

The Bereavement Charter Mark for Employers: A pilot in Inverclyde

Rebecca Patterson, Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care

Alison Bunce, Inverclyde Cares

Jennifer Somerville, Child Bereavement UK



What is the Bereavement Charter Mark?

The Bereavement Charter Mark for Employers in Scotland is designed to encourage and support employers to make their workplaces more supportive of bereaved staff.

A pilot was undertaken in Inverclyde to explore whether the new resources were useful to organisations wishing to take practical action to improve employees' experiences of bereavement.

An employer can achieve the Bereavement Charter mark if they agree to meet at least three of the following criteria:



Inform staff about the bereavement charter mark and give them the option to watch a short film about bereavement.



Managers read relevant sections of the Scottish Bereavement Friendly Workplaces Toolkit.



Develop or adopt a Bereavement Policy for the organisation.



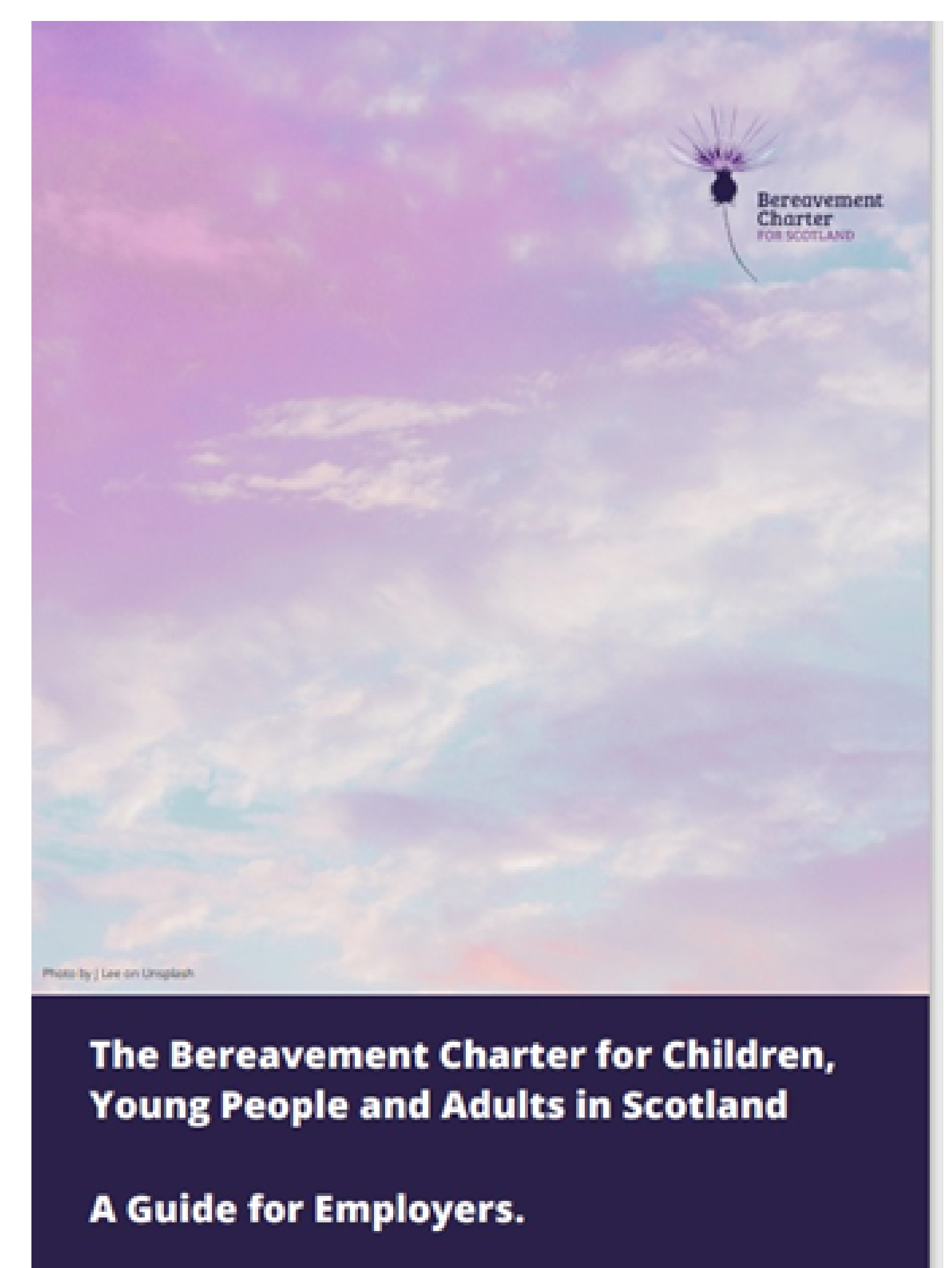
Visibly promote more awareness of bereavement and bereavement support.



