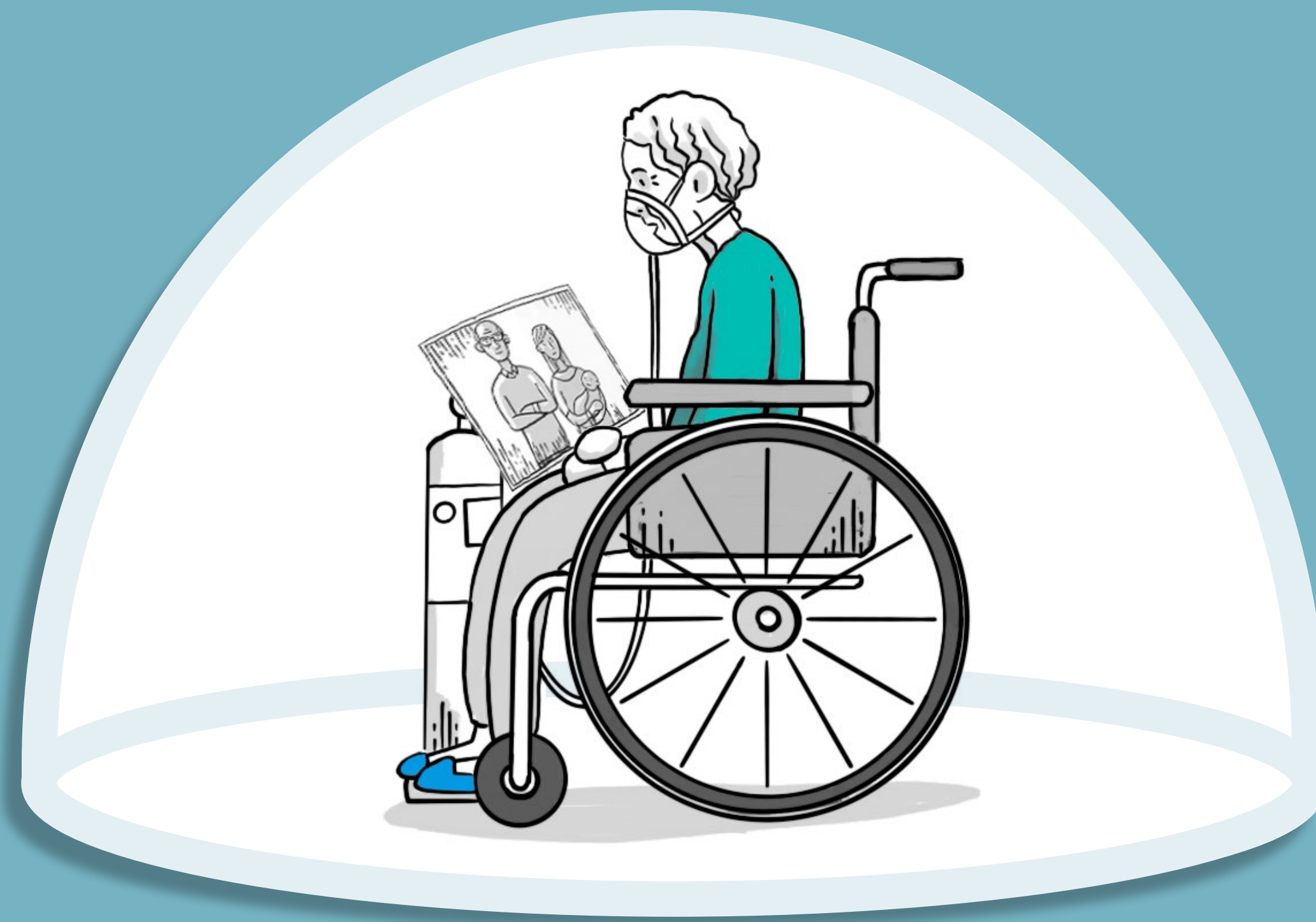


Helping no-one to die alone

Supporting staff in the absence of families and spiritual care provision during the pandemic

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Rationale

COVID-19 has caused some people who are dying to have found themselves isolated from those close to them and their usual networks of support. This has led to health and social care staff struggling to fill the void. There is evidence to support that these distressing and challenging situations have had a significant and detrimental impact on peoples' experience of bereavement – both for families and those caring for their relatives at the end of life.^{1,2}

Methods and Results

We identified an immediate need to support frontline staff and, in collaboration with subject experts, we promptly developed and launched two online educational resources. These are quick to read, openly accessible on any device (also produced in a printable format) and are reflective of the pandemic situation e.g. depictions of personal protective equipment.

- **Supporting the spiritual care needs of those who are nearing the end of life**

Not knowing what to say, or the fear of saying the wrong thing, could lead professionals to avoid conversations about spiritual care which may contribute to a person's sense of isolation and distress, and also be upsetting for their family, potentially later adding to their grief if they feel that their relative's needs were not met.

- **Caring for people who are dying and those close to them amidst COVID-19 visiting restrictions**

This provides practical advice and support in situations where a person's family or friends are unable to be with them around the time of death. It includes advice about means of virtual communication to maintain connection with and between families.

Conclusions

These resources help frontline health and social care staff feel more prepared and confident to do the best that they can during challenging and upsetting circumstances, by improving communication and care and supporting their own and their colleagues' wellbeing. They are part of a suite of bereavement-related educational materials for health and social care staff which are available on www.sad.scot.nhs.uk.

In the 12 month period up to March 2021:



Over 33,000 website users have totalled over 94,000 page views



Over 68% increase in website users versus those seen in the previous year



The website has been accessed from 142 countries and users view on average 2.10 pages per visit

References

1. Harrop E., Farnell D., Longo M., Goss S., Sutton E., Seddon K., Nelson A., Byrne A., Selman L.E. *Supporting people bereaved during COVID-19: Study Report 1*, 27 November 2020. Cardiff University and the University of Bristol
2. Pearce C, Honey JR, Lovick R, et al. 'A silent epidemic of grief': a survey of bereavement care provision in the UK and Ireland during the COVID-19 pandemic. *BMJ Open* 2021;11:e046872. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2020-046872