BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY

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DEATH, BEREAVEMENT AND GRIEF AND THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

In partnership with

KPMG   nationalgrid

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"With the UK's COVID-19 death toll the worst in Europe, many of us will be touched by death, bereavement and grief during the pandemic.

Employers must stop shying away from discussing the deeply uncomfortable topic of death. There is an urgent need for all employers to take a pragmatic approach to considering the impact that thousands of deaths have, and continue to have, on employees.

Now is the time for business communities to step up and collectively share the responsibility of talking openly about death, listening and supporting one another."

Louise Aston

Wellbeing Director, Business in the Community

FOREWORD

At the time of writing, the UK's COVID-19 death toll is the highest in Europe.

At some point, during the initial nationwide lockdown, second waves or localised lockdowns, all UK employers and employees could be touched by the issue of death, bereavement and grief caused directly or indirectly by COVID-19.

COVID-19 presents additional challenges to the grieving process, and funeral and burial arrangements for loved ones. The loneliness and isolation of dying alone may be difficult for the individual and for their family and friends. Attitudes to death and to body disposal are culturally diverse and we are living in a time when religious rituals cannot always be adhered to in the manner expected.

Businesses have an increasing duty of care to protect the physical and mental health and safety of their people. The experience of bereavement is unique to each person but being in a supportive environment which allows someone to express their feelings is often helpful. The impact of not handling deaths well during COVID-19 may risk mental health issues and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and there can be serious implications if trauma remains untreated.

Now is the time for employers to meet the challenge, talk about death in a meaningful way and to consider the impact that tens of thousands of deaths linked to COVID-19 will have on the workplace.

As we all face this crisis together, the need for compassionate leadership has become ever more apparent, fuelled by collective empathy and humanity. We're calling on all employers to use the principles of dignity, decency and respect to respond.

The support and compassion that companies offer to their employees, communities and the most vulnerable during the pandemic matters. Employers who act responsibly now will be best prepared to handle what emerges on the other side of this crisis. How issues are prioritised now will shape the new world.

Moments such as these define a business, their values and how they will be perceived by their communities. As the pandemic evolves, we hope this toolkit will offer a firm foundation to enable responsible and caring businesses to acknowledge, respond to and support colleagues affected by death, bereavement and grief during these exceptional times.

Louise Aston, Wellbeing Director, Business in the Community

Anna Purchas, Partner, Head of People, KPMG UK

Rachael Davidson, General Counsel, National Grid Ventures & Group Assurance

INTRODUCTION

"We may never know the true extent of deaths caused directly or indirectly by COVID-19 in the UK. However, it's important that we, as organisations, step up to help those who are bereaved, process their grief. The legacy of our actions now will be felt for generations to come. I hope this toolkit helps you to understand death, bereavement and grief and put practical support in place to support your employees and the wider business community."

David Oldfield, Group Director, Commercial Banking, Lloyds Banking Group (chair of BITC's Wellbeing Leadership Team)

Responding to death and bereavement is always difficult but the COVID-19 pandemic presents additional challenges. Necessary social distancing and lockdown measures have restricted the ways in which we expect to acknowledge death and begin the grieving process.

These practical challenges are compounded further by our societal discomfort and reluctance to talk about death and grief. Even before the pandemic, as a nation we often avoid or shut down conversations about death and bereavementi. This may be because it reminds us of our own mortality, we fear saying the wrong thing or do not have the right language to use, risking the bereaved being left with feelings of isolation.

The legacy of our actions throughout this crisis will be felt for generations to come. If businesses do not address the situation proactively, we are likely to see increases in mental health issues and post-COVID stress. To help prevent this,

businesses must play a key role in laying the foundations for a society that can talk about death and help those grieving to feel less alone.

Businesses are at the heart of communities and can demonstrate a shared responsibility by ensuring death, bereavement and grief are an integral part of a positive and proactive commitment to mental health at work.

Using the principles of dignity, decency and respect, Business in the Community recommends that all employers take three actions:

1. **Acknowledge**: many employees will be affected by death during the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. **Respond**: provide pragmatic support to employees to help them look after their wellbeing.
3. **Refer**: let employees know that help is available. Signpost internal support or organisations who can help employees affected by bereavement.

