Meet Sam Tyrer
Our MD tells us how she’s putting colleagues at the heart of our strategy PAGES 6-7

All-in champions
Five colleagues share their passion for inclusivity
PAGES 4-5

From funerals to festivals
One Funeral Director tells us about popping up to Download
PAGES 8-9
Welcome to the September issue of Our Voice

I’m relatively new to Co-op, but I’m already so impressed by what I’ve seen and heard. Working in a comms role means I’m lucky to be one of the first to hear about the fantastic things our colleagues are up to - it’s one of the reasons I love working here!

Fancy trying something new? Skip to pages 8-9, where Ryan Kennedy shares his experience of working at our festival pop-up store. I’m already dusting off my wellies for next year!

And on pages 12-13, you’ll find out why I’m never short of a bargain these days. We take an in-depth look at how our new apps are using the latest tech wizardry to make life better for our customers - and colleagues of course!

We hope you all enjoyed National Inclusion Week. Turn to pages 4-5 to read what happened when I met up with a few of our Inclusion Pioneers to ask them why it’s so important to them - and our Co-op.

What an honour to be Our guest editor for this issue of Our Voice! In the 11 years I’ve been here, I’ve seen a lot of change, and I’ve no doubt there’s more on the horizon. But for me, this magazine gives us all the perfect opportunity to stop and reflect on what our fantastic colleagues have achieved, and catch up on what’s happening across the business.

It’s also time to get excited about the future. Our Managing Director Sam Tyrer has been chatting to colleagues about how we can all play a part in our new Funeralcare strategy. Discover more about it - and what people are saying - on pages 6-7.

Of course, I was thrilled to find that inclusion is an important theme in this issue. Whether it’s our revealing round-table conversation on pages 4-5, an open discussion on Yammer (pages 2-3) or even the crazy camaraderie of our festival pop-up shop (pages 8-9), it’s great to see we’re moving forward as one Co-op.

That’s exactly why I enjoyed reading about life on the road for one of our Probate Consultants on pages 10-11. Having read about the similarities between Funeralcare and probate, I’d be great to see our two businesses working closer together in the future.

And my final snippet of inspiration? Reading what our colleagues are doing to help out in the community (pages 14-15). Great work everyone!

Adam Hampton
Excellence Manager

Yammer time!

As you know, we’ve recently introduced social network Yammer, and boy have you embraced it! From heart-warming (and sometimes tear-jerking) stories and tributes, amazing ideas and answers, right through to the burning questions – we’ve seen it all. Here are just a few posts that inspired us.

Jim Clarkson
Funeral Director, Funerals Of Distinction Group

A BRAVE TRIBUTE
I arranged and conducted the funeral of an ex-Royal Navy Lieutenant Commander who had been awarded the George Medal for bravery. As a former Royal Navy man myself, I took it as a great honour to look after the gentleman. We had a graveside service, with the Royal Navy and The Royal British Legion in attendance. You can see the unique thing about the funeral, though - what really stood out to me was the request for an anchor headstone. So I got together with the council and put a lot of thought into the process, and this is what I came up with.

The family thought it was a fitting tribute to a very brave man.

Cheryle Waters
Funeral Arranger and Member Pioneer, Co-op News Group

PRIDE IN PRIDE
The rain seems to be following us around at Pride events this year - but the wet weather couldn’t dampen the spirits of our colleagues from Funeralcare, Food and our Distribution Team when they came together to pull off another amazing event in the Toon! It’s easy to forget the work that goes on behind the scenes, but without it, these events would never get off the ground - so thank you all.

Michelle Munro
Funeral Director, Funeralcare Group

CRACKING COLLABORATION
Tell me what you think of this product! One of our Funeralcare Services Operations suggested the great idea of having these little bags in each of our limos. Inside, there are fluffy fleece blankets for our elderly and child clients. We know the limousines can be really cold in the winter months, so we think it’s a great personal touch. The lovely Colin Rawlinson not only suggested this idea, he had them made up and gave them to our management team so they could explore using them on a trial basis. I’d love to offer this special little thoughtfulness to all our families.

Spend a moment on Yammer to explore using them on a trial basis.
ADAM: Inclusivity matters because it means people can be themselves at work. There’s so much to gain from that feeling, from both a personal and business perspective.

DANNY: That’s a huge part of what we do as Inclusion Pioneers; we celebrate everyone’s differences, including our unique cultures, values and belief systems. This way, no one is left out.

You’ve probably heard of National Inclusion Week (Monday 23 to Sunday 29 September) – but what’s it all about? We invited five of our Inclusion Pioneers to get together and give us the lowdown.

ELLIS: It’s about being there, and being visible. As an inclusion champion, I start conversations and challenge perceptions. But it’s also important to listen; we all want to feel valued, especially for the things that make us who we are.