Develop and display a local workplace bereavement charter.

Resources to support employers

- The **Employer's Guide to the Bereavement Charter**: introduces the Bereavement Charter for Adults and Children in Scotland, and explains how employers can demonstrate their support.
- The **Bereavement-Friendly Workplaces Toolkit**: contains resources to help both employers and employees to cope with bereavement.
- A **checklist** of steps to take, summarising the various ways that an employer can create a supportive environment.
- A **leaflet** giving tips on the kind of things that a colleague can say or do to show support when someone is bereaved.
- A **film** introducing the Bereavement Charter for Adults and Children in Scotland, and suggests ways that everyone can help create a Scotland where people are supported when they're grieving



BEREAVEMENT-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE CHECKLIST	
Policy	Procedure
<input type="checkbox"/> Does your workplace have a clear, specific bereavement policy?	<input type="checkbox"/> Is there a discreet and sensitive procedure in place for how colleagues can report a bereavement?
<input type="checkbox"/> Is it easily accessed and clearly identified in the staff handbook/website?	<input type="checkbox"/> Have managers been fully briefed or trained in handling a bereavement?
<input type="checkbox"/> Does it specify what the organisation believes is a reasonable amount of bereavement leave?	<input type="checkbox"/> Do you have a procedure for informing team members when someone has been bereaved?
<input type="checkbox"/> Does it allow for discretionary additional leave?	<input type="checkbox"/> Do you have a procedure for managing the person's return to work, including extra support if they need it?
<input type="checkbox"/> Does it offer additional support such as flexible working or staged return to work?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Is it clear who it applies to?	Office culture
<input type="checkbox"/> Has consideration been given to all categories of staff, including casual and contract workers?	<input type="checkbox"/> Have staff been trained/briefed on how to deal with a colleague's bereavement and the importance of a supportive working environment?
Communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Is there quiet space to escape to if needed?
<input type="checkbox"/> Do colleagues know who to speak to in the event of a bereavement?	<input type="checkbox"/> Are staff able to take reasonable time away from their desks or workstations if needed?
<input type="checkbox"/> Is there someone colleagues can talk to instead of a line manager if they feel the need to?	<input type="checkbox"/> Is there capacity to help a bereaved person with their workload?