How to use this toolkit

This toolkit outlines in more detail how responsible businesses can best support their employees to cope with bereavement and offers practical advice and guidance. This includes how they can develop an empathetic, compassionate, and inclusive response that listens to bereaved people so they can be open, share how they feel and get the support they need. The toolkit includes a summary checklist for employers and highlights relevant resources.

THE SCALE OF COVID-19

Understanding the nature of a death or bereavement during the pandemic may help employers to respond appropriately.

Direct deaths

The UK Government is currently classifying direct deaths as those who have tested positive for COVID-19 by Public Health England or an NHS laboratory[ii]. From 29 April 2020, these figures included deaths in the community as well as in hospitals and care homes. However, these figures do not include those who could have died from COVID-19 but who were not tested[iii].

Indirect deaths

Deaths from natural causes, accidents and illness continue. Research shows the number of non-COVID-19 deaths is higher than previous years[iv]; suggesting a decline in seeking medical treatment during lockdown or accessing other health care services.

In addition, domestic abuse homicides have more than doubled since lockdown began[v] and there are concerns that rates of suicide will increase[vi] as a result of the economic recession[vii].

Deaths caused by domestic violence and suicide are often preventable. There are guides available addressing these areas (suicide prevention, suicide postvention and domestic abuse during COVID-19).

Groups at higher risk of dying from COVID-19

While more research is needed into deaths caused by COVID-19, early research suggests some groups are disproportionately affected. Public Health England has reported that for people diagnosed with COVID-19, the risk of dying was higher in:

- people with underlying health conditions
- people who are older
- males than females;
- people living in the most deprived areas than people living in the least deprived;
- people in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups than people in White ethnic groups.

These inequalities largely replicate existing inequalities in mortality rates in previous years, except for BAME groups, as mortality was previously higher in White ethnic groups[viii].

Actions for employers

o Accurately audit and assess the risks and mitigations associated with death and bereavement to the organisation. In your audit consider items such as: death and bereavement policies and guidance; line manager capability to support bereaved reports; support services to signpost to; and information and resources to support employees at increased risk of suicide during the economic downturn. Assess the risk of any gaps in your approach and mitigate against them.

o Consider different measures needed for different groups. Ensure groups at increased risk, such as BAME people and colleagues with underlying health conditions, are reflected in the business' audits and risk mitigations.

- Listen, and respect the experience of bereavement by employees from diverse backgrounds. Some of the issues raised may not fall within your experience, but an empathetic ear, signposting to possible materials and networks that can be of support, will always be welcome.
- Integrate death, bereavement and grief into the business' existing mental health and wellbeing strategy, recognising the importance of not only responding to deaths but also forestalling potentially preventable deaths including suicides and homicides.

GRIEVING REMOTELY

"Death is a difficult topic for most of us at any time, but even more so during COVID-19 as we may not be able to use our traditional methods of helping each other to grieve. While we have been living through lockdown and social distancing, it doesn't mean grief, if faced with a bereavement, is any less."
Rachael Davison, General Counsel, National Grid, Ventures & Group Assurance

Grief is a process we go through when we experience bereavement. We may feel a range of emotions including shock, anger, disbelief, guilt, and profound sadness. The pain of grief can disrupt physical health too, making it difficult to sleep, eat or even think straight.

Under normal circumstances, the process of grief is supported by a set of social practices such as saying goodbye at a loved one's bedside, funerals, memorials and physically being there for each other. These practices are influenced by cultural and religious beliefs and help people to work through their emotional reaction to death.

COVID-19 has dramatically restricted these practices. Many people have been unable to visit a dying person due to concerns about spreading the virus; relatives from abroad have been stopped from visiting due to travel bans; attendance at funerals has been limited to a handful of family and friends; and at times there have been delays in burials, causing distress for many whose religious and cultural beliefs require a person to be buried or cremated in a certain timeframe or method. Even as lockdown restrictions ease, not being able to sit close to someone at a funeral or comfort someone with a hug may be difficult for some. These restrictions on rituals might be an obstacle to processing a bereavement and could lead to long-term trauma.

