**NHS Education for Scotland**

**Transcript of ‘Perspective of a Care at Home Manager Experiencing Bereavement in the Workplace’ Film**

One morning I had an email from one of our care workers, Steph. She'd been on sick leave due to having covid. She said she was feeling much better, although still testing positive, and that she was hoping to start testing negative, to be able to return to work after the ten days.

However, in the late afternoon on the same day I received a call from her family to advise that, after a shower, she had become suddenly unwell, so the paramedics were called, but unfortunately they were unable to bring her back to life. It looked like she'd had a heart attack.

For me, having read her email earlier that day, I was in total disbelief. I had to double check we were talking about the same person. It wasn't until I spoke to her family again the next day that it finally sunk in and I realised we would never see or speak with her again.

In my line of work, we deal with death quite often. However, having managed this person for some years, and with them being so young, this was by far the most emotional I've ever been at work. Not only did I find myself dealing with my own thoughts and feelings regarding this sudden death, I realised I was going to have to help care for both colleagues and clients as I broke the news to them too.

Steph had been with the company for many years and was a valued member of the team. I knew I now had to tell both our clients and the rest of the care team. As this was a very delicate matter, and I knew how shocked I had been, I visited each one of her clients, after speaking with the family, in person to break the news. This was met with utter shock, disbelief and condolences for the family. One of Steph's clients told me they would miss her meals, as she'd always taken the time to ensure they were nicely presented. Hearing the different stories from the clients about Steph both saddened me and brought a warmth to me, to know that she had touched so many different people.

I then had to tell the rest of the care team. I spoke with each member personally, and, again, everyone was shocked and saddened by the news. The care and branch team were given access to a counselling service, and I went in person to visit the family and pass over everyone's condolences. We spoke in length about her life, her work and family, and this helped me process my grief a bit more. Spending time with the family and listening to the stories that she was the same kind and funny person out of work as she was in work helped.

Before Steph had died, she had been nominated by me for care worker of the year within our company. We found out later that year that she'd won this award and we invited the family along to the ceremony to receive her award. We also made a video of her time with the company, with statements from both clients and colleagues included. The care workers advised that they felt better for contributing as they felt they were doing something to help support the family, which helped ease their grief.

For me, I’ll never forget Steph and the memories we shared together, but having her win that award and seeing how proud her family were helped ease my grief and made me feel less sad. This was a very difficult death for me, as I not only had to take into account my own thoughts and feelings but also those of the family, the branch team, other care workers and clients. The care team and I chose to celebrate the time we all worked with Steph and regale each other of stories and memories of working with her. We all felt this helped us come to terms with her death and our loss, a bit easier than pretending it didn't happen, not talking about her, or forgetting her.

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/906401505.>

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

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