

# 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 2: St John's Hospital ITU



St John's Hospital is a district general hospital in Livingston, West Lothian. The Intensive Therapy/High Dependency Unit provide specialized care for patients in complex or life-threatening situations. The Unit currently has 2 x Senior Charge Nurses, 7 x Deputy Charge Nurses, 29 x B5 nurses, 7 x Clinical Support Workers, 1 x Ward Clerkess.

## Why did SJH ITU apply for the Bereavement Charter Mark?

The staff at SJH ITU work in a high stress environment and regularly deal with challenging cases and situations. While they are used to offering support to patients and relatives, they had not thought as much about what staff were experiencing in their own lives and how that might affect them at work.

They saw the Bereavement Charter Mark as a good opportunity to bring the team together to look at how they could better support each other through difficult times, and to set an example to other wards to do the same. They felt that achieving the Charter Mark would be a huge positive for the team.

## Which criteria did SJH ITU choose to work towards?

As SJH ITU is a unit within a hospital that is part of NHS Lothian, they knew they wouldn't have the opportunity to work on organizational policy, so ruled out #2. However they were keen to aim to achieve the remaining four criteria as they felt the process would benefit staff in the unit.

## THE PROCESS

An session was held by SPPC for Unit staff who attended in person and online. Staff from NHS Lothian Bereavement Services also attended. The session included:

- Setting a safe space agreement
- An introduction to the bereavement charter and the charter mark process
- Watching the Bereavement Charter Animation
- An opportunity to share personal reflections on how workplaces in general could better support bereaved people
- An opportunity to share reflections on the specific challenges of working in this context and what better support might look like
- A detailed explanation of the five criteria and a chance to ask any questions
- Making a commitment to start working towards meeting the criteria by a set deadline

The process was then handed over to the SJH ITU staff members who'd come along to the session.

- The first step was to approach their Clinical Nurse Manager to obtain permission to go ahead and work towards the Charter Mark. They were given 100% support.
- An email asking for volunteers was then sent out and the working group was formed.
- The working group was made up of a mix of staff from the unit including nurses of different levels, support workers and an admin worker.
- Tasks were then allocated among the working group.
- A follow up session was held with SPPC after a few months.

## ACTIONS TAKEN TO MEET THE CRITERIA



1. The working group watched the Bereavement Charter film as a group during the first workshop. That and the Grief Kind films were then shared with all staff via email. The working group also created flyers with QR codes linking to the films, which were posted to each staff member's locker and displayed in the coffee room.



2. Emails were sent with links to the Bereavement-Friendly Workplaces Toolkit to all Management team: Deputy Charge Nurses, Senior Charge Nurses, Lead Consultants. The working group received very positive



3. N/A [As SJHDU is part of the larger organization NHS Lothian it is not in their remit to change policy]

4. A noticeboard in the main unit was used to display the Bereavement Charter and details about the Charter Mark project. They created a unit Instagram account to share details of the project as well as information about bereavement care and support services, and to promote wellbeing.



5. The working group created their own Workplace Bereavement Charter. This included setting up a chill-out zone - a homely place away from the clinical environment where users can spend some private time to reflect and reset. This space features soft lighting, comfortable seating, a speaker to listen to relaxing music, an affirmation tree - where people can post positivity messages to boost the team - and a folder of support in the room, which signposts to NHS Lothian and national support networks

# REFLECTIONS

As they work in critical care, SJH ITU staff experience a lot of stressful situations and sad outcomes. This can take its toll on, especially if they have experienced the loss of a loved one in their personal life. Those that volunteered to be part of the working group found they were very like minded and recognised the importance of feeling supported in the work environment.

Once they advertised the project to the wider ITU MDT, they were really taken aback by the support, encouragement and offers of help received. Working on the project gave them the fantastic opportunity to network with NHS Lothian services, for example the Chaplain and Wellbeing Hub, and to glean some of their knowledge and experience.

As the journey progressed, they found more and more people were naturally getting involved. The unit has lead Wellbeing Nurses whose input was welcomed; similarly the directorate Wellbeing Co-ordinator Christine Fraser.

The group are really proud of achieving affiliation to the Charter Mark and of the work they have done and changes they have made to raise awareness of bereavement and to take steps to try and support each other. They feel it has been a very worthwhile project that will hopefully help to prioritise staff wellbeing. After all, as they ask: 'if we are not at our best, how can we ensure the best possible outcomes for those in our care?'

## Top tips from SJH ITU



- Optimise your working team and divide up tasks - make it manageable
- Sometimes small actions or changes are enough
- Utilise technology – meeting in person can be difficult in busy working environments with different shift patterns, but that doesn't need to hold you up
- Find what works for your unique workplace and people

There is no magic fix for grief but practising kindness, compassion and humanity in our unit goes a long way to building resilience and reaffirming self-worth.