We can all help each other by coming together and accessing support networks virtually, or in person when restriction measures allow. While there might be distance between people and employees geographically, this does not mean we have to distance emotionally. Responsible businesses have a key role in fostering social support mechanisms for employees. The business community can connect people in grief and bridge gaps to enable peer-to-peer support. Find out more in the section "Responding to death and bereavement" on page 10.

Actions for businesses

- Consider setting up a virtual support network where bereaved people can share their experiences. These are sometimes called Bereavement Cafes or Grief Cafes. Take a look at the Good Grief Trust's example.
- Upskill mental health champions or key employees to understand and respond to grief.

LIVING WITH GRIEF

Although COVID-19 has brought death to the forefront of our consciousness, even before the pandemic, 1 in 10 employees at any time were likely to be affected by bereavement[ix]. And yet we often struggle to talk about death and understand what it is like to grieve.

There is no single way to approach life after bereavement and everyone will find their own path, hopefully with support from family, friends and colleagues. Employers can play a huge role in helping employees to live with death by acknowledging it and helping their business community to understand what it is like to live with grief.

1. We can't acknowledge what we can't talk about

It is important to reach out to people who are bereaved – listen to them, find ways to support them and grieve together. Some people may not be ready to talk immediately but most will appreciate receiving messages, even if they don't feel ready to respond.

2. There is no right or wrong way to grieve

Everyone's response to grief is specific to them and is influenced by factors such as previous life experiences, religious and cultural beliefs, personalities, our relationship with the deceased and the cause of death[x].

There are several models of grief[xi], but most people experience a wide range of emotions such as denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Additional factors during the pandemic may complicate these emotions as well, such as increased anger and upset if

someone was not able to say goodbye or feels the death was preventable or outside the natural order (those who have long-term sickness and the elderly)[xii].

As grief is unique to everyone, it may be difficult for some people to understand or accept the way other family members are grieving. If this leads to conflict, some people might find respite at work and need support for them and their family members.

Grief can also exacerbate pre-existing mental health conditions and can lead to prolonged grief disorder[xiii], self-harm behaviour or suicide attempts.

3. People who are bereaved should be able to rebuild their lives

When someone is bereaved, they may lose elements of the life they have created with their loved one and the identity they had. People may struggle to adapt to building new routines as the person they loved played a significant role in their lives. In the workplace, it may be hard to see a desk that belonged to a colleague who has died, hold a virtual meeting without them on screen, or adapt to regular meetings without the person present. Many employees are currently working from home so there may be a delayed reminder when they return to the office.

4. There is no time limit on grief and it may be triggered by future milestones

People often grieve at stages throughout their life as new events make them understand the person they loved in a new way (e.g. reaching the age they died). Milestones, such as anniversaries and birthdays of the deceased, can be hard and their absence is felt at notable occasions such as weddings, religious celebrations and Mother's

and Father's Days. Grief relating to deaths during the pandemic may be triggered by reminders and anniversaries of when lockdown started. These milestones should feel easier to cope with in time. If they don't, it may be an indication that help is needed.

Other experiences may subconsciously trigger feelings of grief too such as seemingly unrelated events, smells, or songs.

5. Memories may be altered by the current pandemic

Many people find sharing memories of a loved one comforting, especially in circumstances where it is not possible to gather in large groups. Coming together virtually to celebrate someone's life can be the next closest thing. Memories of a loved one who has died can fade over time and people who are bereaved often find holding onto keepsakes helpful.

6. Finding meaning in grief

Grief is shaped by many things such as the relationship with the person who has died, whether it was expected or sudden, religious beliefs, societal expectation, and cultural context, among other things.

When people rebuild their lives following the death of a loved one, they can begin to find meaning in positive outcomes of this new life. This might be repairing a relationship, reevaluating what is important to them or growing as a person due to the experience. They may feel more resilient to future life events or kinder and more empathetic.

7. Listening and storytelling

Storytelling is an important part of connecting people who are bereaved and encouraging others to talk and listen. Not that long ago, it would have been rare to hear someone talking about mental illness. But in the past years we've seen unprecedented progress as professionals, celebrities and people in our communities share their personal experiences to help break down the stigma around mental health and raise awareness and understanding.

