

Supporting Scottish Grief & Bereavement Care workstream

**~ Supporting primary care teams to help
people who are bereaved or experiencing
living grief ~**

We are sensitive that the themes being discussed today may be upsetting for some people. Please attend in the way in which you are comfortable to be present.



Who we are

Lynne Innes

- Senior Educator, NHS Education for Scotland (NES)
- Healthcare Chaplain (Staff Support), NHS Fife
- Previous roles:
 - National Coordinator for GPN, NES
 - Lead GPN/ANP in Primary Care

Sarah Giffen

- Healthcare Chaplain – Primary Care Chaplaincy Scotland and Regent Gardens Medical Centre, Kirkintilloch
- She is a trainer and Chair for the Association of Chaplaincy in General Practice
- MSc in Advanced Healthcare/Chaplaincy

Vicki Waqa

- GPN National Coordinator, NHS Education for Scotland
- Previous roles:
 - ANP in Primary Care
 - GPN Access Practice
 - A&E Senior Charge Nurse





Background of the workstream

- Commissioned (2013) to develop **death certification** educational resources and the following year to lead work on **enhancing medical practice in bereavement care** more broadly
- Focus has since widened to **those across health and social care**
- Our work concentrates on **developing educational solutions** to support staff learning and development, rather than supporting those who are bereaved directly





Why bereavement education matters

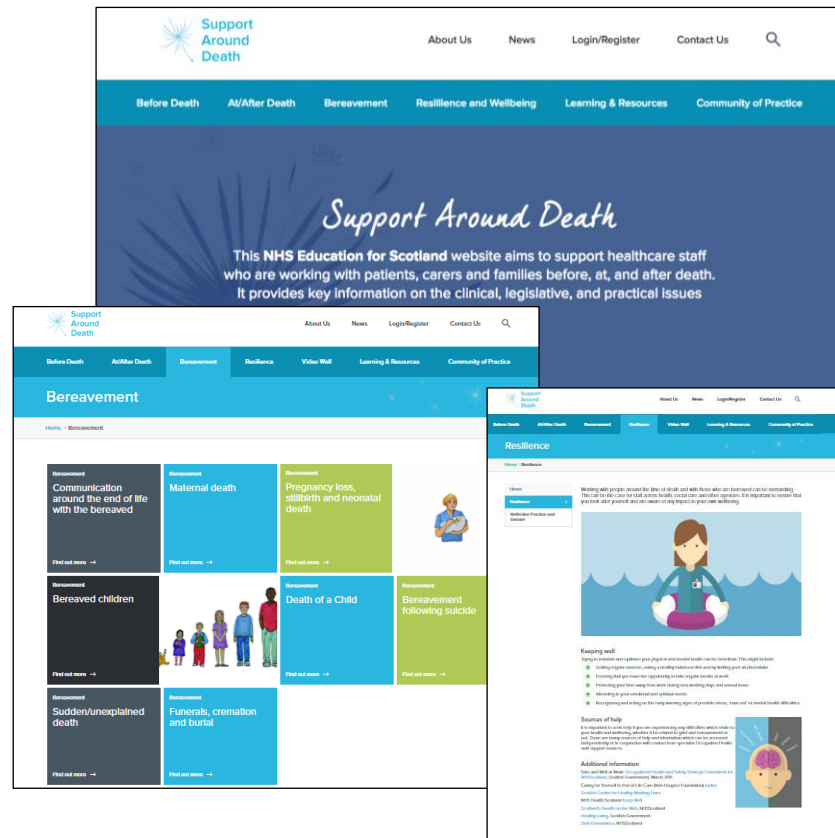
- Bereavement care & communication with those who are grieving is **core business for** many staff groups across health and social care
- If **poorly handled**, there can be the **risk of causing additional harm**, with **negative impact** on **staff wellbeing**
- Training focusing purely on expected deaths not equipping professionals for **range of death scenarios**
- Literature suggested there is a **low prevalence of bereavement training** with a **corresponding high need** for it
- **Importance** of education / staff support around themes of death and bereavement further **emphasised** through the **COVID pandemic**





Toolkit of educational resources

- Range of **materials already launched** e.g. films, e-Learning modules, handouts and small group teaching session outlines
- Others being **developed on a continual basis** in response to identified gaps
- Requests to use materials across UK/internationally
- Openly accessible website www.sad.scot.nhs.uk
 - Key info on clinical, legislative, & practical issues
 - In the last 18 months the website has seen:
 - **>45k** users (from >170 countries)
 - **>128k** page views
 - **54% & 68%** increase respectively from previous 18 months





