 **NHS Education for Scotland**

**Transcript of The Stories We Live by – Two creative innovations in baby loss bereavement support film clip recording**

**Speakers:** Tamarin Norwood,Leverhulme Research Fellow, Loughborough University and Nicola Welsh, Chief Executive, Held in Our Hearts

**TN:** My name's Tamarin Norwood, and I'm a writer and academic. Since our son died five years ago at birth, I've been looking at the stories we tell ourselves when a baby dies. I'm a Leverhulme early career research fellow at Loughborough University and a visiting scholar at the universities of Bath and Oxford. This session is about two bereavement resources we created for parents whose babies have died, a pack of keepsake writing prompts, and a creative writing group. What I've discovered through my research is that, when somebody dies, stories can really help us, whether those are the kinds of cultural narratives that are, that our society tells us, whether it's just a simple story of, you know, we have a funeral and people send us condolence cards and understand that we feel sad. People share stories, people reminisce about memories and so on. And all of these things can help us, you know,

like signposts along the path of grief. But we know that when a baby dies, very often, many, many of those signposts, those stories are just not there. We can't share memories of our baby with our families and friends because they didn't know our baby. Maybe there isn't a funeral, maybe there isn't even a, a birth or death certificate. And generally, the kind of cultural narratives that should be surrounding death are just not present very often when a baby dies, where, when a pregnancy is lost. I know that writing can play a special role in creating these stories. Creative writing techniques can offer bereaved parents a way to replenish missing narratives and create stories where otherwise stories would be missing altogether. I started to wonder whether the techniques that I developed for writing about loss and creating narratives around baby loss could support other parents, and that's when I was put in touch with Held in our Hearts. And together we worked to develop resources to do exactly this, to support parents through creative writing and through writing around their experiences of baby loss. And I'll hand over to my colleague Nicola now, and she can tell you more about the project.

**NW:** Hi. So I am Nicola Welsh and I am the chief executive at the charity Held in our Hearts. We're a, a Scottish based charity and support a number of health boards and our objective really is to make sure that nobody is alone when their baby dies. We provide counselling and peer support and a new hospital to home early intervention project, and support families from any gestation of loss into the death of a young infant as well. As you can tell from what I've described there, lots of our services around talking therapies. And our counselling is long term, which, also accommodates complex PTSD and we recognise the trauma, and families and the complexities when a baby dies. But we're always seeking to do more and learn about other ways of engaging with families in their grief. And so when Tamarin approached us about a writing project, it really spoke to us. We know the families well, and it gave us a really brilliant opportunity to engage with families in a different way. And as Tamarin's explained that, how do we, the narratives that we use and how do we talk about that loss. I’m bereaved myself and sometimes the challenge of how do I talk about these really deep rooted feelings and the complexities and sometimes by giving families other avenues to explore their grief can really help. And so the writing project and the feedback was incredible and, and it really did reinforce the need for families to engage in different ways. And, and we then developed the writing packs, which you will learn more about. And in these writing packs, there are little prompts to families to make them think about the bonds that they already have with their baby. So when a baby dies, many families say that it feels like they don't know if they're theirs anymore, and has the connection gone. And we are interested in that continuing bonds. And these writing prompt cards remind them that they do know their baby and there is love and they've been with their baby through that pregnancy. And there's still ways of remembering. And all the packs now go in our memory bags in the hospitals that we support. So the workshops, you'll learn about the, the bereavement care resources that are making a difference to the families so that the health and social care staff can access these and use these. And we'll also share some, share some lessons along the way, and the benefits to health and social care, who are undertaking such important projects as this writing project. We hope that you'll go away with some practical advice on how to access and effectively deliver the resources that we are talking about. And also, advice on moving from the research implementation, including initiating and funding effective collaborations between third sector and research institutions. Thank you very much.

The film was produced in October 2023 and can be found at <https://www.sad.scot.nhs.uk/events/2023-conference/> or <https://vimeo.com/870690541>

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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