Being the first to speak about death and bereavement in a business might feel like a big ask, but for some it might provide healing during their grief as the 'Grieving Together with a Yellow Heart' movement – a new and poignant way of remembering those who've died with COVID-19 – demonstrates.

"With COVID-19 altering dramatically the scale and nature of deaths in the UK, it has never been more important for business leaders to act with and encourage empathy, compassion, and inclusion; to integrate death and bereavement support into your mental health strategy, encourage healthy conversations about the topic, listen, and put protocols in place to empower line managers to support their reports. We can't know with any certainty what will happen in the months ahead, but we can take proactive steps to act responsibly now. This toolkit will help you think about your response and navigate these uncertain times." **Anna Purchas, Partner, Head of People, KPMG UK**

- Display and encourage empathetic, compassionate and inclusive leadership by role modelling that it is normal to have conversations about death and bereavement.
- Provide a platform for employees who are comfortable to do so to share their personal experiences of death and bereavement.

PROLONGED GRIEF DISORDER AND POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

"If we do not handle bereavements well during COVID-19, we risk a significant rise in poor mental health and, in some cases, prolonged grief disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder. Line managers can play a critical role in the weeks and months after a bereavement by listening, noticing when someone isn't coping and helping them access professional support if needed."

Professor Neil Greenberg, Professor of Defence Mental Health, King's College London

Following a bereavement, most people will process their grief over time, but in a few circumstances, they may develop more serious conditions such as prolonged grief disorder (PGD) or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

If we do not prevent and treat PGD and PTSD during and following the pandemic, we could see the impact on mental health affecting a generation for years to come.

What is prolonged grief disorder?

PGD affects up to one in ten people following the death of a person who was close to the bereaved[xiv]. It is a 'persistent and pervasive grief response characterised by longing for the deceased or persistent preoccupation with the deceased accompanied by intense emotional pain'. These symptoms must have persisted for at least six months following the death and clearly exceed expected social, cultural or religious norms for the individual's culture and context[xv].

What is post-traumatic stress disorder?

PTSD is a type of mental health disorder that may develop following an extremely threatening or horrific event[xvi], which in some cases may include a sudden and unexpected bereavement.

People with PTSD re-experience the event through symptoms such as nightmares and flashbacks; feel hyperalert to potential threats; avoid places or things that remind them of the trauma; and have problems with sleep and concentration. PTSD also alters the way that people think about the world and can distort perceptions which may lead to blaming themselves or others and associated strong emotions.

These symptoms might arise from a primary trauma, where the person has experienced a distressing situation first-hand (such as witnessing a suicide) or a secondary trauma, where the person has learnt about it in relation to a loved one. Trauma can also arise from exposure to trauma in the course of professional duties (e.g. frontline NHS employees).

What is survivor's guilt?

Survivor's guilt is when a person has feelings of guilt because they survived a life-threatening situation when others did not[xvii]. Survivors may question why they escaped death while others died. They may also wonder whether there was something that they could have done to prevent the event or preserve life.

Research suggests that many people with symptoms of PTSD recover without treatment usually within the first year following the event. However, around one-third of people will continue to have PTSD symptoms for three years or longer[xviii].

When PTSD symptoms are overwhelming or do not begin to get more manageable over the weeks and months after a trauma, it is important for those affected to seek professional help.

How can responsible businesses help prevent and support employees with PGD or PTSD?

One of the biggest predictors of whether someone goes on to develop conditions such as PGD and PTSD is how well they are supported and managed as they try to recover from a bereavement. Employers can play a role in preventing PTSD developing in employees through good line management, support from peers and helping staff to access effective support if needed[xix].

Conventional counselling support, typically offered through Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP), is not recommended for treating PTSD. If employees have access to an EAP, check whether they offer specialised therapy for trauma and, if in doubt, encourage employees to speak to their GP, or another healthcare professional, who can refer them on to further support approved by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) ..

