DIGNITY BOXES: QUALITY CARE BEYOND DEATH
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Background Care after death, for both the patient and their family is vital to maintain the same dignity and respect, observed whilst the patient was alive (Wilson, Laverty, Mann et al. Care after death. 2022, 4th ed.). This is something hospices do so well, however, there was one aspect where I felt we fell short of this. I and other nurses felt uncomfortable when returning belongings of loved ones to relatives, in a plastic bag. We felt both patients and relatives deserved a more dignified handover of patient property; herein formed the idea of cardboard dignity boxes. Researching online, I found evidence of relatives sharing the belongings of the deceased with the hospice, to the end.

Aim To introduce a presentation box for patients’ belongings returned to relatives, to maintain dignified care. Method Online research was conducted to source suitable design, with several options sent out to all care team members to vote upon. All options were flat packed to facilitate ease of storage. The team majority chose a tasteful A4 box design with photo frame attachment and printed ribbon seal; this was sent to fundraising to acquire.

Conclusion We will now be able to continue to deliver respectful patient and family care, from the start of their journey with the hospice, to the end.

COMPASSIONATE NEIGHBOURS – SUPPORTING BEREAVEMENT THROUGH MUTUAL CONNECTIONS
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Background Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice has been running a Compassionate Neighbours programme since 2018. Over the past five years, more than 270 people have been trained as Compassionate Neighbours; more than 430 ‘Community Members’ (CMs) have been referred for an introduction; and more than 250 pairs of people have been introduced to each other. Many of our volunteers continue their relationships with extended families or friends of the community member they visited after the death of their community member – which is supported and encouraged where it is wanted – and this is an area we have sought to understand further.

Aims To explore the extent to which Compassionate Neighbours provide elements of informal therapeutic support to those who have been bereaved – an extension to the programme’s focus of supporting those at risk of loneliness/social isolation – and the extent to which this complements our existing bereavement support offer.
Method Focused interviews with: Compassionate Neighbours; People who knew the person who died; Health and social care professionals who refer. Analysis of: programme referral data, and hospice’s EPR (SystmOne) data.

Results The relationship between a Compassionate Neighbour, the person they were connected with and their wider support network can provide a unique way to support bereavement. Evidence of need for less ‘formal’ counselling support for some people. Evidence of appropriate signposting to bereavement services for those who may not otherwise have accessed support.

Conclusion Compassionate Neighbours are in a unique position to provide support due to their personal relationship with the deceased. CNs can be especially effective when referrals target those with pre-bereavement risk assessment needs. Compassionate Neighbours are a resource to increase the hospice’s bereavement capacity. The programme has developed a community-led response to supporting those at the end of life, as well as the recently bereaved.

HOW COMPASSIONATE IS YOUR WORKPLACE?
SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESSES TO BE COMPASSIONATE WORKPLACES
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Background The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted that many organisations needed to review their practices to support their workforce facing loss, grief and bereavement. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development states ‘A compassionate approach is vital to remain connected, mentally healthy, and productive while we battle through the challenges we face at work and beyond’ (The role of compassion in the workplace. 2020). Research highlights the importance of compassion in the workplace following a bereavement to ensure retention of staff and healthy mental wellbeing (Marie Curie, 2021; Hospice UK. Compassionate Employers workplace support [online]). It was recognised that developing training would be beneficial for organisations to support compassion in their workplace.

Aims To develop a training session that engages employers to support and guide their workforce during life’s most difficult moments. To deliver the training to external organisations and businesses. To support a compassionate communities approach to improve end of life care and support to all.

Methods Training was developed using a multi-disciplinary approach, specifically to support and guide local business workforces by:

- Providing a framework to understand loss, grief, and the impact of bereavement.
- Developing empathetic conversations.
- Improving management of staff and colleagues with kindness.
- Promoting compassionate leadership culture.
- Providing resources for policies, wellbeing, and guidance.

Results Training is being delivered to a range of organisations. The responses and feedback provided after attending this has been very positive:

- 100% of participants agreed their understanding of a compassionate approach in the workplace has increased.
- 100% of participants recommended that other organisations attend this training.

Conclusion 85 attendees from at least ten different workplaces have completed the training so far, with the unanimous message that all workplaces should implement a compassionate approach to grief and bereavement. The outcome shows that hospices can effectively influence the workplace culture to become compassionate workplaces.