

Appendix 1 – Pilot to extend the latest time of burial
– Consultation Analysis Report

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Introduction

Between April and September 2019, the Council and Dignity agreed to trial a new 'out of hours' service to enable short notice burials to take place after 3pm in Rotherham.

The pilot aimed to make a reasonable adjustment to the bereavement service to address the concerns raised by the Muslim community and to improve the offering to any other service user who wished to bury up until 6.30pm in East Herringthorpe cemetery.

This report provides a high level overview of the findings from the post pilot survey which was conducted with key stakeholders between the period 20th November, 2019 and 6th December, 2019 in order to understand whether the main aims of the pilot had been achieved.

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Background

About the Public Sector Equality Duty: Under the terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Council has a responsibility to ensure that in the exercise of the Council's functions, that services will have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

These are sometimes referred to as the three aims or arms of the general equality duty. The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

About Muslim Burial Traditions: Members of the Muslim community, for faith and cultural reasons, bury as soon as possible after a death. The community had expressed concern that 3pm, as a latest time of burial was too early and therefore contributed to the pressures involved in trying to arrange a funeral at short notice.

In order to address the concerns of the community it was agreed that a pilot would be carried out between the 1st April, 2019 and 30th September, 2019 at East Herringthorpe cemetery extending the time of the latest burial from 3 p.m. to 6.30 p.m. which is an extension of three and a half hours. The pilot aimed to make a reasonable adjustment to service to address the concerns raised by the Muslim community and to improve the offering to any other service user who wished to bury after 3p.m. in East Herringthorpe cemetery.

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Evaluation Process

What the Pilot Was Seeking to Understand: An Evaluation Framework was developed in order to assess the pilot in an open and transparent way. The main aims of the evaluation process were to consider the implications of delivering an extended out of hours service and to understand to what extent such a service could:

- Advance equality of opportunity, though making a reasonable adjustment to ensure that the bereavement service enables members of the Muslim community to practice their faith through their burial traditions?
- Improve community relations, through improving the quality of relationships between Registration staff, Dignity staff, Funeral Directors and, most importantly, members of the Muslim faith community?

Data Collection: The following stakeholders were asked to complete a survey, designed in collaboration with officers with expertise in Communications, Registration Services, Performance and Partnerships. Surveys went to Registration Officers, East Herringthorpe cemetery staff, the Faith and Community Leaders Forum, the Community Reference Group and funeral directors who provide a service to bury after 3pm.

The Council sought to collect data via an online survey for all stakeholders with a paper version made available for those without internet access. Data collected via these methods has been collated in to this summary report.

Response Rates: There were 134 responses, broken down as follows:

- Of 18 Registration Officers surveyed 9 responded, this is a 50% return rate.
- Of the 17 team members surveyed at East Herringthorpe cemetery 16 responded, this is a return rate of 94.11%.
- Of 4 Funeral Directors, appointed by service users who opted to bury after 3pm, 1 responded, this is a 25% response rate.
- Partners and community members were asked to provide feedback via the Rotherham Faith and Community Leaders Forum and the Community Reference Group. As invites to comment went wider than Forum and Group members, the % response rate is unknown: there were 108 responses

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Key Findings

Service Demand:

During the pilot 21 burials took place after 3p.m. at East Herringthorpe cemetery, take up was as follows:

- Between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. the service was accessed by service users who had planned a funeral in advance and opted for a burial time after 3pm as well as those wishing to bury at short notice to meet a faith or cultural requirement.
- Between 4:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m., the service was accessed by those wishing to bury at short notice to meet a faith or cultural requirement.
- Take up was greatest at 3:30 p.m.

Providing the death occurred in Rotherham and all necessary documentation is available the Registration Service is able to issue a Form 9, to permit a burial to take place prior to death registration. This enables burials to take place at short notice.

The table below illustrates number of burials, time of burial how many were planned in advance and how many were arranged at short notice:

Time of burial	Number of burials	Arranged at short notice	Not arranged at short notice
3:15pm	3	1	2
3:30pm	9	6	3
4pm	5	3	2
4:30pm	2	2	
5:30pm	1	1	
6:30pm	1	1	
Total	21	14	7

Of the 14 short notice burials that took place after 3pm in East Herringthorpe cemetery, a Form 9 was issued by Rotherham Registration Service on 9 occasions.

During usual business hours no adjustment to service was necessary as the Register Office is open for appointments between 9:30a.m. and 5p.m.

Of the 9 Form 9's issued 7 were issued during usual business hours.

The Registration Service provides an on call out of hours burial service at weekends and Bank Holidays (excluding Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Years Day, Good Friday and Easter Sunday).