Outline

- Recognising loss and the grieving process
- Demonstrate some of the available resources that may be helpful
- Consider how we talk and be with people who are bereaved or experiencing living grief





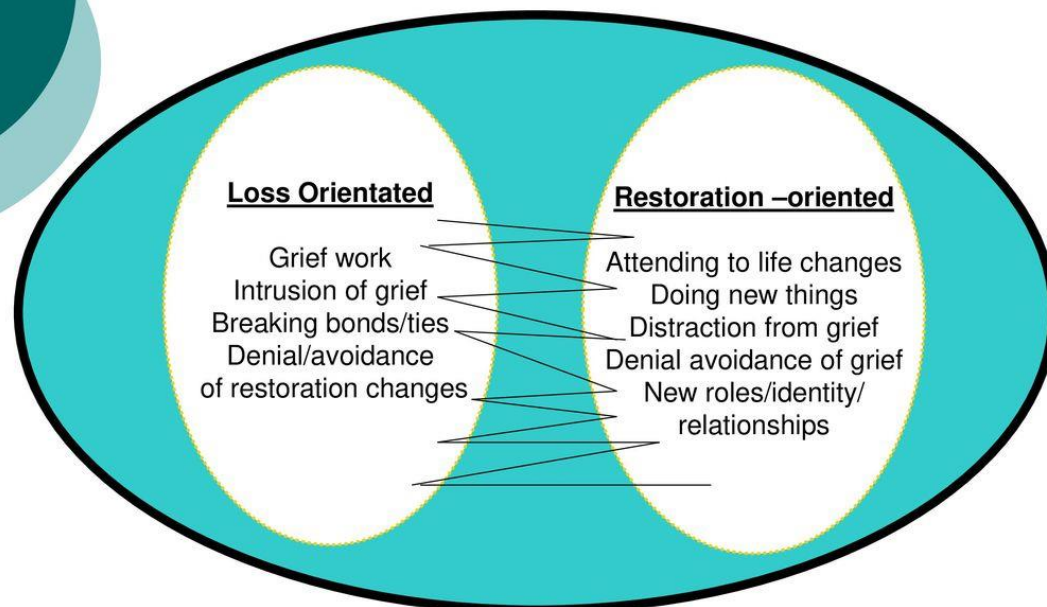
Recognising Loss and Grief

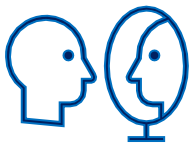
- **Loss** – losing something that is of significance to us
- **Grief** – **natural process** of reaction and adjustment to loss and change
 - **Intense sorrow** – mental, physical, emotional and spiritual suffering resulting from loss
 - It is a **transforming** experience, can lead to personal growth
 - Each of us experience it **differently**- we don't know what the other person's grief is like but we can ask and reach in



How we cope with grief – one model

A Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement Strobe & Schut (1999)





Reflection

- We are going to watch a film of Louise, a bereaved mother reflecting on the death of her baby. Please be aware and notice your reaction as you watch and listen to the video.

Reflection -

- Do you notice when is Louise moving between loss orientated and/or restoration orientated mode?

Consider -

- If Louise comes into your practice/place of work how would you talk to and be with her if she brought up the death of her baby?
- What might you say or do that might be helpful? Add any suggested answers into the question function

We are sensitive that the themes being considered in this film may be particularly upsetting for some people. Please attend in the way in which you are comfortable to be present.

Abigail's 

Providing support for bereaved families

Film of Louise used with kind permission:
<https://www.abigailsfootsteps.co.uk/> :



Talking with and being with people who are bereaved

- Gently and tenderly
- Be open – sit with discomfort
- Try to use language of companionship not fear
- We can't take their pain away
- We aren't trying to fix or rescue people from their grief
- We are quietly listening – creating space and time, enabling silence
- Consider how to close the conversation
- <https://www.sad.scot.nhs.uk/media/16286/talking-with-people-web-only.pdf>



Talking and being with people who are bereaved



Try to:

- Be aware of how to sensitively approach interactions with those who are bereaved, to have the confidence to talk or just listen
- Acknowledge the person's loss and offer sympathy. Even just telling them that you're finding it hard to know what to say is ok too
- Let the person lead the conversation at their own pace and try to be comfortable if there are any silences
- Mirror the words and phrases used by the person who is bereaved
- Handle and package possessions sensitively
- Ensure that you are looking after your needs as well as those of your team

Try not to:

- Hide away from a person who is bereaved out of fear or embarrassment
- Force anyone to open up or press for details
- Say that you know how someone feels or make reference to your own thoughts, views or beliefs
- Be apprehensive to use the words dead or died. Euphemisms are often used but aren't always helpful
- Hand possessions to a family in an unthoughtful manner
- Make assumptions about how someone is feeling based upon outward appearances. Take talk of suicide very seriously, seek advice, either about what you should do or what can be done to support someone



Please visit www.sad.scot.nhs.uk to watch a short animated film on this topic and for other educational resources on bereavement for health and social care professionals

Grief

- There is no right or wrong way to grieve - it is a process not an event
- Grief is a personal journey, unique to each of us
- People may experience a combination of powerful emotions at different times



Please note these resources are not designed to be used by the lay public (including patients, relatives or carers)

www.sad.scot.nhs.uk

supportarounddeath@nes.scot.nhs.uk

[@NES_Bereavement](https://twitter.com/NES_Bereavement)



Talking and being with people who are bereaved

<https://vimeo.com/264030127>



Things to remember when talking with a family who is bereaved

Communicating is everyone's role

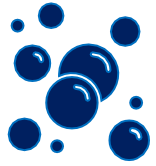
Conversation Pitfalls



Living or Anticipatory Grief

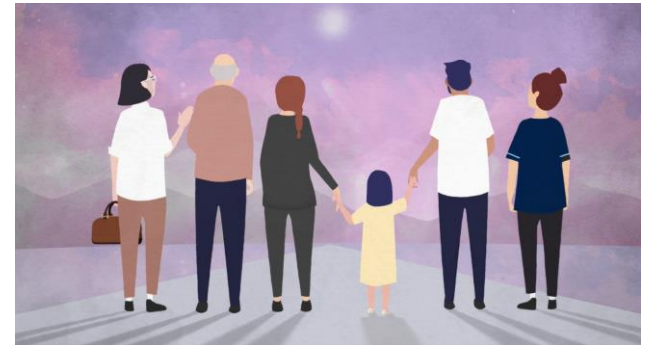
- Anticipatory, or 'living' grief is where someone experiences feelings of loss before a person dies
- People may experience it in different ways
- It can be thought of as a journey and may last for years
- Maybe appropriate not to say anything at all, but just be with them, giving them a safe space to talk, cry or just 'be'
- Affirm with people how they are feeling
- Making memories
- Anticipatory Care Planning
- Experiencing a long period of anticipatory grief doesn't necessarily lessen feelings of grief at the time of death
- Anticipatory grief can be a long and lonely journey





Living or Anticipatory Grief

<https://vimeo.com/629251076>





Reflections...

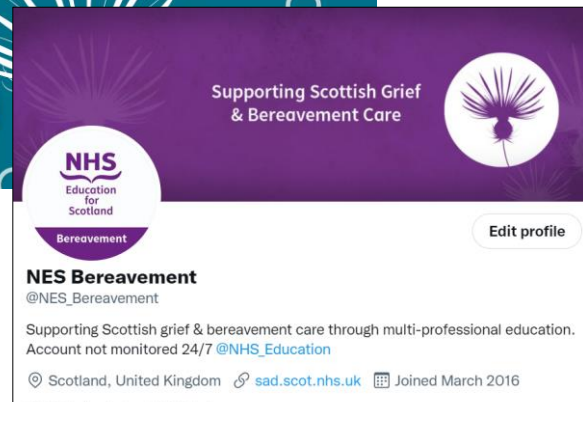
- Be gentle and patient with yourself and one another
- Coping with death and bereavement as a health and social care professional – **TALK**
 - **Tell** how you are feeling
 - **Ask** for help
 - **Listen** to each other
 - **Kindness** to each other
- Aim to be present
- ‘Be’ with one another gently





How to find out more

- Workstream [Annual report 2020-21](#)
- Quarterly Bereavement Update e-Newsletter: [sign up](#)
- Email: SupportAroundDeath@nes.scot.nhs.uk
- Website: [Support Around Death](#)
- [TURAS Learn Death, Dying and Bereavement](#)
- [Twitter @NES Bereavement](#)
- Abigail's - a baby loss charity providing support and counselling for bereaved parents and families as well as specialist bereavement training for midwives and healthcare professionals.
<https://www.abigailsfootsteps.co.uk/>



Abigail's
Providing support for bereaved families

This resource may be made available, in full or summary form, in alternative formats and community languages.
Please contact us on **0131 656 3200** or email **altformats@nes.scot.nhs.uk** to discuss how
we can best meet your requirements.



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