SARAH: We’ve got four incredible diversity networks to support our colleagues. I’m part of the ASPIRE network and we believe in equality across the Co-op. We want to help our colleagues diversify in their roles, so they can be their best selves.

VICKY: That’s it! We’re living and breathing our Co-op values, finding ways of listening to our colleagues and supporting their ideas. There’s still work to be done, but it’s something we should celebrate.

ADAM: This is why we’d love everyone to get involved in National Inclusion Week, every year. We’ve tonnes of events in the pipeline, but anyone can join in by talking about what inclusion means to them. Don’t forget to share your stories on Yammer!

Meet our inclusion champs

ADAM HAMPTON
I’m a Co-op RESPECT Network representative and I work as an Excellence Manager in Funeralcare.

ELLIS GERMAN
I’m a Co-op RESPECT Network representative and I work in Co-op Insurance as an Aggregator Partnerships Executive.

DANNY DALES
I’m an Inclusion Pioneer and I work as a Funeral Service Operative.

AGGIE RIGG
I write for the Internal Communications team.

SARAH TOMUNSON
I’m a Co-op ASPIRE network representative and Inclusion Pioneer, and I work as a People Partner in Funeralcare.

VICKY DOBSON
I’m an Inclusion Pioneer and I work as a Support Planner in Food Logistics.

Introducing our diversity networks

At Co-op, we want to build a culture where everyone can flourish while always being their true, authentic selves. That’s what makes our four diversity networks so important.

- RISE is building a supportive community for colleagues from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds
- ASPIRE supports, and challenges others to support, women in Co-op, promoting equality and raising awareness of issues that affect women
- RESPECT is our lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBTQ+) network
- STRIVE focuses on bringing together young colleagues, aged 16-30, with other colleagues. By narrowing the generation gap, everyone can work together to support each other’s career journeys.
Managing Director Sam Tyrer is determined to put colleagues at the heart of our new strategy, transforming Funeralcare into a thriving and vibrant business fit for a bright future.

So she’s travelling round the country chatting to as many people as possible about how we can all play our part. We gatecrashed one of the conversations at our Keynsham funeral home, to hear what’s being said about the future of Funeralcare.

“We need to pinch ourselves and remember what an amazing job you guys do. You’re dealing with grief every time you make contact with a customer – and there are often traumatic circumstances. We need to be better at looking after our people.”

Sam Tyrer isn’t a woman to mince her words. When she took over as Managing Director in April, she was well aware that Funeralcare hasn’t always been an easy place to work. But rather than sit behind a desk in 1 Angel Square and let her team roll out the changes, Sam’s kicking off her leadership charge by devoting a day a week to visiting our funeral homes. At each location, she sits down for a no-holds-barred chat with colleagues, introducing them to the ideas behind the new strategy – and listening hard to the honest responses.

“When I ask for feedback, people think it’s a trick question,” she laughs, “But I genuinely want much more communication coming up from all levels. I want to hear ideas, issues and innovation. I’m here to learn.”

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The six pillars of our strategy

We need to pinch ourselves and remember what an amazing job you guys do.”
FESTIVALS

This year, we took our pop-up shop on tour to eight of the UK’s biggest and best festivals, including the legendary Glastonbury. We gave hundreds of our colleagues the chance to take a leap out of the ordinary and come with us.

For Ryan Kennedy, Funeral Director and first time festival-goer, working in the store at Download festival was an exciting new experience. Despite the weather earning the event the nickname 'Drownload', it didn’t dampen his spirits.

BY RYAN KENNEDY, CHITTENDEN FUNERALCARE, FOLKESTONE

I jumped at the opportunity to work at Download; I used to be in the army and never had the chance to go to a festival. Now, as a Funeral Director, no one expects that I’d be interested. But why not? I love music and meeting new people. It was time to prove everyone wrong!

First day in store and first time ever on the tills! It was amazing how everyone came together to muck in. The shop was packed with the essentials and more - we even had a plastic bottle return machine. Our meal deal quickly became our most popular product, and a bargain for me with my colleague discount!

DAY 1 TUESDAY

After hearing about rain in the forecast, I came ready for battle. But I was pleasantly surprised to find that our Co-op campsite was fully equipped with our own tents, toilets and hot showers. I was greeted by colleagues from parts of the business I hadn’t even heard of! After an evening of getting to know each other, we all became friends.

DAY 2 WEDNESDAY

This was no ordinary working day. In a flash, the wall-to-wall queuing outside our shop turned into people dancing around the aisles to our in-house DJ. As a Funeral Director, a lot of my time is spent supporting people through difficult circumstances. Here, the atmosphere was electric: people were having an amazing time.

DAY 3 THURSDAY

The day was mine to explore the festival and I saw tonnes of my favourite bands, including Slipknot and Def Leppard. A highlight was when the bass player from Anthrax gave me his guitar pick. There was so much else going on too, from medieval fighting to wrestling. But I had just as much fun chilling around the campsite with my new colleagues.