Actions for businesses

o   Assess whether you would benefit from becoming a trauma-informed organisation by evaluating employees' exposure to trauma within the workplace. Consider implementing models such as Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) – a peer support system that aims to identify those who are not coping after potentially traumatising events and ensure they are pointed towards professional help.

o   Train key staff, such as line managers and mental health champions, to be active listeners, understand the signs that someone might not be coping and feel confident signposting to support.

RESPONDING TO DEATH AND BEREAVEMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

Bereavement laws have not been written with a pandemic in mind and it is unlikely that employers' bereavement policies will be adequate for the situation in which we currently find ourselves. For instance, they may not consider the scale and nature of deaths or the additional amount of time it may take to arrange a funeral. It is vital individual businesses respond fairly, inclusively and compassionately.

Responsible business approach

We strongly encourage responsible businesses to put guidelines in place for the event of deaths and bereavements during the pandemic.

The benefit of having guidelines over a policy is that they are more adaptable to individual

circumstances, are inclusive of the needs of different communities and allow employees to have a voice on how they want to pay their respects and grieve. Bereavement should be about understanding and responding to an individual's needs by coming together as a community and fulfilling the duty of care.

Guidelines should be underpinned by fair and transparent principles such as:

- A commitment from leadership to show empathy, compassion and inclusivity.
- Seeking to really understand first, and then respecting individual religious and cultural beliefs and ways of mourning.
- Understanding that grief is unique – there is no right or wrong way to grieve.
- Including and respecting the wishes of the family of the deceased.
- Giving employees a voice and control over how they want to pay their respects.

The importance of line managers
Although people can legally keep their bereavement private from work colleagues, in most cases, employees will inform their line managers first. Line managers are not expected to be experts on grief, but they have a duty of care. It is important they are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to listen to bereaved colleagues and respond empathetically and practically.

Supporting a bereaved employee
Cruse, a national bereavement charity, outline several steps following a bereavement[xx].

- Offer condolences and reassure the employee that supporting them through this is the priority.

- Ask how they would like to stay in touch and what, if anything, they would like their colleagues to know about the bereavement.

- Stay in regular contact and, when appropriate, inform the employee of any bereavement leave to which they are entitled. If the employee is furloughed, be clear about whether this affects any leave entitlements.

- Share information about internal and external support services. Make sure they are applicable for the employee's circumstances by considering the nature of the death, relationship to the deceased, religious affiliations and cultural sensitivities.

- During different phases of the pandemic, be mindful of any funeral restrictions that could have an impact on employees. At times, the funeral may be delayed and attendance may be restricted. It may be difficult for employees during the time the funeral is taking place as they would have usually been there – encourage them to consider taking leave and/or attending the funeral online if possible.

- For colleagues who are bereaved due to COVID-19, it may bring their own mortality into their consciousness. As such, returning to the workplace may create a real fear for the safety of their own or their family's lives as it may be seen to increase the risk of contracting COVID-19 and spreading it. In response, seek to understand their specific concerns about returning to the workplace. Discuss any adjustments required to support employees, particularly bereaved employees, to perform their role (such as extended deadlines or time off if they have new or additional carer responsibilities following the bereavement).

"Success of all businesses, particularly SMEs, will rely on the passion and commitment of their workforce, hence it is absolutely right for the employers to support their staff during the most difficult times involving loss of the loved ones.

In our company, in times of bereavement afflicting a member, we rally together and become a large family to support each other and share the loss thus helping with journey to recovery. This is important not just for the bereaved but also for those who work with them."

Dr Nasser Siabi OBE, CEO, Microlink PC (UK) Ltd

A team which has experienced the death of a colleague[xxi]

Following the death of a colleague, it is important that a business comes together as a community to acknowledge the death and offer support, even when COVID-19 restrictions are in place. The first response from an organisation sets the tone for what is to follow and can impact on trust between the employer and those grieving. Businesses should consider the following in their response:

- Reach out to the bereaved family if they aren't the ones who have informed you of the death. Offer condolences, listen and give them a single contact person for any news or questions they have (e.g. about pay and insurance). Take the family's wishes into account when deciding how to communicate or remember the colleague. Be mindful to respect any cultural or religious practices.
- Think carefully about how to communicate the news of the death to employees, especially those who worked closely with them and those on furlough. Large organisations may have HR or Internal Communications teams who can help with this.

