

## GUIDE FOR MANAGERS: WHEN A COLLEAGUE OR A LONG TERM PATIENT PASSES AWAY

You may experience a team member or a patient you have known for as a team for some time passing away. Sadly this is going to be more common during coronavirus. Here is some guidance around doing this.

### Informing the Team:

- There is no specific guidance. However, once the family has agreed the message can be delivered to staff members.
- You may need to consider how you contact staff who are off work. A phone call to the staff member might be considered.
- This contact will be guided by your relationship with the staff/team member and the particular circumstances of the death and your department.
- Think before you contact them how much information is appropriate to share and how the staff member may react. This may be affected by their illness (if they are off sick).
- It may be helpful for the appropriate line manager to call the member of staff off work and explain they have some difficult information to deliver. It is most likely with current social media and easily accessible contacts that the staff member already knows. However, this may not be the case.
- Offer the staff member a follow up call from you or if they prefer, another team member who they trust. Often teams have contact with each other.

### What staff may express if they have experienced a bereavement

- Longing and sadness.
- Disbelief
- Anger
- feeling overwhelmed
- Unable to concentrate or communicate well.
- Stressed or panicky about things they would normally cope with.
- Jumpy, tense, or restless.
- They may struggle with sleep and eating.
- They may say that no-one understands what they are going through.





# COVID-19

## Supporting your staff

- Enable space for staff to discuss the loss, especially if it is of a shared colleague or patient they have known for some time. However don't force people to talk if they do not want to.
- If you have been given details of any funeral arrangements or memorial then ask the staff member how they would like to receive these.
- You may wish to create a memorial for a colleague.
- Do not avoid someone who has been bereaved.
- Do not use clichés such as 'I understand how you feel'; 'You'll get over it'; 'Time heals'.
- Do not tell them it's time to move on, they should be over it - how long a person needs to grieve is entirely individual.

## Supporting your self

Remember this may affect you too, so give yourself some time and space to do this and have some 'time out' after if needed. During coronavirus Employee Wellbeing has been extended, and there is a management support available to support you when supporting others- contact the Employee Wellbeing Service as below

## When should you be more concerned?

Working through a bereavement takes time, and that differs for individuals. It is a natural process, and should not be rushed, and does not always require counselling. However for some individual grief is more complex and they need support.

### Some signs of this are:

- remaining angry for several weeks
- becoming so low in mood they stop being able to look after themselves, or come to work
- becoming very anxious and on edge
- going over and over things in their minds

## Staff members can get further support from:

- Cardiff and Vale Employee Wellbeing Service  
Employee.wellbeing@wales.nhs.uk  
02920 744 465
- Cruise Bereavement Care: **0808 808 1677**
- **Health For Health Practitioners:** 0800 058 2738

*Alison Scrivens, Lead Counsellor Employee Wellbeing*  
*Julie Highfield, Consultant Clinical Psychologist*  
*With advice adapted from Cruise Bereavement Care*



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