

BEREAVEMENT CHARTER MARK FOR WORKPLACES

PROCESS CASE STUDY



A workplace can demonstrate that they are proactively working to support bereaved employees by displaying the Bereavement Charter Mark on their website or within their buildings.

Having the charter mark demonstrates that you are working to make your community a place where people who are bereaved feel supported by the people around them.

The Charter Mark Process

To qualify to display the Charter Mark, a workplace must have met at least *three* of the following criteria:

1. All staff are informed that their workplace is working towards the Bereavement Charter and given an opportunity to watch short films about bereavement.
2. All Managers have read the relevant section of the Scottish Bereavement Friendly Workplaces Toolkit.
3. Senior Management have considered how the organisational bereavement policy can be improved, and made a plan of action to address identified areas for improvement.
4. The organisation, department or team has set out ways that it will visibly promote more awareness of bereavement and bereavement support.
5. The workplace has developed (or is in the process of developing) and displayed a local workplace bereavement charter.

The Case Studies

While the Charter Mark Process has been designed to be accessible and achievable, and workplaces can work towards the various criteria independently, Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care (SPPC) wanted to know more about what challenges a workplace might face and what support might be helpful. They worked with different workplaces to look more closely at the journey towards achieving the Charter Mark, and collaborated with each workplace to produce a case study outlining the steps they took.



Case Study 1: Simba Charity



Simba is a baby loss charity that aims to ensure every family in Scotland receives the support they need following the loss of a baby. Simba supports bereaved families to honour and remember their babies through the provision of Memory Boxes to hospitals and homes across Scotland.

Why did Simba Charity apply for the Bereavement Charter Mark?

Whilst the team at Simba regularly come into contact with people who are bereaved, they wanted to review their offering for staff and volunteers to ensure they were providing a bereavement friendly workplace environment.

They saw the Bereavement Charter Mark process as a good opportunity to bring the team together to review and reflect.

Which criteria did Simba Charity choose to work towards?

The Simba staff felt that all the criteria would have a positive impact on how they experience bereavement in the workplace and that all were achievable. They decided to aim for all five.

THE PROCESS

An in-person workshop was held by SPPC for the full staff team and a Trustee. This included:

- Setting a safe space agreement for the workshop
- An introduction to the bereavement charter and the charter mark process
- An opportunity to get more comfortable talking about death and dying with each other by using a short conversation menu
- An opportunity to share reflections on how workplaces in general could better support bereaved people
- A detailed explanation of the five criteria and a chance to ask any questions
- A commitment to start working towards meeting the criteria by a set deadline

The process was then handed over to the Simba team:

- Simba created a shared action plan to allocate tasks and track progress.
- A second facilitated meeting was held internally to discuss the process and share reflections.
- Ideas for a Simba Bereavement Charter were shared using the tool Menti to allow for anonymity.
- A nominated trustee was involved in the initial workshop and throughout the process and was the liaison between the staff team and the board.
- At regular team meetings, space was created to share reflections on the videos and other aspects of the process.
- A second meeting was held online with SPPC, representative staff and a trustee, to check in on progress, address any challenges and offer support.

ACTIONS TAKEN TO MEET THE CRITERIA



1. The team watched the Bereavement Charter film as a group during the first workshop. The Grief Kind films were shared with staff and trustees via email, and staff were given time to watch them during work hours.



2. The Bereavement Friendly toolkit was shared with senior staff and trustees via email. Documents (bereavement toolkit PDF, updated policy and bereavement charter) were added to BreatheHR and Sharepoint. Line managers were asked to review website resources and look over the documents, identifying any gaps or additional training required.



3. The Chief Executive and senior staff reviewed the current Bereavement Policy and identified areas for improvement. They revised the policy, shared with staff for consultation and sent to the board for approval.



4. Leaflets on how to offer support during a bereavement were left in the workplace. A safe space agreement was drawn up to be displayed in the workplace. Broader bereavement support was added to the website. Bereavement services were promoted within the workplace as well as externally.



5. A staff meeting was used to draft a Simba Bereavement Charter using the tool Menti to allow for anonymity. Suggestions gathered were then used to draft the charter which was shared for approval, before being designed graphically for display in the workplace.

REFLECTIONS

Simba has a small staff team of 8, which meant they could be agile and progress at pace. Reflecting on this, it might take a bit longer in a larger organisation but the principles and process above could still be applied.

The process was initiated and led by the Chief Executive but from the start there was a focus on everyone being involved. Having all staff at the initial workshop was beneficial. It helped everyone feel part of the process and gave them space to share their thoughts. The initial workshop also allowed for questions and reflections which helped to clarify the different criteria and give examples of potential ways forward.

Using a tool like Menti to share ideas anonymously allowed for a more equitable and open discussion when developing the local workplace charter.

Having a trustee involved in the process demonstrated support from the board and allowed trustees to have a say.

During the process, Simba staff found themselves in the situation of offering workplace bereavement support. They reported that having been working towards the Charter Mark they felt better equipped to offer this support.

Top tips from the Simba Team



- Be clear about your reasons for going through the Bereavement Charter Mark and have a commitment to making meaningful change.
- Be prepared to do the work! Whilst simple and straightforward, there was additional work required to update policies and procedures, as well as education and training, all of which takes time.
- Utilise the Charter Mark resources available, these are really useful and help guide conversations.
- Be committed to longer term change, achieving the Charter Mark is only the first step in ensuring bereavement friendly environments exist.



At Simba, we strive to be a bereavement-friendly employer, recognising that losing a loved one is a profound and deeply personal experience. Grief is not linear, and healing takes time. In line with our values, we committed to going on the Bereavement Charter Mark journey, allowing us to better understand our own expectations around bereavement and what we need to have in place as an organisation, both in policy and practice.

Thanks to Caroline from Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care who provided guidance throughout the process in the most sensitive and supportive way. We are delighted to have been awarded the Bereavement Charter Mark, further demonstrating our commitment to developing compassionate, respectful, and flexible environments for employees who are dealing with grief and loss. We strive to ensure our employees feel supported, heard, and valued during bereavement.