- If colleagues are not able to attend the funeral, they will be grieving without the start of the healing process that a funeral can provide. Therefore, consider other ways to celebrate their life as a community. Listen to how employees who were close to the colleague want to remember them. This might be through a virtual memorial, creating a virtual book of condolences, or raising money for a cause that was close to them. This will help employees express their grief, share memories to celebrate the life that was lived, and begin the healing process.
- Remind employees that it is important to foster a supportive community, even if it is virtual. Utilise existing employee support networks, such as mental health champions, and new communities, such as support groups for people who are bereaved during COVID-19.
- The majority of employees will process the bereavement, especially when they stay connected to support systems, reach out to trusted others, take care of their physical health with good nutrition, proper rest, moderate exercise and hydration, and mentally coach themselves to be patient and compassionate with themselves while they recover and heal.
- If more support is needed, signpost employees to internal and external support services.
- For more guidance see the British Psychological Society's Guidance for Death of a Colleague[xxii].

Legal requirements
Time off

Employees have the right to bereavement leave if a dependant dies (including their partner, parent, child or someone else who relied on them). The law does not specify how much time can be taken off work, it simply says the amount should be 'reasonable'. This will vary depending on an individual's needs and employers should try to accommodate it wherever possible.

Pay

There is currently no legal right for paid time off for bereavement (unless someone is eligible for parental bereavement pay – see below). However, many organisations offer 'compassionate' or 'special' paid leave and professional HR bodies, such as the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), strongly recommend employers do.

Children

Additional legal requirements apply in the case of a death of a child. Parents might be eligible for:

• Parental Bereavement Leave

• Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay

This will be a minimum of two weeks' paid leave. If more than one child of an employee dies, they can take a separate period of leave for each childxxiii.

"Grief and trauma can lead to long term health conditions such as stress, depression and anxiety; all of which fall under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010. Employers would be wise to make provisions to support all of their workers to process their grief and other feelings that have occurred through the pandemic. I'd encourage them to work alongside their trade union representatives and Health and Safety reps."

Matt Lay, UNISON Full Time Officer, Energy

Actions for businesses

o   Review existing compassionate leave policies/guidelines or create new guidelines to ensure they are fit for purpose during the pandemic. Ensure everyone understands how to respond and what support is available.

o   Equip line managers with the training, resources and support they need to listen to bereaved employees, respond with empathy and compassion, apply the bereavement guidelines/policy and signpost to further support.

o   Upskill key employees on the business' bereavement guidelines, related policies, and support services. They can help bereaved employees or families of colleagues who have died in service to navigate the organisation during their grief.

o   Self-care: supporting a bereaved employee may be emotionally and mentally demanding, encourage line managers to practice self-care.

o   If you have an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) or private medical care, check what support they offer to employees and their family members who are bereaved and ensure this is communicated so employees understand the support available.

o   Signpost local and national bereavement organisations to grieving employees and family of colleagues who have died in service. Remember to consider religious and cultural needs and circumstances (see resources section).

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS FOR BUSINESSES

Acknowledge

o Accurately audit and assess the risks and mitigations associated with death and bereavement to the organisation. In your audit consider items such as: death and bereavement policies and guidance, line manager capability to support bereaved reports, support services to signpost to, and information and resources to support employees at increased risk of suicide during the economic downturn. Assess the risk of any gaps in your approach and mitigate against them.

o Consider different measures needed for different groups. Ensure groups at increased risk of serious illness and death, such as people from BAME backgrounds and colleagues with underlying health conditions, are reflected in the business' audits and risk mitigations.

o Display and encourage empathetic, compassionate and inclusive leadership by role modelling that it is normal to have conversations about death and bereavement.

o Provide a platform for employees who are comfortable to do so to share their personal experiences of death and bereavement. Be sure to be inclusive and hear from people from different backgrounds and cultures.

o Listen, and respect the experience of bereavement by employees from diverse backgrounds. Some of the issues raised may not fall within your experience, but an empathetic ear, signposting to possible materials and networks that can be of support, will always be welcome.

