision and employment)	<input type="checkbox"/>
A specific part of the service (including service provision or employment or a specific section of the service)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Procuring of a service (by contract or grant) (please see equality assurance in procurement)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Please provide detail:</b> This assessment considers proposed charges for bereavement services from 1 <sup>st</sup> February 2015.	

## 5. Fact finding – what do we already know

The Council remains committed to improving our Cemeteries and Crematoria and is also mindful that they are not only places used for the purposes of cremation or burial, but are also used as places for peaceful and quiet reflection. This in turn helps the bereaved when they come to visit to remember their loved ones.

Any proposed increase in charges is likely to be a sensitive issue and perhaps even more so within a Bereavement Service area. A shortfall of £375k in budgeted income has been identified within the current financial year.

In order to secure the continued level of resource, the Council now needs to review its Bereavement service charges and similar to previous years, is proposing to increase these charges by 4% from the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2015 as set out in Appendix 1.

### Population Data

Leeds Population – 751,485 ( as per the 2011 Census)

Between the 2001 and 2011 Population Census, statistics indicate that there has been a 7.9% increase in Non-White British groups across the city with the largest single BME group being from the Pakistani Community, (representing 3% of the total population in Leeds).

It is acknowledged that the increase in charges for Bereavement services may impact more on those on low incomes and that these are likely to include a higher proportion of people from some BME backgrounds, disabled, single parent families and similar groups. It is also recognised that the provision of an out of hours service may also mean some of these BME groups are likely to see charges which are disproportionately higher again.

### Faith Element

The information in the table below is from the 2011 Census and shows the religion/faith profile of Leeds. People of the Muslim and Jewish faiths use only burial, Hindus and Sikhs solely cremation and people of the Christian faith use either method.

Category	Numbers	%
Christian	419,790	59.3
Buddhist	2,772	0.4
Hindu	7,048	0.9
Jewish	6,847	0.9
Muslim	40,772	5.4
Sikh	8,914	1.2
Any other religion	2,396	0.3
No religion	212,229	28.2
Religion not stated	50,717	6.7

People of all faiths can be buried at any of the municipal cemeteries of their choosing.

An out of hours burial service is provided at cost for those faith groups that require this service and is also includes other faith groups upon request. It should be noted that the labour element for these are recharged at cost with materials similarly recharged and these additional charges are not included within the scope of the revision.

### **Core Cities Comparators including other Authorities within the Yorkshire Region**

Over the last 3 years, the bereavement service has seen an increase in fees and charges at above inflation rates. These increases have brought our charges more in line with other Core Cities and also covered the costs for an additional 3 site based gardeners to help improve cemetery and crematoria maintenance. The 4% increase in charges from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2015 is not based on charges made by other local authorities as each local authority will work towards different financial strategies. A table of charges are set out within the covering report and as most authorities operate differently and have yet to review their charges, it is not possible to make a true like for like comparison.

### **Financial Support**

In the case of a death with no next of kin or where members of the public are unable to meet these charges through financial hardships or other such circumstances, support is available to bereaved families. There are 3 main means of support:

- Social Services
- Hospital where the death occurred
- Funeral Payments, available via the Department of Work and Pensions

Under Section 50 of the National Assistance Act 1948 a local authority will meet the costs of a basic funeral where the deceased or the next of kin are not in a position to meet the expenses. In Leeds there is an existing contract with a funeral director to undertake arrangements in these circumstances in partnership with Adult Social Care.

A person on low income may be eligible for a Funeral Payment if they are in receipt of qualifying benefits. The payment covers various aspects of the funeral, but is recoverable from the deceased person's estate if they have left one. The payment includes all fees and transport costs and up to £700 for any funeral expenses.

NHS Trusts become responsible for the funeral arrangements of a person who dies in hospital when no relatives can be traced, or relatives are not able to afford the cost themselves and do not qualify for Funeral Payments. A claim may be made on the deceased person's estate to offset the cost involved.

It should be noted that the bereavement services charges are only a part of the overall cost of services charged by funeral directors.

### **Consultation and Engagement**

A consultation paper was published on the Council's website 'Talking Point' and this was also circulated to the Funeral Directors to seek the views of the public and key stake holders on the proposal to increase bereavement service charges by 4%. The details of this are set out within the attached report. However, in response to the consultation, it is proposed to retain the level of charges for the memorialisation's but to increase all other Bereavement charges by 4%.

