

Bereavement Commitments



150,000

How it started



Unique challenges presented by the pandemic

The Pandemic was unique in that that some employees were grieving personally through loss of loved ones whilst supporting residents and their families through the grieving process.



We recognised that

An organisational culture where death wasn't viewed as 'taboo' was an important factor in us being able to properly support our residents and employees by holding meaningful conversations with people.

The 'aftercare' provided for residents and employees affected by bereavement was equally as important as how we care people at the end of their lives.

Bereavement commitment

Bereavement Commitments Introduced

- Create an environment where employees feel able to **speak** about their experiences of death and bereavement and feel supported in doing so
- Create an environment where people feel able to **speak** about death and don't fear saying the wrong thing
- Ensure that managers have **empathy** for employees who ask for support and make sure that managers recognise when employees need that support
- Provide additional **support** to deal with bereavement related issues if needed
- Recognise the differing impacts of sudden versus expected death (for both employees and residents) and the resulting difference in bereavement
- Ensure that employees know where to go for **practical** as well as **emotional support**



Bringing the commitment to life

Death Cafés held for National Grief Awareness Week

Operational guidance: death of a resident, death of a colleague and employees who are bereaved going beyond usual HR procedures.

Blogs from employees sharing their personal experience of bereavement.

Housing 21

Employees who are bereaved: Key points for line managers

This guidance is designed to help line managers have confidence to support employees who experience bereavement.

Managers may naturally feel apprehensive about handling this, however, the principles outlined below can help to deliver empathetic support to the person who is grieving, whilst also acknowledging the needs of your team and your service.

Line managers should be familiar with the Annual Leave and Authorised Policy and Procedure - this guidance is intended to support the application of this.

When you have been made aware that a person is bereaved

Find a quiet place to talk and listen to the member of the team, whether face to face, by video call or telephone. Set aside enough time and think about what you need to say in advance.

Be compassionate, genuine and show empathy. Mirror the words and phrases used by the person who is bereaved. Consider asking the name of the person who has died and then refer to them by name or by their relationship, unless it doesn't feel appropriate or comfortable to do so.

Make it clear that the colleague is not expected to be at work. Use active listening skills and be non-judgemental. You are not expected to know all the answers and it's okay if you don't know what to say. Ask the colleague if there is anything from a team or organisational point of view that would help support them.

What should you do?

Be aware of different cultural, faith and religious practices and the implications of these on funeral arrangements. Be as flexible as is practical within the workplace. Even if someone isn't able to attend a funeral, consider offering them time away from work, so they can make the day in a way that is meaningful for them.

Make sure the colleague has contact details for sources of support, including the Mental Health First Aiders, or the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) number.

Housing 21

Experiencing the death of a colleague: Key points for line managers

Experiencing the death of a colleague can be a particularly upsetting and unsettling time for their co-workers and team.

This guidance is designed to aid our people and managers to identify some initial responses and actions that may help in this challenging situation to ensure people have an opportunity to express their grief, to mark the death in a way that feels appropriate for them, and to receive the support that they need.

Breaking the news

It is important to find a sensitive and appropriate way to inform individuals about the death of a colleague. This is especially important for close co-workers who had a friendly relationship with the person who has died. Whenever possible, tell people in person. If there is no opportunity for a face to face conversation, contact them by video call or telephone.

You may then wish to circulate news of the death to others within Housing 21, perhaps by email, to inform those who did not work with them closely. Be aware that news of the death may spread very quickly, so prioritate contact with the immediate team as soon as is practical.

Take direction from the person's family regarding the information that they would wish people to know. Grief can affect all aspects of a person's wellbeing - physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual. Each team member may react in a very different way to the news of the death. Consider having a chaplain or spiritual care lead with you when breaking the news, or arrange for them to visit the team afterwards as soon as is practical, if appropriate.

Practical considerations

Consider how to re-allocate the work of the person who is deceased and deal with their belongings in a sensitive way, i.e. any items left behind by the employee such as items within their locker or desk.

Consider contacting the deceased person's family, perhaps by sending a condolence card from the team.

Housing 21

Making Housing 21 bereavement friendly

Housing 21's bereavement commitments:

- Create an environment where staff feel able to speak about their experiences of death and bereavement and feel supported in doing so
- Create an environment where people feel able to speak about death and don't fear saying the wrong thing
- Ensure that managers have empathy for staff who ask for support and make sure that managers recognise when staff need that support
- Provide additional support to deal with bereavement related issues if needed
- Recognise the differing impacts of sudden versus expected death for both staff and residents and the resulting difference in bereavement
- Ensure that staff know where to go for practical as well as emotional support

Points to consider:

Every bereavement is different. The time people may wish to be away from work will vary, it will depend on a number of factors including the relationship and whether the death was sudden or not.

Bereavement will frequently lead to changes in the personal and financial circumstances of the bereaved employee. For example, someone losing their partner will become a single parent with sole responsibilities for childcare and may need greater flexibility.

Death of a staff member

Telling colleagues is essential and that communication should be personal and sensitive.

There may be appropriate ways of commemorating the person who has died and of marking key dates; the family should be consulted about these.

Extra help and support

Employees may find it helpful to contact our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) www.healthsupport.co.uk or to speak to one of our Mental Health First Aiders.

The national charity Cruse: www.cruse.org.uk offer free support via their helpline 0800 806 1677 or via a chat function.

Practical support on what to do when someone dies is available in our operational guidance.

We will do this by:

- Offering our condolences
- Ensuring that staff know that work comes second and that they must take what time out is needed
- Asking how they would like to stay in contact - is phone or email contact preferred?
- Being conscious of diversity within the workforce and the impact this may have on, for example, days taken to allow the employee to fulfil religious or cultural expectations such as mourning rituals. See liverpool.com/obitwv for further information on religious and cultural rituals
- Providing operational guidance on the practicalities surrounding the death of a resident

General Communications - 19 Apr 2021

A 'Death Café'? Isn't that a bit morbid?

In our recent post you'll have seen that **Dying Matters Week** is fast approaching.

During the awareness week (10-16 May) we'll be launching our Bereavement Commitments, and through these, we hope to help our people feel able to talk about death and dying openly. We will also be issu... See more



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General Communications - 29 Apr 2021

Dying Matters blog: In a good place to die

As you know, we are approaching Dying Matters Week (10 - 16 May) and acknowledging it across Housing 21 for the first time. The theme this year is 'in a good place to die'. We hope by talking about dying and bereavement, we can normalise it, and remove the taboo. A colleague has kindly offered to share their experience of death, and what being 'in a good place to die' means to them, below.

We recently posted about **Death Cafés**, and would like to remind you that there are spaces available on these - please see the link for details.

What a Death Café is:

- No intention of leading participants to any conclusion, product or course of action
- An open, respectful and confidential space where people can express their views safely

What a death café is not:

- Death Café is not a bereavement support or grief counselling setting.
- Death Café doesn't work for people who, for whatever reason, aren't able to discuss death comfortably and openly.
- Death Cafes aren't an opportunity to give people information about death and dying regardless of how good or important it is. Rather we create time to discuss death without expectations.

Looking to the future

End of Life[🌿] Support



30 registered care services will be accredited by Gold Standards Framework by mid 2023 with a target of 100% of services to be accredited within four years' time.



A new package of training and guidance is due for release in August this year for registered care services.

Thank you

