

Proactive Plans workplaces can make now (Transcript)

When considering bereavement and grief in the workplace, policies and practices are inevitably going to be sought out at a time of disruption and distress, therefore the time to put clear-thinking heads together to develop the necessary resources is before this disruption hits. Workplaces that have well-thought-out practices in place will be well-equipped to also effectively support staff who experience a wide range of trauma and loss.

Whilst most workplaces will have a compassionate leave policy in place, why not have a distinct bereavement policy that directly addresses how you will respond to and support staff members dealing with death and grief? Why not include within that explicit statements around the expected and promoted culture of empathy, support and flexibility in addressing employee's needs? Why not make clear to staff how a bereavement can be reported and how they can choose to keep in touch if taking leave? Why not explicitly state that there is not a set timeframe people are expected to grieve within? Why not include the point that there is no right or wrong decision around when to return to work, and that judgments will not be made about this? The 'A Road Less Lonely' report explains that:

“Colleagues being initially supportive, but then expecting them to have ‘moved on’ was cited as a common detrimental behaviour. Staff feeling unsupported because their relationship with the deceased was not deemed close enough was another concern.”

Could this be directly referenced and addressed in your workplace's bereavement policy? Can all of your staff be involved in the development of the policy to ensure it truly reflects the particular needs of your organisation?

Most people know that there may only be so many days available of paid leave in relation to a bereavement and may rather be more helped by all of these other supportive elements being communicated clearly.