A Form 9 was issued via the out of hours burial service on two occasions during the pilot; on one occasion the death had occurred on the previous day, the family chose to bury the day after death and access the out of hours burial service. On the other

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occasion the Registration Officer was contacted to issue a Form 9 on the same day as the date of death.

All the Form 9 issued at short notice were within a time frame that permitted burials to go ahead at the planned time.

The table below illustrates the time a form was requested by the service user and the time of issue during usual business hours

Usual business hours – Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm	
Time of request	Time of issue
9am	9:15am
10:05am	11am
10:50 on day before funeral	2pm on day of funeral per family request
1:50pm	2:20pm
9:30am	9:40am
11:40am	11:45am
9:10am	9:30am

The table below illustrates the time a form was requested by the service user and the time of issue outside usual business hours

Out of hours burial service – Weekends and Bank Holidays (excluding Christmas day, boxing day, New Year's day, Good Friday and Easter Sunday)	
Time of request	Time of issue
9am	9:20am
9am	11am

Other Implications

The first 6 months required Registration staff to extend their 'on call' availability at weekends from 9am to 11am to 9am to 1pm. As well as impacting on the work-life balance of staff on call, the pilot impacted on the rotas for the statutory marriage programme, creating additional pressure within the service.

During the 6 months of the pilot, take up of the service from the Muslim community has been relatively modest.

There is therefore a need to give careful consideration as to whether there is likely to be increased demand for the service, the wider benefits that the availability of the service brings to fostering positive community relations and, consequently, to what extent the adjustments necessary to the delivery of the service are 'reasonable'.

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Delivery of the Equality Duty:

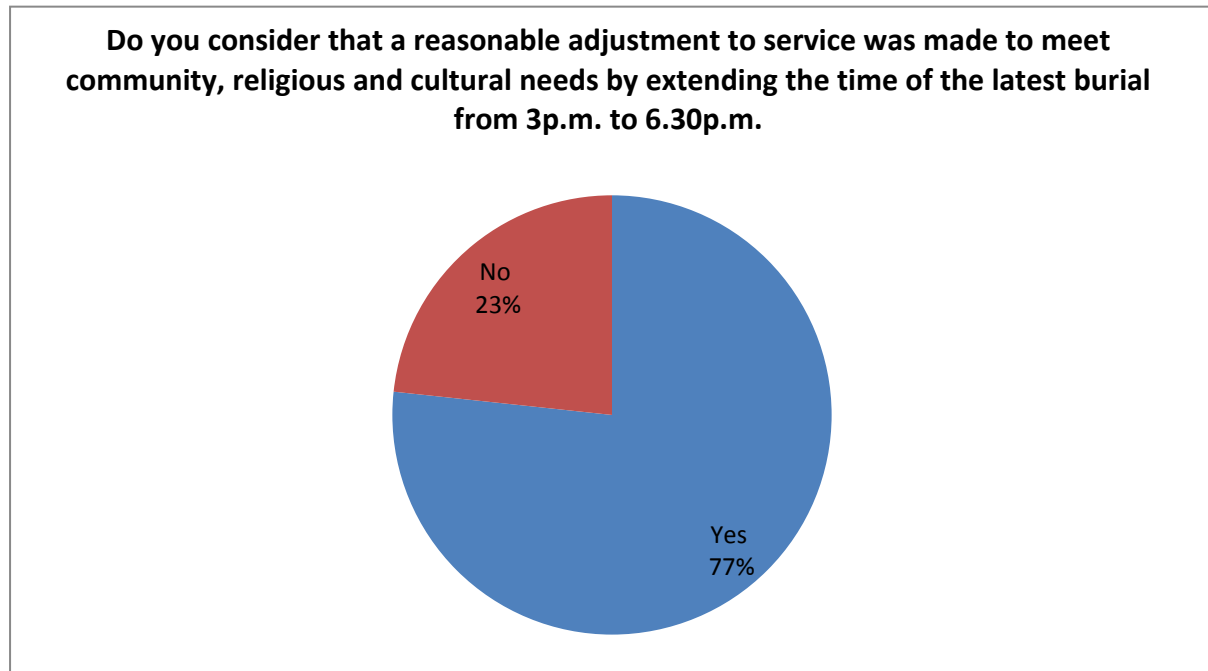


Figure 1

The above chart (figure 1) shows that of the 134 respondents (**102 respondents, or 77%**) consider the pilot made a reasonable adjustment to meet community, religious and cultural needs.

Respondents were given the opportunity to comment, with examples as follows:

The positive impact of the pilot is reflected in the following examples:

'It gives families more chance of getting a burial that day!!'

'Great service example of good practice and meeting the needs of local people'

Additional comments included:

'Because burials taking place after 1700 incur a charge. This is not meeting the Muslims needs who have the need to bury as soon as possible.'