Before

Why not share your own festival experience on Yammer?

DAY 4 FRIDAY

Back in store there was a great sense of camaraderie, even with the customers. Most of them said how awesome our shop was and kept asking if this was my day job. They couldn’t believe it when I said I was a Funeral Director. They were really interested in what I do - I felt like a Co-op Funeralcare ambassador!

DAY 5 SATURDAY

Last day at the festival and the atmosphere was just as vibrant as the first. Day-to-day, I deal with people who can be at their lowest point. Here, I was able to watch people live and enjoy their lives. It certainly didn’t disappoint and I can’t recommend it more to my colleagues back home. And to top it all off, the sun came out!

DAY 6 SUNDAY

Our Voice / September 2019

Our Voice / September 2019

8 9
8.30am I’m heading off from my home in Nantwich to get to my first appointment at 10am. Our visits are generally 10am and 2pm, but I’m also available for a 6pm appointment twice a week if it is the only time that the customer can see me. I cover quite a big area, so I could be going anywhere from west Wales to Manchester or the Midlands. I clock up between 2,000 and 3,000 miles a month!

9.45am I’m at the customer’s house as planned, so there’s time to read over the appointment details one more time before I go to the door.

10am A warm welcome from the customer - and a good cup of tea too! It’s a difficult time for our families, but my job is to break down into plain English all the legal worries of probate and take that burden off their shoulders as much as possible. If they don’t take up the service straight away, I might be there only an hour, but today they’re happy to go ahead and I’m there for just under three hours, filling in our electronic questionnaire, scanning documents and filling out forms for a complex estate.

My longest appointment on record was four hours and 15 minutes: I started the appointment at 6pm and finished after 10pm. I thought they might have to make up a bed for me!

2pm Onto the second booking of the day. The service we provide is important for our customers; while we’re going through difficult information, they’re comfortable in their own home and not having the extra stress of having to go into a solicitor’s office.

I love dealing with different people every day. They often have interesting stories to tell and it’s great to feel you’re connecting with people and able to help them through a difficult time.

6.30pm I call in at my local Co-op - I’m a regular customer here! Today, I’m picking up some bananas to have with my cereal tomorrow.

8pm I review the documents on my laptop to ensure that I have all the relevant information required by my case-handling colleagues and write a file note covering my meeting. I like the ethics of the Co-op. I like that it means something positive to most people. There’s a lot of value placed on brand in the commercial world, and sometimes that means very little, but I think it’s very real here. If I’m talking to customers and I hear that we’ve done the funeral and it was a positive experience for the families, it makes my job a lot easier.

I don’t have any huge career goals, I’m very happy to carry on helping people in my current role.

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Our Probate Consultants spend long days on the road, with no fixed office. Paul Hext gave us a glimpse into his working day, guiding families through the legal maze of losing a loved one.
Co-op Health: there's an app for that!

In May, we officially launched Co-op Health and our innovative digital pharmacy - but how can it make your life easier?

PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE

We want to do even more to support the health of people and colleagues in our local communities. So we've been trialling new digital health stations in six of our Food stores across Greater Manchester. Hooking up to one of these easy-to-use machines takes just a few minutes to check your blood pressure, weight and heart health. The results provided can then help people make informed decisions about their health.

And people are getting on board! More than 5,000 checks have been completed since the beginning of the year – and we're considering extending the trial, so watch this space.

If you haven't tried Offers yet, follow this step-by-step guide to get started today:

1. Download the new Co-op app (or sign into your membership account through coop.co.uk/offers)
2. You'll see your tailored offers for that week. Simply select the ones you want to use and they'll be added to your Co-op membership card
3. Shop in store for qualifying products and scan your membership card or keyfob at the till. Hey presto! The offer amount will automatically come off your total.

Offer up

We all love a special offer, right? Well, thanks to our new Offers service, there's now a super-easy way to bag a bargain. Here's how.

Did you try out the colleague member preview of Co-op Offers? It's a new service available to all members. With personalised, paper-free offers to use in our Food stores, there are opportunities for savings every single week. You might have heard about ‘digital personalisation’, but what does it mean?

Rowan McPhail, from our Data & Insights team, says it’s about giving customers offers they’ll actually want to use, and making them effortless to redeem.

“We’ve got tonnes of sales data and we’ve been using it to build relevant offers through emails and coupons for a while,” she explains.

“The beauty of Offers is that it links to a member’s account, so once they’ve chosen their savings, all they have to do is swipe their card at the till in one of our Food stores and it all happens automatically,” adds Rowan.

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A novel experience

Author Katy Colins’ experience of arranging her father’s funeral with Kenilworth Funeralcare inspired her to set her next novel in a funeral home.