Respond

o Integrate death, bereavement and grief into the business' existing mental health and wellbeing strategy, recognising the importance of not only responding to deaths but also forestalling potentially preventable deaths including suicides and homicides.

o Review existing compassionate leave policies/guidelines or create new guidelines to ensure they are fit for purpose during the pandemic. Ensure everyone understands how to respond and what support is available.

o Assess whether you would benefit from becoming a trauma-informed organisation by evaluating employees' exposure to trauma within the workplace. Consider implementing models such as Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) – a peer support system that aims to identify those who are not coping after potentially traumatising events and ensure they are pointed towards professional help.

o Train key staff, such as line managers and mental health champions, to be active listeners, to understand the signs that someone might not be coping and feel confident signposting to support.

o Upskill mental health champions or key employees to understand and respond to grief.

o Equip line managers with the training, resources and support they need to listen to bereaved employees, respond with empathy and compassion, apply the bereavement guidelines/policy and signpost to further support.

o Upskill key employees on the business' bereavement guidelines, related policies, and support services. They can help bereaved employees or families of colleagues who have died in service to navigate the organisation during their grief.

- o Consider setting up a virtual support network where bereaved people can share their experiences. These are sometimes called Bereavement Cafes or Grief Cafes. Take a look at the Good Grief Trust's example.
- o Self-care: supporting a bereaved employee may be emotionally and mentally demanding, encourage line managers to practice self-care.

Refer

- o Signpost local and national bereavement organisations to grieving employees and family of colleagues who have died in service. Remember to consider religious and cultural needs and circumstances (see resources section).
- o If you have an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) or private medical care, check what support they offer to employees and their family members who are bereaved and ensure this is communicated so employees understand the support available. Remember, to see if they provide specialised support for treating PTSD as conventional therapies aren't recommended.

"Bereavement is one of those issues that can make employers feel uncomfortable and not sure how they can support anyone who is dealing with it. This is especially true of a small business like ours where we don't have dedicated resources or support in place. This toolkit is invaluable as it gives a small business the tools, advice and signposts we need so we can support any employee going through the grieving process."

Amanda Powell Smith – CEO, Forster Communications

KEY RESOURCES

Government guidance and training
- NHS Advice
- England: Government guidance – funeral arrangements
- Scotland Government guidance – funeral arrangements
- Northern Ireland: Public Health Agency – COVID-19 bereavement resources
- Wales: Government guidance – bereavement advice
- PHE: Free Psychological First Aid Training

Legal and human resources guidance
- CIPD Guidance: COVID-19: Compassionate bereavement support for employees
- ACAS: Time off for bereavement

Responsible business during COVID-19
- Leading with compassionate, empathy and inclusion
- An inclusive approach to supporting your workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic

Charities specialising in death and bereavement
- COVID-19 National NHS Bereavement Helpline – a helpline run by nurses to support people through bereavement during the pandemic
- Cruse – offer support, advice and information when someone dies
- Dying Matters – a coalition which aims to help people talk more openly about dying, death and bereavement and to make plans for the end of life

- Jewish Bereavement Counselling Service – support for the Jewish Community
- Muslim Youth Helpline – support for the Muslim Community. Services are targeted at young people however, they take calls from people of all ages and backgrounds
- Sudden – support after someone close to you dies unexpectedly
- Support after Suicide Partnership – support after a suicide
- The Good Grief Trust – aims help all those who are grieving in the UK

Bereavement charities supporting families with children

- Grief Encounter – support for bereaved children, young people and families affected by death
- Winston's Wish – support for children and young people after the death of a parent or sibling
- To Wish Upon A Star – support following sudden death in children and young people

Domestic abuse and homicide

- BITC/PHE Domestic abuse during COVID-19
- BITC/PHE: Domestic abuse toolkit

Suicide
- BITC/PHE: Suicide prevention toolkit
- BITC/PHE: Suicide postvention toolkit

Trauma
- NHS: Post-trauma Stress Disorder
- Cruse: Guidance on traumatic bereavement

i https://www.dyingmatters.org/news/brits-leaving-it-too-late-make-wishes-known

ii https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/
iii
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