### **Are there any gaps in equality and diversity information**

**Please provide detail:** None identified

**Action required:** N/A

### **6. Wider involvement – have you involved groups of people who are most likely to be affected or interested**

**Yes**

**No**

**Please provide detail:** Since 2008 and as part of the Council's long term burial strategy, the Council has committed through the capital programme £1.5m of which £1.1m has been used to secure new land for burial provision and to extend existing cemeteries where possible.

The Council has also secured £2.9m for the refurbishment of the cremators to meet requirements under Government legislation to abate mercury emissions from cremations by 50%. Work has been completed at Rawdon and is nearing completion at Cottingley. This refurbishment work also includes a new music system for chapel services offering a new webcast facility for chapel services for those who are unable to attend the funeral.

From time to time, the Bereavement service also meets with Funeral Directors as part of a Bereavement Forum. Meetings are generally convened on an annual basis and or via email communication.

**Action required:** No action required

**7. Who may be affected by this activity?**

**Equality characteristics**

**Age**

**Carers**

**Disability**

**Gender reassignment**

**Race**

**Religion or Belief**

**Sex (male or female)**

**Sexual orientation**

**Other**

**Please specify:** Those on low incomes or in receipt of benefits.

**Stakeholders**

**Services users**

**Employees**

**Trade Unions**

**Partners**

**Members**

**Suppliers**

**Other please specify**

**Potential barriers.**

**Built environment**

**Location of premises and services**

**Information and communication**

**Customer care**

**Timing**

**Stereotypes and assumptions**

**Cost**

**Consultation and involvement**

**specific barriers to the strategy, policy, services or function**

**Please specify** Service users can decide to use other service providers and may travel outside of the city to access these. However most other cities in common with Leeds charge additional fees for non-resident services.

**8. Positive and negative impact**

**8a. Positive impact:**

The revision of the charges will reduce the current level of revenue rate charge that exists in providing these services thereby sustaining their availability.

**Action required:** No actions required

**8b. Negative impact:**

Should the level of activity decrease (through falling death rates or the elective choice of service users) this will increase the financial pressures on the bereavement service and will need to be monitored throughout the financial year. As other authorities introduce new charges thereby providing a wider choice of service delivery there may be scope for Leeds City Council to do the same. It may require bringing forward bereavement charges to help offset such financial pressures.

**Action required:** To monitor the levels of activity and to further consider the charging arrangements in Oct - Dec 2015 / 2016.

In addition the service will promote awareness of the financial support available to those in hardship and will clearly communicate the charging policy to inform personal financial planning.

To undertake a review of bereavement charges as a percentage of the overall cost of funeral arrangements post introduction.

To undertake a service user questionnaire with relatives of the deceased per annum.

**9. Will this activity promote strong and positive relationships between the groups/communities identified?**

**Yes**

**No**

**Please provide detail:** It will allow for the continuation of service provision that is currently held in high regard as evidenced by feedback from service users. In addition services sensitive to the multi-faith population of Leeds will be sustained.

**Action required:** No action required

**10. Does this activity bring groups/communities into increased contact with each other (e.g. in schools, neighbourhood, workplace)?**

Yes

No

**Please provide detail:** There are no identified effects

**Action required:** No action required

**11. Could this activity be perceived as benefiting one group at the expense of another?**

Yes

No

**Please provide detail:** There are no identified effects

**Action required:** No action required

## 12. Equality, diversity, cohesion and integration action plan

Action	Timescale	Measure	Lead person
To monitor the levels of activity and to further consider the charging arrangements to provide a wider choice of service delivery.	September 2015	Comparison with other Local Authorities.	Chris Simpson Bereavement service Manager (Acting)
To undertake a service user questionnaire with relatives of the deceased per annum	July 2015	Comparison with existing data	Chris Simpson Bereavement service Manager (Acting)
Promote awareness of the financial support available to those in hardship and will clearly communicate the charging policy to inform personal financial planning.	February 2015	Awareness increased	Chris Simpson Bereavement service Manager (Acting)



**13. Governance, ownership and approval**

State here who has approved the actions and outcomes from the equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment

<b>Name</b>	<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Date</b>
Joanne Clough	Trading and Operational Support Manager	27 November 2014

**14. Monitoring progress for equality, diversity, cohesion and integration actions**

As part of Service Planning performance monitoring

As part of Project monitoring

Update report will be agreed and provided to the appropriate board  
Please specify which board

Other (please specify)

**15. Publishing**

<b>Date sent to Equality Team</b>	27 November 2014
<b>Date published</b>	