

Exploring the impact of Community Connection for those who have been Bereaved



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Background

“Dying is understood to be a relational and spiritual process rather than simply a physiological event” (Sallnow et al., 2022). Bereavement services traditionally provide counselling support for people who have been bereaved. To complement these services, Strathcarron Hospice use a Community Link model. Our BereavementCommunityConnector (BCC) reconnects individuals with their community, expanding social connections and support networks.

Method

A BCC was employed for 22.5 hours per week to support individuals to reconnect with community. Individuals are supported in their homes, using Good Life Conversations (Russell, 2017) to explore what is important and what they enjoy. BCC finds local groups and activities of interest and supports to overcome barriers so individuals can attend activities. Impact is recorded using Five Ways to Wellbeing: Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Learn, Give.

Results

From October 2022 to September 2023, the BCC received 53 referrals, providing 58 home visits; with 8 individuals being regularly supported at the Snowdrop (community) Cafe. The CLW connects individuals with activities, offering opportunities to meet local people (see fig.1). Feedback from supported individuals (fig.2) and staff (fig.3) is provided.

Conclusions

The BCC role impacts positively on individuals’ mental health and longevity by connecting them to their community (Hold-Lunstad, Smith and Layton, 2010), and impacts positively on the wider hospice team.

For further information contact

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Figure 1
Community Activities Accessed

Maggies Centre	Local gym
Snowdrop Cafes	Freedom of Mind Choir
Volunteering positions	Having dinner with a neighbour
Mens Shed	Braveheart Walks
Dial A Journey	Denny WASPS (school access project)

Figure 2
Feedback from Individuals Referred to CLW

Please see:
www.strathcarron.net/Pages/Category/bereavement-resources

“I decided I would start trying to get out and then [BCC] suggested the [Snowdrop] café and that was one of the best things that ever happened. I didn’t feel I needed to worry if I was upset and I met friends there... I mean, that did save me quite a bit because before that I was just distraught, totally... Once I started to get out that made the world of difference.”

“That’s one of the better things I’ve ever done actually, was to go to that choir. It’s just did so much good for me. It’s amazing how singing can make you feel so much better... that’s been something that’s done me a power of good... If I’d shut myself away I just wouldn’t be here today.”

“[BCC] has put me in touch with local groups that I can go to and help me. I was also put in touch with the mens shed... this has encouraged me to do little projects around the house that I never got the chance to do when I was caring... [It] gets you out and about and chatting and it helps to lift you.”

Figure 3
Strathcarron Hospice Bereavement Team Feedback

Lack of human connections can make adjusting to a bereavement very difficult and when someone feels vulnerable reaching out is hard. In offering emotional support we can only take someone so far if other forms of sustainable support or activities in their life are lacking. It has thus been great to have the option to work with [the BCC] in identifying people who would benefit from being better connected to their communities as they grieve, then hearing about the positive results.

References

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