



Helping families

remember loved ones
during COVID-19

This month, *Funeral Director Monthly* talks to two of the NAFD's suppliers members specialising in memorial jewellery, to see how COVID has affected their businesses.

The pandemic has sparked a greater need for memory-making

By Oliver Pykett, Memory Treasures

Not surprisingly, there has been an even greater need for families to be able to make memories of their loved ones. In the event that a death has been sudden, with the loss made all the worse through isolation and lack of personal contact, the ability to treasure something as personal as a fingerprint or handprint has been important to our customers.

We've also seen an increase in the volume of people ordering items with a loved one's handwriting on them, where they haven't been able to obtain a fingerprint because of COVID-related restrictions.

Memory making will always be important. The biggest market shift will be in the ability for bereavement service providers to make this available to all families as part of their modus operandi, without it having a cost or notable operational impact.

There is also an increased emphasis on hygiene and the ability to take prints with "single usage systems", ie avoiding the re-use of hardware that is touched by multiple operatives (as well as the deceased). The ability to introduce customers to memorial jewellery options remotely has been important during the pandemic and, to some extent, this is

likely to remain the case for the foreseeable future.

In terms of changes we've made, we've enhanced our web presence to make it easier for customers to browse our ranges. We've also introduced a Bereavement Service Programme that makes it easy for funeral businesses to share their own unique links to our products and automatically generate commission through orders placed online. See <https://youtu.be/xONaPljJd20>. We've also placed the focus on our single-use kits, to obtain prints safely.



We were already COVID-secure, and confidence is returning

By Sue Stevens, Love2Donate/Footprints and Whispers

COVID-19 did have an impact on us at Footprints and Whispers. Initially, as with most other businesses worldwide, we needed to quickly assess the stability of our business and adjust accordingly to ensure the robustness of our service and safety of our employees.

As an online memorial keepsake business, we were already in a good position with regards to our admin employees already working from home, so we could continue to maintain our service with confidence. Some of our artisans had to shut down for a few months, however people who had already placed

an order with us completely understood that a delay in receiving their keepsake was inevitable.

“Keeping our customers informed with regards to the status of their order is paramount in maintaining the high quality of service we provide” said our Customer Liaison Manager, Brenda.

“Along with a COVID-19 statement on our website, we also gave very clear advice on estimated delivery times displayed alongside each product we sell and whether a particular artisan was working. Potential customers could make an informed decision on whether to proceed or not. In fact, after an initial drop in sales, our transactions have increased dramatically.”

At the beginning of the year when lockdown began and people were concerned about losing their income, our sale volumes dropped substantially. Once people felt more

secure financially, with the introduction of the furlough scheme for example, sales began to increase slowly to start with and now our sales have increased to beyond pre COVID levels.

With mourners unable to attend a funeral, being unable to say ‘goodbye’ as they would have wished has had a great impact on society. Having a memorial keepsake may have an even greater meaning to the family, wanting something tangible to cherish.

Brenda added: “We have noticed an increased number of multiple memorial keepsakes being ordered by one family. Losing a husband, father or grandad’ for example, has meant that one family may order a memorial item for each member of the family - a bereaved wife, their children and, sometimes, even their grandchildren.”

We have always operated in a ‘COVID-restricted’ way, and so have had little to change in our already tight handling procedures. All staff work from home and we have very little direct contact with customers as the majority of customer interactions are dealt with via emails, telephone and Royal Mail Special Delivery Services.



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