

Supporting people when they are bereaved is everyone’s business. The interactions we have with people who are bereaved can have a major impact.

The Bereavement Charter for Children and Adults in Scotland paints a picture of how our society can become better at supporting people experiencing grief and bereavement. Launched in 2020, the Charter illustrates how we can work together to make Scotland a place where individuals who are bereaved find empathy and support in all aspects of their life.

So, how does the Charter relate to our everyday actions?

The Charter highlights the importance of creating a culture of care and support. Showing someone that their feelings are important and understanding that they may be in pain, is a good place to start.

Treating others with kindness and empathy helps to create a culture where people feel cared for. Though we may feel apprehensive or be unsure of what to say to those who are grieving, it is important to show compassion and help the person as best we can.

Often, this might be by listening, by helping the person to identify their needs, and showing them where they can get more support.

Scotland’s Bereavement Charter can also help us to understand bereavement better.

There is no right or wrong way to grieve. People grieve in different ways, and each person’s grief is unique. One way we can help is by making space in conversations so that people feel able to talk openly about how they are feeling if they wish to.

The length of time people grieve can be very different. Grief can change over the years, and, for many people it can be a lifelong process. People may still have grief reactions many years after a bereavement, and certain events can act as emotional triggers, for example birthdays, anniversaries or cultural celebrations.

It is not uncommon for people to experience feelings of grief before someone has actually died, as they anticipate the distress, changes and problems that lie ahead, or feel that they are slowly losing the person they once knew.

People carry the impact of their bereavement with them through all aspects of their life. This could be anywhere including at home, at work, at school and when meeting health and social care professionals.

The Charter emphasises that good bereavement support is a fundamental human right. Death is a natural part of life and caring for people who are bereaved is natural too. Everyone can play a role in helping to provide that support. For more information on Scotland’s Bereavement Charter go to https://www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk/content/bereavement_charter/

This short animated film was produced in May 2022 and can be found at
<https://www.sad.scot.nhs.uk/bereavement-charter/> or <https://vimeo.com/704575872>

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

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