' I think although it was appreciated by community of extending the hours but same time it was financially was too costly for already very expensive cost of burial, we know that out hours factors but if dignity could look at extra cost of burial involved.'

'the service was ok before'

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Impact on Community Relations:

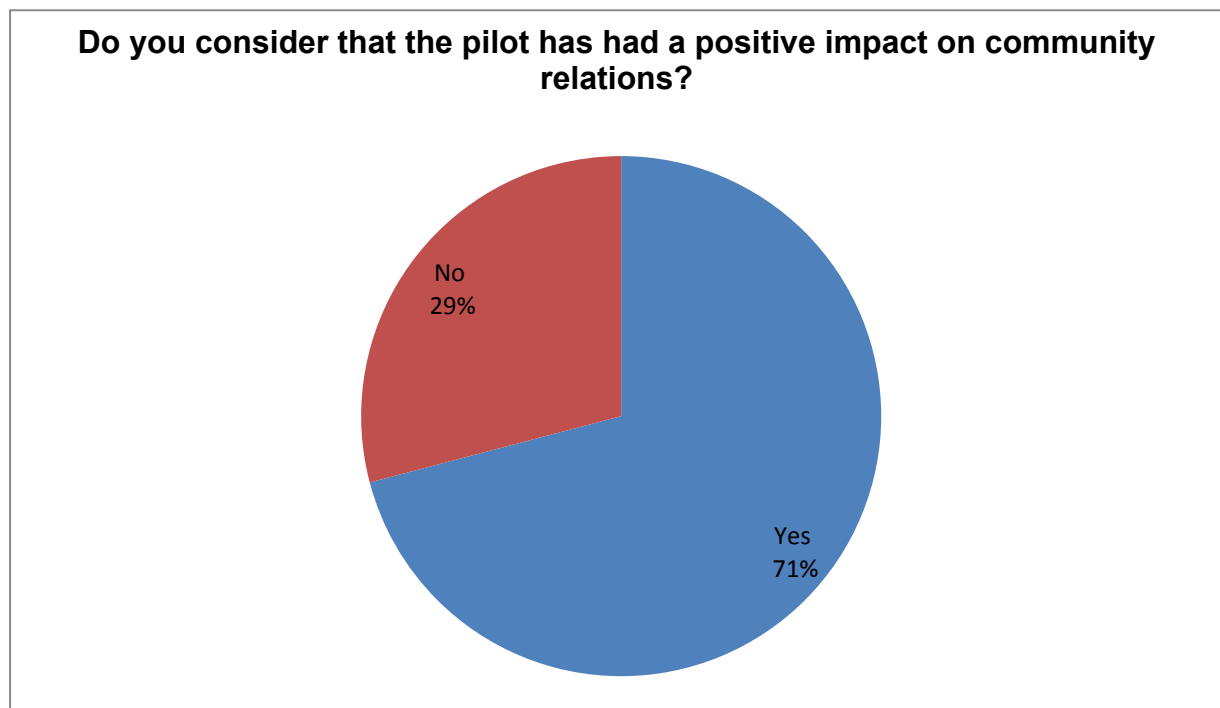


Figure 2

The above chart (figure 2) shows that of the 134 respondents, the majority stated that the pilot had a positive impact on community relations (**95 respondents, or 71%**).

Examples of positive feedback are as follows:

Very appreciative you took other minority views into perspective thanks'

'We need to have this time till 6.30pm. It's great for the community'

Makes the community feel you are valuing the opinions and feelings to do with their beliefs'

'Continue make it permanent'

Other feedback is as follows:

'The service users that I assisted were respectful and polite, however, it is important to note that the situation of telling a family that you cannot issue documentation is intimidating. The time constraints of issuing documentation can also add pressure to the situation.'

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Summary and Conclusion

In summary, the main conclusions from the pilot are:

- 77% of respondents consider the pilot made a reasonable adjustment to meet community, religious and cultural needs.
- 71% of respondents consider the pilot had a positive impact on community relations.
- Demand for the service was relatively low during the first 6 months. Further research is required to assess the likely speed and volume of growth in demand in future.
- Whilst there was no change to the fee charged for burials that took place between 5pm and 6:30pm, there is a need to give further consideration as to whether this fee is comparable with other areas and if it is acceptable under the terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Although the delivery of the pilot has achieved significant support from the community, further work is needed to manage the impact on staff delivering the service.

'This has been a very beneficial pilot and has highlighted the need and demand to extend the service provision. It has greatly helped to ease the pain and suffering of families who wish to bury their loved ones on the same day. It has allowed families to have the time to grieve in this difficult time and not to hurry the funeral prayers in order not to miss the burial time/slot. This has had a positive impact on mental well being of the families, friends and community. I hope and recommend that this service is extended.'