

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF THE BEREAVEMENT CHARTER MARK FOR WORKPLACES IN SCOTLAND

Cummings S.(UoE), Cavers D. (UoE), Patterson R. (SPPC)



Background

- Bereavement affects almost everyone at some stage in their life, and the effects of grief can impact on people both emotionally and physiologically.
- A public health approach to bereavement care suggests that workplaces can play an important role providing informal bereavement support to staff.
- The Bereavement Charter Mark for Workplaces promotes grief literacy and encourages supportive workplace policies, but it's impact remains underexplored.

Aim and Methodology

- The aim of this study was to explore how adopting the Bereavement Charter Mark for Workplaces has affected how participating organisations in Scotland deal with Bereavement in the workplace.
- Qualitative research was conducted using a phenomenologist theoretical framework and analysed with reflexive thematic analysis.
- 1 informant from each of the 7 participating organizations was interviewed.

Findings

Drawing on the voices of staff and managers findings fall under four core themes :

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND EMOTIONAL REALITIES

- Findings suggest that the process of introducing the Bereavement Charter Mark:
 - Enables staff to talk about their experiences, receive emotional validation and receive support from others.
 - Encourages recognition of a broader spectrum of losses including the deaths of pets and close friends and experiences like a miscarriage.
 - Supported recognition of the unpredictable nature of bereavement and the importance of long-term sensitivity to bereavement.

"I think that it's just about recognising that its ok to talk about bereavement. It's ok to have some of those difficult conversations, and it actually ok, you know, to make it quite a, you know, a visual thing for staff as well as because it is very much a taboo subject, and people really struggle to talk about it."

(F) Human Resources Advisor
Government Agency

LEADERSHIP AND OWNERSHIP

- Senior management support and participation made the implementation process easier.
- Staff leadership and participation was seen as key to the success of the Bereavement Charter Mark implementation.
- Hierarchal governance structures limited changes that could be made to bereavement policies.

"The basic foundations were there, but it did make us realise we had to be collectively a bit more thoughtful on how we support somebody who is dealing with bereavement and make sure we are discussing that."

(M) Locality Services Manager
Non-Profit Organisation

PRACTICAL AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT STRUCTURES

- People found that the implementation of the Bereavement Charter Mark was a straightforward process that enabled a responsive model of support aligned with real-life grief experiences
- Many organizations reported increased empathy, understanding and connections thanks to working-group discussions in the implementation process.

"I think the fact that we had worked as a whole staff team, including some of the management team, on this. That actually worked really, really well, and I think that's what pushed things with the board because they realized that all the staff team had been involved, were very much behind this and recognizing what a difference it would make."

(F) Senior Management
Non- Profit Organisation

SUSTAINABILITY AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

- Many participants wish for the Bereavement Charter Mark to remain active and relevant within organizational culture rather than a one-off initiative .
- The Bereavement Charter Mark was seen as part of an organisational commitment to compassion, kindness and staff-wellbeing.

"I think it's a case of keeping these regular meetings going, or we should all come together. So, if you've given the Mark to other organisations, maybe it's a good idea that we come together and do; you know what things have you put in place? Is there any suggestions that you can give to other companies that may be having difficulties? So, maybe coming together? And discussing you know any improvements or anything, any difficulties?"

(M) Manager
Independent Care Home

Summary and Next Steps

This study indicates that the Bereavement Charter Mark for Workplaces is a practical tool that, given the right engagement and support, can promote changes that can make workplaces more supportive of bereaved staff members. Given the Bereavement Charter Mark's perceived impact further research could explore how to encourage and support more workplaces to adopt the Bereavement Charter Mark, and how this model might be adapted for other settings.



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