

Each year in England, over 500,000 carers face the death of the person they were caring for. Preparing for the death of someone close and dealing with its aftermath is one of the most challenging experiences of life, but as with many challenges, it has the capacity to be profound, fulfilling and enriching. For those who were caring for the person, the 'legacies of caring' (Larkin & Milne, 2017) bring extra dimensions to bereavement. Whether the carer felt prepared for the death or not, the physical, mental, financial and social strain of caring can have lasting impacts well beyond the death.

This presentation will share good practice and ideas to improve outcomes for bereaved carers. Some of these are things that can be put in place before the death, to improve outcomes in bereavement. Others are ways of improving support after the death to make it more sensitive to the 'legacies of caring'.

The presentation will set out what we know about carers facing and managing bereavement, and some of the recommendations that have been made to improve support. It will summarise the policy context for supporting former carers as a framework.

Drawing on findings from consultations with former carers and those supporting them, it will lay out a series of six aspirations for local areas and services. If these were in place, we would all be able to say 'we get the right support at the right time, before and after the person we are caring for dies'.

Twelve examples of local good practice in supporting carers facing and following bereavement will be shared.

#### P-246 EVALUATING THE BENEFITS OF MAKE, DO AND MEND

Lynsey Lawson. *St Mary's Hospice, Ulverston, Cumbria*

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**Background** In December 2017 St Mary's Hospice made a successful application to the Masonic Charitable Foundation Hospice Bereavement Care programme. This application shared our hope to develop a 'Make, Do and Mend workshop' following an internal audit of referrals into the service. This audit identified that the number of bereaved women who came forward for care and support from us, far outnumbered men. We wanted to reach out to these 'missing men'.

**Aims** Our project aimed to set up a 'Make, Do and Mend' workshop within our retail warehouse, reaching out to bereaved men and women, those caring for their partner or living with their own life-shortening illness. Workshop participants will work alongside each other on a variety of projects and the essence of the group is not building, but the connections, relationships and support between members.

**Method** The workshop will be led by an experienced retail manager and bereavement staff and volunteers, and will take place in a fully equipped DIY workshop environment. The workshops will run throughout the year on Wednesday and Saturday mornings and participants will be invited to attend eight sessions. Through the use of the Warwick-Edinburgh Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) we will seek to evidence an improvement in participants' wellbeing at the end of the eight week programme.

**Results** Ten workshops have been completed attended by 50 clients (34 men and 16 women). Through the use of the WEMWBS we have identified significant improvements in all 14 areas of the scale as well as clients narratively reporting

improvements such as an 80 year old gentleman stating 'The company and overall community feel of the workshop have helped me greatly. We are all in the same boat and support each another through loss'.

#### P-247 INNOVATION IN BEREAVEMENT CARE – EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF THE HOSPICE ONLINE SUPPORT GROUP

Lynsey Lawson. *St Mary's Hospice, Cumbria, UK*

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**Background** One of the many things that have changed in the digital age is the way we grieve. While the bereaved have traditionally visited graves or burial sites to talk to deceased loved ones, some are now turning to digital spaces to continue their bonds with the dead. Grieving is once again becoming a community practice with online groups offering support and validation for mourners. As a hospice we recognise the emerging need for online support and as a result we have created our online support group.

**Aims** Our online support group aims to create:

- A chance for people to share their grief with other bereaved members without feeling unwelcome or uncomfortable;
- A safe place to post poetry, photographs, journals or articles about their loved one who has died;
- A chance for people to feel less lonely in their grief;
- A place to learn coping skills and the importance of self-care.

**Method** A secure online support group was created in August 2017. Details of the group were shared at initial assessments as well as on the hospice website and on social media in a hope to reach out to the harder to reach groups. The group is supported by trained bereavement volunteers at set times throughout the week.

**Results** The online support group has been established for 22 months and currently has 82 members ageing from early twenties to late eighties. A further development is that the group now meet monthly at the hospice for a coffee evening. Satisfaction surveys have been completed with the group with one member reporting, 'The group just works for me. We are all in the same boat and support one another, especially as weekends which I find extremely difficult at times'.

#### P-248 GRIEF IS AS INDIVIDUAL AS A FINGERPRINT. ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL!

Lynsey Lawson. *St Mary's Hospice, Cumbria, UK*

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**Background** At St Mary's Hospice we recognise grief is unique and individual to the person, but also to each loss. Grieving experiences are unique and can be experienced in different ways. As a hospice we previously adopted the traditional way of formally supporting people who have been bereaved through telephone or face-to-face appointments, however, many people who are bereaved and consider support, choose not to access these traditional services due to their own individual way of grieving and limited alternative support services. As a hospice we recognised it was time to change and develop in line with emerging needs recognising that one size doesn't fit all.