**NHS Education for Scotland**

**Transcript of ‘Perspective of a Nurse Experiencing Bereavement in the Workplace’ Film**

I was a care assistant in a care home at the time and I was a lot younger than I am now. I was trained up by this amazing lady, Louise, who at the time I remember thinking was older, but she was probably about the same age I am now. She was bubbly and had this brilliant sense of humour. If you were having a horrible shift, she'd get you through it, she was full of life.

Obviously, it was a care home, so there were patients that were terminal and you got really close to them, it was a bit of a family setup. There were patients that you would be really worried about when you had days off. I got a call from my manager, and I assumed it was about one of the patients that had been really sick for a few weeks, and I thought, oh she's passed. But it wasn't. It was my colleague, Louise. She was really clear – Louise is dead. I'll never forget it. The only response I could give was "you're joking" because I just didn’t believe it. I was like, no, this can’t be right, not Louise. I think it might've been the fact that you didn't see it coming and she was a friend. It was probably my first experience with someone not very old dying around me.

It was a hard time because everyone had to go back to work, and she wasn't there. The patients were feeling it too, it wasn't just us. And there was a lot of guilt because she died whilst getting ready for work. She just dropped down. She had been complaining of back pain for, like, a week, and we all told her to go to the doctor. Afterwards, there was this collective guilt; we should have made her go and get it checked out. We all heard her talking about it and she continued to work. It was a heart attack, and we don't know truly what caused that.

When you lose someone, you just want to know why. I've always put that down to the nursing part of me, but I think as humans, we want an explanation and a reason. It was a tough couple of months, but we were all in a similar situation. She was friends with everyone, and we all missed her. There wasn't anyone at work that wasn't feeling it.

On shift, you would have a handover in the morning. But the first time you were on shift after Louise died, it was more everyone talking about Louise. It was a really supportive environment to be in but you just kind of had to get on with work as well. It was the coffee room where we would laugh and joke, talk about what an amazing person she was. We would laugh about things that happened at work or what she would have said if this had happened. There was a lot of grief and sadness. It was still raw and everyone was feeling it. I mean, we all had a good cry and there were lots of cuddles. But yeah, it was definitely encouraged that we talk about it.

We were all given the time off to go to the funeral. There were so many people at the funeral. I've never seen a funeral like it, we couldn't all get into the crematorium. She was just such a lovely person. The care home got agency staff in to cover our shifts. We were very much a family and they understood that we all wanted to be there. I think it gives you closure, being able to go to the funeral, all together to support one another, and to see Louise's family. I found that really helpful. And my manager let us all know that her door was open if we ever wanted to talk to her.

It's been a long time but it still plays on my mind. I can't believe how I responded to the news

and I always wonder what my manager thought of me. But as I've gotten older, I've forgiven myself a little bit for that, because everyone responds differently individually. I've seen people howling at their grief and I've seen people quiet at their grief. Everybody is different and every person is different

depending on who they're grieving for. I've lost close friends and I've lost other colleagues and responded differently, maybe because I was more mature or had more experience of loss. So, I think it's different for every single loss.

The film was produced in October 2023 and can be found at [www.sad.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.sad.scot.nhs.uk) or <https://vimeo.com/906400054>.

For more information visit [www.sad.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.sad.scot.nhs.uk) or contact [supportarounddeath@nes.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:supportarounddeath@nes.scot.nhs.uk)

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