When Katy had to arrange her father’s funeral, it was her first time in a funeral home and she didn’t know what to expect. She explains: “It felt homely, not at all like I thought it would be. The Funeral Arranger, Nikki Whiting, was very calming and kind to me and I could see she really wanted to do her best for me.”

When Katy collected her father’s ashes, she told Nikki that she was an author and asked if she could come back to learn more about working in a funeral home. Katy explains she wanted to do something with the experience: “I was surprised to be greeted by a young female funeral arranger. It made me think… how did you get into a job like this and learn to deal with people like me?

“This was the starting point for my latest novel, How to Say Goodbye. The main character in the novel, Grace, is a female funeral arranger who has her heart in the right place but uses very unconventional methods to plan her funerals – nothing like Nikki!”

Katy told Our Voice she’d like to thank Nikki for all her help and inspiration. You can read more in Katy’s blog post here bit.ly/2MO9DlE

A magical funeral

Chris Flint, Funeral Director, Rainworth, will do absolutely anything to make our service right for his customers. When faced with a family who’d recently lost their child, he made it his mission to make sure she was remembered in the most special way.

“The little girl loved Minnie Mouse and princesses, so when I mentioned we could have a Cinderella carriage pulled by unicorns, they said that would be perfect,” Chris says.

He took things one step further, encouraging his team to dress up with a Minnie Mouse theme and wear pink ties and black ears as a tribute to her favourite character.

“If we can try to make a horrible, sad day feel just that little bit better for the parents, that’s our job – it’s what we’re here for.”

A rainbow conga

Just three months into the job, Charlie Fowler, Funeral Arranger from Newquay, took to fundraising like a duck to water – and it really did involve water!

“I was planning to go to the Rainbow Run at RAF St Mawgan,” says Charlie. “I thought it would be such a perfect opportunity to get to know my colleagues if I invited them to take part and raise money for a good cause.”

After putting the feelers out, Charlie managed to get six of the Cornwall team on board with her. “It’s a 5k run where firefighters pelt you with paint powder and water from hosepipes. By the end we were doing the conga covered in blue paint - together we looked like a Smurfs reunion!” she explains.

“It’s fantastic the Co-op’s here to help at every step in people’s lives. We were so proud to raise more than £600 for South West Children’s Hospices. I have a friend who uses Little Harbour, one of the hospices in St Austell, as respite for her daughter who has a life-limiting condition.

“She says it’s a lifeline for her family and her daughter, who loves her time with the staff there.”

Do you have a #BeingCoop moment you’d like to shout from the rooftops? Share it on Twitter using the #BeingCoop hashtag and tag @CoopUKColleagues for the chance to be featured on our new Twitter account especially for Co-op colleagues.

Your stories

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Puzzle Time

Why not have a crack at our Funeralcare word-fit competition?

You must fit all the words from the ‘across’ and ‘down’ questions into the grid below. Once the grid is complete, rearrange the 11 letters in coloured squares to form a hidden word. Just jot down the hidden word and scan the QR code at the bottom of the page. Enter your answers and one winner will be drawn at random from the correct entries. The lucky winner will receive a signed copy of Katy Colins’ novel, How To Say Goodbye (see page 15 for more about this story of love, friendship and letting go).

Across
6. Light umbrella used to give shade from the sun (7)
7. Seat without a back or arms (5)
9. Group featured in the movie Bohemian Rhapsody (5)
10. Wonderful but inexplicable event (7)
12. Going on holiday carrying your possessions on your back (11)
14. Holiday region of southern Spain (5,3,3)
18. Angry person…or someone who has done too much sunbathing! (7)
19. Thames, Yangtze or Nile (5)
21. Dish cooked in an Indian-style sauce (5)

Down
1. Afghanistan’s capital city (5)
2. Equipment used by a photographer (6)
3. Male running legend who won 1500 metres gold at the 1980 and 1984 Olympic Games (3)
4. Aggressive and violent action (6)
5. Phil, whose hit albums include Face Value and No Jacket Required (7)
8. At last (7)
11. An area made slippery so that vehicle drivers can practise driving in adverse conditions (7)
13. Large seed growing on a tropical palm (7)
15. Informal piece of clothing (1-5)
16. Murder On The ______ Express, an Agatha Christie novel (6)
17. Large, fish-eating wading bird with long legs (5)
20. Frozen water (3)

Complete the word-fit competition for a chance to win a signed copy of Katy Colins’ novel, How To Say Goodbye. To enter, scan the QR code on this page (or type the address that’s next to the QR code) to go to the prize draw entry page. Submit your answers and contact details on the page between 00:01 on 26.09.19 and 23:59 on 23.10.19 to enter. Open to Co-operative Group employees only. Internet access required. Full T&Cs apply – see prize draw entry page via the links below.