

HR Factsheet: Bereavement Support during COVID-19

1. Introduction

NHS England and NHS Improvement have put together a suite of resources that aim to help all NHS staff access bereavement support during what will be a difficult time for all individuals given the restrictions and changes to normal grieving patterns and processes.

In recognition of this, a selection of bereavement support resources are available to all NHS staff to access.

2. Bereavement support during COVID-19

The resources in this section are available to all NHS staff.

2.1. Bereavement Support Line

There is a confidential bereavement support line, operated by Hospice UK and free to access from **8:00am – 8:00pm**, seven days a week. A team of fully qualified and trained bereavement specialists are available to support you with bereavement and wellbeing issues relating to loss experienced through your work.

You will be offered up to 3 sessions with the same counsellor and onward support to our staff mental health services if you need. **Call: 0300 303 4434.**

2.2. Staff Support Line

During the current pandemic and the increasing pressures on our healthcare system, a national confidential staff support line, operated by the Samaritans, has been launched and is free to access from **7.00am – 11.00pm**, seven days a week. **Call: 0300 131 7000** or **Text: FRONTLINE to 85258** for support 24/7 via text.

2.3. Mental Health Self Help Apps

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with a selection of app suppliers to offer free mental health and wellbeing support to NHS staff during the Covid-19 pandemic. All NHS staff have been given free access to several mental health and wellbeing apps from now until the end of December 2020.

- For mental health self-help: Headspace, Unmind, Daylight, Sleepio and SilverCloud

To access these resources, click here: <https://people.nhs.uk/help/>

3. Losing a Colleague - How to access support

The loss of a colleague will not only affect their family and friends, but also impact their team members and colleagues that they worked with.

A loss of a co-worker can be difficult to cope with. A range of emotions, from sadness, anger and guilt to loss of concentration or motivation, can all be part of the bereavement process. Emotions can be strong and changeable, and they don't always come straight away – sometimes they can occur at a later stage. People grieve in different ways and there is no right or wrong way to react to the death of a

colleague. Many people find it helpful to reach out and talk to someone about their feelings, other may wish to deal with the loss in private.

In addition to the National NHS support mentioned in section 2 above, the following resources are available to all NCL CCG staff:

- a) **Occupational Health** - to access support from Occupational Health, please check with your line manager or through the HR team to arrange a referral.
- b) **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)** - a 24/7 confidential helpline with access to free counselling sessions for staff and their immediate family. Please see further details [here](#).
- c) **Line Manager Support** - if you feel it would be helpful, speak to your line manager about how you are feeling and coping with the unexpected grief. Your line manager will be able to guide you to additional resources that will help you through this difficult time.
- d) **Trade Union or Staffside** - you may already have a relationship with your Staffside representative through other conversations and may feel comfortable talking to them about a recent bereavement. You can contact your Staffside representative through your membership with the union.

4. When you're concerned about a colleague

There is a tragic reality that some of us will have concerns about colleagues at risk of harming themselves or taking their life by suicide. Flags to be aware of include communicating that they are feeling much worse, saying they would 'rather not be here'. You might be aware that they have considered suicide previously or have ideas about how they would kill themselves. It can also be more subtle including appearing restless and agitated, not wanting to talk to people, or not coping with everyday tasks.

It is important to remain calm and not panic.

- If you are worried someone may be in immediate danger, call the emergency services.
- If you are worried about the person but do not think they are in immediate danger encourage them to talk about their feelings and to seek help.
- Asking simple, direct questions can help. This includes asking someone whether they are having suicidal thoughts. Ask open questions, give them time to respond and try not to judge.
- Suggest they call the confidential staff support helpline: 0300 131 7000. You can also call on their behalf.
- Make sure you get support as well. Caring for someone else who is suicidal can be very emotionally draining.
- Remember, it's ok to ask for help.

Grassroots is a charity who aim to prevent suicide through open and direct conversations. Their free app is an [easily accessible suicide prevention resource](#), packed full of useful information to help colleagues stay safe. Colleagues can use it if they are having thoughts of suicide or if you are concerned about someone else who may be considering suicide.

5. Further Resources

We know that managing everyday life in the midst of bereavement, both as an individual and as a line manager or team leader, can be complex and unexpected. NHSE/I have collated extra resources to help you navigate through this difficult time. Everyone grieves differently, especially given the diverse cultural backgrounds of our NHS staff, therefore this range of resources comes in a variety of formats to best support you in your individual situation.

Additional information and resources on understanding bereavement, additional support that is available during bereavement and self-harm awareness is accessible via [the people bereavement support page](#).