

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.

Directorate: Environment & Housing	Service area: Parks and Countryside
Lead person: Joanne Clough	Contact number: 0113 3786002
Date of the equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment: 28 March 2017	

1. Title: Bereavement Service Charges 2017/18
Is this a:
<input type="checkbox"/> Strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service <input type="checkbox"/> Function <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Is this:
<input type="checkbox"/> New/ proposed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Already exists and is being reviewed <input type="checkbox"/> 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 Parks and Countryside Service is responsible for the management of 3 crematoria, 24 cemeteries and 23 closed churchyards and the service deals with over 5,000 cremations and 1,000 burials each year.

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"/>
Please provide detail: 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"/>
Please provide detail: This assessment considers proposed charges for bereavement services from 1 st April 2017.	

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. However, the focus remains on providing the best possible standards of service, which includes not only the maintenance of our 24 cemeteries but the ongoing aim of ensuring the long-term needs of the city for burials and cremations are met. This includes the development and laying out of new cemeteries and the extensive refurbishment and modernisation of both Rawdon and Cottingley crematoria.

In order to secure the continued level of resource, the Council now needs to review its Bereavement service charges and is proposing to increase these charges by 5% from the 1st April 2017 as set out in Appendix 1. These proposed increase in charges were given approval as part of the Council's budget plan that was agreed at full council on the 8th February 2017.

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 any faith group that require this service 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. Some faith groups also prefer to enter into mourner participation where mourners backfill a grave area. The Council will allow this to occur provided that prior notification is given. This is so that the service is able to undertake any necessary arrangements that may need to be put in place.

Although the Council will allow mourner participation, the integrity of a coffin is the responsibility of the funeral director and the Council will not be held responsible for any damage that may occur to a coffin through the backfilling process.

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 which 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 5% increase in charges from 1st April 2017 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.

Although it is difficult to make a true like for like comparison with other authorities, it is proposed to increase the age threshold for child interments from 7 years to 16 years to bring this in line with other core cities.

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.

Consultation and Engagement

A consultation paper was published on the Council's website 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 5%. The details of this are set out within the attached report. However, in response to the consultation, it is proposed to once again retain the level of charges for the memorialisation's but to increase all other Bereavement charges by 5%.

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 both Rawdon and Cottingley and 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. A new webcast facility was also installed in 2016 at Lawnswood and the Council will also need to make further investment decisions as the cremators at Lawnswood come towards the end of their operational life.

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

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Services users	<input type="checkbox"/> Employees	<input type="checkbox"/> Trade Unions
<input type="checkbox"/> Partners	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Members	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Suppliers
<input type="checkbox"/> Other please specify		

Potential barriers.

<input type="checkbox"/> Built environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Location of premises and services
<input type="checkbox"/> Information and communication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Customer care
<input type="checkbox"/> Timing	<input type="checkbox"/> Stereotypes and assumptions
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cost	<input type="checkbox"/> Consultation and involvement
<input type="checkbox"/> 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 remove the estimated current level of net subsidy.
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 and or change in the Council's fees and charges policy.
Action required: To monitor the levels of activity and to further consider the charging arrangements in Oct - Dec 2017
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 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 2017	Comparison with other Local Authorities.	Chris Simpson Bereavement service Manager
To undertake a service user questionnaire with relatives of the deceased per annum	July 2017	Comparison with existing data	Chris Simpson Bereavement service Manager
Promote awareness of the financial support available to those in hardship and will clearly communicate the charging policy to inform personal financial planning.	April 2017	Awareness increased	Chris Simpson Bereavement service Manager

13. Governance, ownership and approval State here who has approved the actions and outcomes from the equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment		
Name	Job Title	Date
Joanne Clough	Trading and Operational Support Manager	28 March 2017

14. Monitoring progress for equality, diversity, cohesion and integration actions	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	As part of Service Planning performance monitoring
<input type="checkbox"/>	As part of Project monitoring
<input type="checkbox"/>	Update report will be agreed and provided to the appropriate board Please specify which board
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify)

15. Publishing	
Date sent to Equality Team	31 March 2017
Date published	3 April 2017