Grief and Loss in the workplace

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Paula Kimmel

In today's fast-paced work environment, it's imperative for employers to recognise and address the profound impact of bereavement on their employees' well-being and productivity.  Whilst this sounds wholly sensible, according to the UK Commission on Bereavement, adults (and children) don’t get adequate support after the death of a loved one.  A study by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development confirms this with only 54% of employees reporting awareness of their employer's bereavement policy or their support measures, indicating a significant portion may not be aware.

Dealing with grief and loss goes beyond implementing a bereavement policy. That is why [Prospect Hospice](https://www.linkedin.com/company/prospect-hospice/) has launched a programme to support organisations in dealing with grief and loss in the workplace, delivered by [Gina King](https://www.linkedin.com/in/gina-king-b36a31b3/) with over 37 years of experience of working in end of life care.

The programme helps to establish a culture of openness within an organisation, an environment where individuals feel at ease discussing bereavement and seeking assistance from their managers. Gina said “Death and dying still remains a taboo topic. However, we have it in our power to change that, as the risks of bereavement such as suicidal thoughts or behaviours, alcohol misuse, depression, and loneliness are  too high  a price just because we presumed the person “didn’t want to talk about it”.  The grief and loss in the workplace session explores how we can support other people and ourselves when we have been bereaved and know where to get help, importantly, building our confidence in asking someone who is experiencing loss, how they really are feeling and what support they need.”

The Employment Rights Act 1996 grants limited provisions for time off during emergencies, including bereavement, however the unpredictable nature of grief often exceeds conventional leave durations. Research indicates a necessity for organisations to cultivate resilient and compassionate workplace cultures, recognising the enduring impact of bereavement on employee well-being and long-term organisational success.

To highlight the profound impact of grief, Sue Ryder’s recent report, ‘Grief in the Workplace,’ reveals that, on average, individuals experiencing intense grief take 22 days off within their first six months post-bereavement. This equates to one full working month lost, highlighting the pervasive nature of grief’s influence on professional life. Also, the financial ramifications extend beyond the individual.  The report also suggests that 5% (around 95,000) ‘of those experiencing intense grief leave their jobs after six months’.

At Prospect Hospice we believe that supporting employees through the grieving process is not just a compassionate act but also a strategic investment in maintaining a resilient and empathetic workplace culture.  As articulated by [Sian Johnson](https://www.linkedin.com/in/sian-johnson-a981955/), HR Manager.  Sian said “Bereavement can deeply affect an employee's mental health and ability to perform effectively. Offering comprehensive support measures such as bereavement leave, counselling services, and flexible work arrangements is essential. These initiatives not only demonstrate empathy and understanding but also foster loyalty and trust within the organisation.”

“Prospect Hospice have committed to support staff during difficult times and this is exemplified by our compassionate leave policy, which refrains from categorising or judging the significance of the lost relationship. We recognise and respect diverse responses to death, accommodating cultural and religious practices with sensitivity and inclusivity. Our dedication extends to acknowledging the significance of non-human companionship, as evidenced by our provision of paid bereavement leave for the loss of a beloved pet. Such gestures not only align with our organisational values but also contribute to morale, retention, and ultimately, productivity.”

To further equip employers and leaders in effectively managing bereavement in the workplace, the programme at Prospect Hospice ‘Grief and Loss in the Workplace’ is delivered on-line. In just three hours, the session provides practical strategies and insights for HR managers, team leaders, managing directors, employee assistance program coordinators, or anyone that wants to know more about supporting colleagues to navigate this delicate yet critical aspect of employee well-being, by exploring how we can support other people and ourselves when we have been bereaved.  This session will involve how we can look after ourselves and colleagues better.  Within the session, we will be addressing myths and misconceptions, taboos, knowing where to get help, and building our confidence in asking someone who is experiencing loss, how they really are feeling and what support they need.  To find out more or to book your place contact the Education team by emailing education@prospect-hospice.net’