

Compassionate Communities; Sharing Stories of Loss, Grief and Care in Lock-Down

Oram E¹

¹ Learning and Development, Health and Social Care Partnership, Perth and Kinross

Abbreviated abstract: The essence of a compassionate community is to support the wellbeing of citizens, and recognize those who are experiencing loss, loneliness, grief and ill health. One aspect of connecting and empathizing with others is story-telling, whether we listen, or share our narrative of how we got here. Covid-19 has added complexity in how we talk about care. The creation of a 'bumping space' and use of social media has enabled a community to share their stories virtually.

Related publications:

Allan Kellehear: Compassionate Cities: Public Health and End of Life Care (2005)

Dadow R: 'Creating Bumping Spaces Where Anything is Possible' (2013)

nurtureddevelopment.org



Eoram@pkc.gov.uk

This poster is part of the
SPPC poster
exhibition
Scottish
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2020



Previous work, challenge, and approach

- An opportunity to explore compassionate communities was presented through the Truacanta project run by the Scottish Partnership for Palliative care and funded by Macmillan Cancer Support.
- One of five such projects in Scotland, Truacanta Perthshire's planned activities are around raising awareness of compassionate communities, and their potential benefits to our citizens. Much of our focus is around opening dialogue and sharing stories of lived experience of loss grief and care across all ages.
- The project is represented by the Perth and Kinross Health and Social Care Partnership, Macmillan Tayside Palliative and End of Life Care Managed Care Network, and Perth and Kinross Association of Voluntary Service (PKAVS).
- The arrival of Covid-19 had an impact on some of Truacanta Perthshire's plans, and we debated whether to defer until next year.
- Opportunity came knocking by way of funding, which meant we could revisit our ambitions around gathering experiences of loss and grief, and some innovative thinking led us to creative solutions to accommodate social distancing, but still share our stories.



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Techniques and Methods

- We know that stories are an effective method of gathering qualitative data. A recent example can be seen in Frome where the 'The Compassion Project' gathered and published stories of community kindness during Covid-19
- The Frome example resonates Kellehear's suggestion that in living through a pandemic, a "community that recognizes that care for one another at times of crisis and loss is not simply a task solely for health and social services but is everyone's responsibility."
- Gathering these stories occurs best in so-called 'bumping spaces', which are informal locations in our neighbourhoods where people feel comfortable and supported. "It's where the magic happens" (Dadow 2013)
- We identified a safe outdoor space on the North Inch, a public park in the centre of Perth, and came up with the concept of using 'selfie wings' as a recognizable symbol, putting the person in the centre.
- We developed a QR code which links to information on Truacanta and compassionate communities, and also created a Twitter page and hashtags for people to share their stories of loss, care, grief and hope.

Results and Conclusions

- The QR code allows us to monitor engagement through counting download numbers.
- We can see shared stories emerging on Twitter from which we will create a further resource.
- The wings have become the symbol of 'Recovery Week' in Perth and Kinross around promoting well-being.
- We have found that the wings have been shared by a diverse group, and intend to translate the QR data into Polish and Romanian. A young carers' group have created a second set of wings to raise awareness on loss and grief.
- We will use QR codes to create a remembrance trail for the 'To Absent Friends' festival, showcasing artwork and literature across the community.

