

# Co-op Funeralcare put the focus on people.

Equal Experts simplify funeral planning for  
Co-op Funeralcare colleagues.

The funeral business is focussed on providing an excellent level of customer service, and with over 1,000 branches, Co-op Funeralcare has become the largest provider of funeral services in the United Kingdom.



Responsible for organising over 97,000 funerals every year, it prides itself on 'providing professional, caring support, information and advice to families in their time of need.'

Co-op Funeralcare felt that its outdated systems tied up its funeral directors in unnecessary paperwork, preventing them from spending essential time with their clients. They asked Equal Experts to create a seamless digital service that can support the end-to-end running of the business, to be rolled out across the UK. This already **award-winning service** has the potential to transform the way funerals are organised across the entire industry.

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**£3 million**

Savings due to operational efficiencies.

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**Winner**

Awarded Best Large Enterprise Digital Project and Transformation Award and Grand Prix Award.



# About Co-op Funeralcare.

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Funeral Services Limited, trading as Co-op Funeralcare, is a wholly-owned subsidiary of The Co-op Group comprising food retail, pharmacy, legal services and more, and is based in Manchester. It is the single largest funeral operator in the UK. As part of The Co-op Group consumer co-operative, it is owned by 4.6 million active members who can each earn a share of the profits.

## INDUSTRY



Funeral Services

## REACH



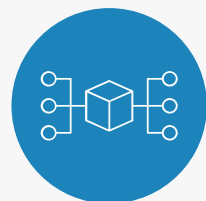
34 million  
customers

## LOCATION



Manchester, UK

## SERVICES



End-to-end  
service build

# A sensitive approach to the problem.

Before Equal Experts, the process of arranging funerals was carried out through manual administration. Staff needed to fill in over 20 paper forms for every funeral, and deal with several software systems. Over time, different regions and branches had adopted their own manual approaches too. Creating a joined-up approach was essential.

Our initial aims were clear: **"A simple, thoughtful funeral arrangement service that lets our staff spend more time face to face with clients, and less time filling in paper forms."**

This meant creating a service which supports a variety of activities including handling calls, arranging service, booking a hearse, and allocating staff.

## Putting users front and centre.

Equal Experts took time to understand Co-op's processes, pain points and goals. These were distilled into a set of user needs and the team began to sketch out the beginnings of the digital service – a 'thin slice' of end-to-end functionality.

From the beginning, we knew that a user-friendly and intuitive interface would be essential. We could not assume a high level of computer literacy for our users, nor did we want to create the need for weeks of training.

40 Co-op staff were involved in testing this alpha service. This meant they could try out vital services like tracking the details of the first customer calls, view a 'mortuary dashboard,' arrange funerals via a shared calendar, and manage inventory and logistics. Over 150 scenarios were tested by real-life users, giving us invaluable feedback and the confidence to move into the beta stage.

## Seamless new ways of working.

The Co-op Digital Team saw the project as an opportunity to demonstrate new ways of working to the Funeralcare business.

Starting with rapid one-week sprints, we adapted our methods over time. These initial sprints helped us to show our vision to key stakeholders. We then moved to two-week sprints, easing pressure, and allowing stakeholders to see the evolution of features.

Following this, we moved to a Kanban approach – high priority feedback was received from live trials, meaning we could move quickly, and with minimal disruption.

The whole project involved some of the most cutting-edge innovation – from the end-to-end deployment of whole environment sacks, to an overnight tear-down and rebuild. Working closely with Co-op's existing infrastructure, and ensuring that we only built features that were genuinely required, meant colleagues were onboard and ready to take ownership of the new service.

## High hopes for roll-out.

The project was a success, and roll-out across all Funeralcare homes began in 2017. Colleagues have been able to manage their workloads more effectively, meaning they are able to provide that crucial support to customers during a time of need – and Co-op Funeralcare have reported £3 million in annual savings as a result.


What's more, with Equal Experts, Co-op Funeralcare has been able to demonstrate a new, innovative way of doing things which sets a high bar for the entire funeral industry.

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*Equal Experts consultants were professional, highly experienced, and a great “cultural fit” within the organisation. Together, we’ve designed and built a service that has the opportunity to **radically transform a very traditional business.***

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Andy Pipes, Head of Product Management for Co-op Digital



# Want to know more?

Are you interested in this project?

Or do you have one just like it?

[Get in touch](#). We'd love to tell you more about it.