



NHS Education for Scotland

Transcript of 'Beyond the Full Stop: Bereavement and the Power of Human Story (NES Bereavement Conference, 2019)' video - Donald Macaskill

I'm Dr Donald Macaskill. I'm the Chief Executive of Scottish Care which is the representative body for care home and home care housing support providers across Scotland. Our members employ about 110,000 staff who everyday support people including through bereavement support.

So, this morning I was talking about bereavement being beyond the full stop and the power of human story. And I was trying to describe the way in which story is part and parcel of who we are as human beings. From the first moments in our life to the very end we are trying to communicate, and story is often the way in which we seek to communicate. It is a bridge between our world and others.

And in bereavement support it is often too, through story that people are enabled to express some very hard and often very challenging emotions and feelings. So, story is both the vehicle but it's also something innate and inherent within us.

I concluded by talking about the national bereavement charter which is a new project aimed at encouraging fellow Scots, professionals and members of the community to start talking about bereavement. It's aimed about creating a human right around bereavement, because we profoundly believe that if Scotland is to become a nation where people can belong, where people can form their own identity, where people can be supported, then we need to get better at supporting people around bereavement. It's the reason why tens of thousands of care staff give up their job because they simply don't have somebody to talk to, they simply don't feel supported in dealing with death and dying all the time. We need to get better at that, and so, the charter is one attempt to help the conversation around death and dying and to create a Scotland where bereavement support is the best it can be.

There are lots of practical ways in which the bereavement charter will hopefully start people having conversations. Do we need to have policies which take account of people losing a family relative? We have some but they are not as robust as they could be. Do we need additional resource so that we have better support and counselling services for all individuals regardless of what they do in their day to day work? Do we need to get better at helping children and young people, particularly in this age of technology, to communicate about, and talk through their fears and worries about death and dying? So there are lots of practical ways in which we can get better at supporting bereavement as well as ways in which we can help people to start talking because in the words of Maya Angelou, *'There is no worse feeling than having a story within you which is untold'*.

There are very few opportunities where practitioners, clinicians, health staff and others can come together and talk about what is often an emotive and challenging and difficult subject. This conference is a unique opportunity in getting people to hear what is some of the best practice available, and we are doing amazing things across Scotland, but also to share their concerns, their priorities, their hopes and their ambitions. So, this is a unique event and you can see by the phenomenal attendance how needed this event is.

The film was produced in March 2020 and can be found at www.sad.scot.nhs.uk or <https://vimeo.com/392425434>

For more information visit www.sad.scot.nhs.uk or contact supportarounddeath@nes.scot.nhs.uk

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