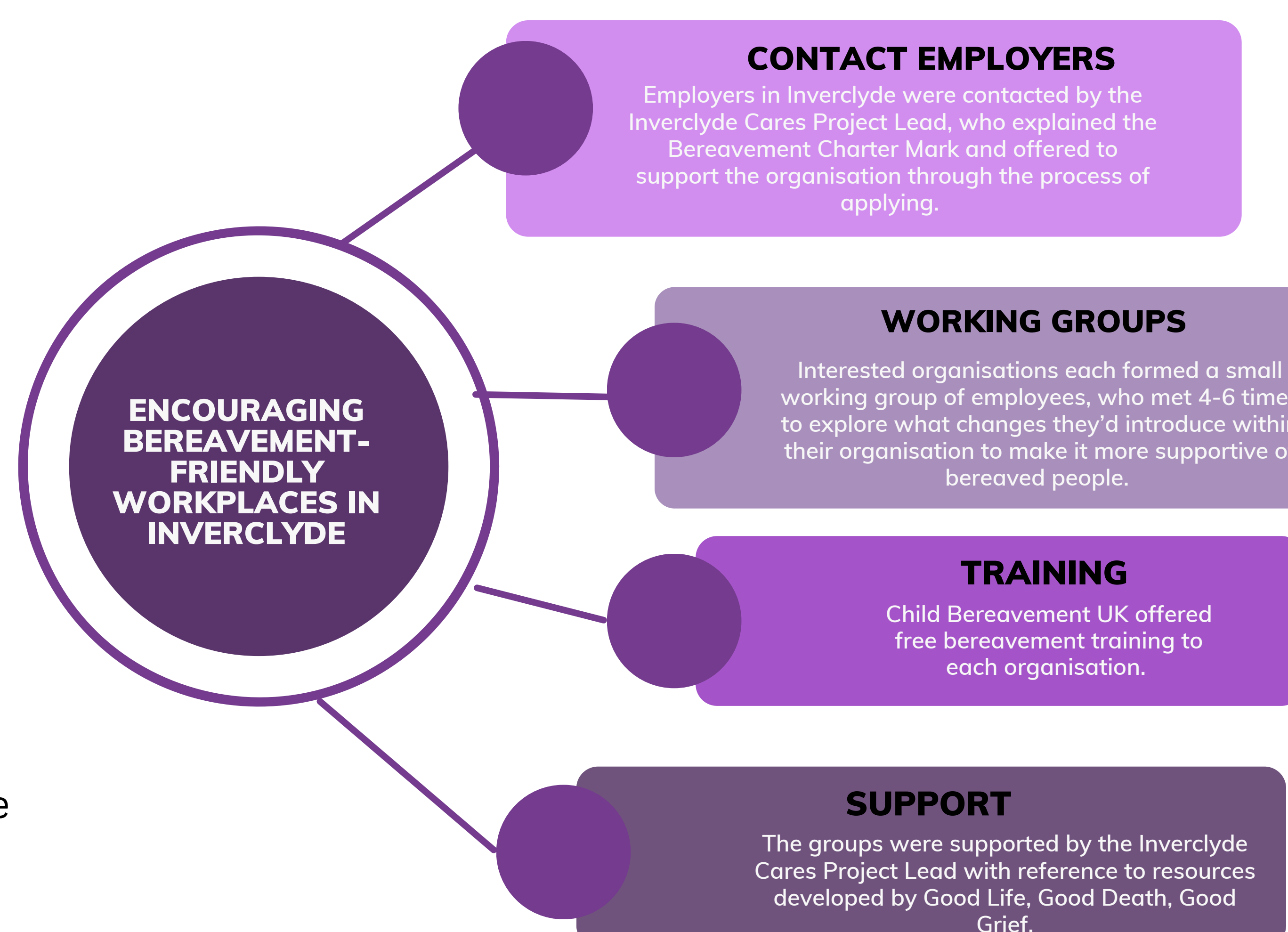
More information about becoming a bereavement friendly workplace at: https://www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk/content/workplace_home/

Results

All the organisations we worked with introduced changes, for example:

- local bereavement charter
- bereavement policy
- 'safe space'
- condolence and back to work form
- staff bereavement training
- bereavement educational film shown to all staff

These five organisations were the first in Scotland to be awarded the Bereavement Charter Mark for Employers.



Discussion

The Bereavement Charter Mark can inspire organisations to undertake positive change.

The accompanying resources can support employees to make practical improvements.

In the pilot, organisations benefited from the support of the Inverclyde Cares Project Lead.

Going forward, it will be important to observe how/if organisations without this dedicated support progress with the Bereavement Charter Mark.

