



**Best pandemic
bereavement care –
shared learning**

This guide

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 - No face-to-face
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- Funeral
 - Challenges
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- Bereavement and pastoral care
 - Challenges
 - What has helped
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- Next steps for shared learning



Contributors

- More than 60 people contributed, including:
 - Ministers and celebrants
 - Bereavement counsellors and charities
 - End-of-life services
 - Care homes
 - Wills and probate solicitors
 - Florists
- All from Yorkshire
- All supporting people with bereavement and / or funerals during the 2020 pandemic
- Thank you!

Pre-funeral challenges

- Understanding ever-changing rules
- People not being able to attend the funeral
- Lack of face-to-face interaction with people being supported
- Those who have been bereaved are more isolated and have less community support
- People unable to spend time with the person who has died due to safety concerns
- Administrative tasks (registering death / banks etc) are harder as longstanding systems have changed and people are unavailable



Specific challenges – no face-to-face contact

- Video calls have been enabling but some very important disadvantages include:
 - Hard to establish rapport
 - Hard to deliver pastoral support
 - Hard to articulate empathy
 - Lack of non-verbal cues
 - Risk of being more disinhibited
 - Harder to get meaningful content for tributes and service



What has helped – pre-funeral

- Sharing images about choices and information online and by email (of flowers / coffins etc)
- Tailoring communication method to situation / individual needs (sometimes going to sit in the garden on a stool is what is needed)
- Risk assessing every situation and reacting accordingly
- Consistent use of PPE to keep everyone safe and give confidence (especially if allows some safe face-to-face contact)



Funeral-specific challenges

- Specific rituals / options compromised by restrictions (see next slide)
- Initially no service possible at all and then continuously changing landscape of what is allowed in different locations / at different times
- Service times reduced (and sometimes people are located inside and outside the chapel)
- Lack of reliable Wi-Fi
- Need to engage with audience present physically and online simultaneously
- Hard to be heard outside when people standing far away (socially distancing)
- Some interruptions to flower supplies



What has helped - funeral

- Encouraging pre-funeral, informal online gathering
- Moving seats to bubbles or informal layout
- Adapting traditional service structure to new time and to be less structured and more intimate
- Proactively acknowledging those not present
- Sending script to people not present
- Including condolence card comments in service
- Live-streaming, recording and photographing
- Encourage memorial / thanksgiving services later
- Greater sharing of post-funeral ritual options



Pastoral and bereavement support challenges

- People are suffering loss while they are already struggling with greater stress and anxiety
- People are more isolated and therefore have greater support needs to be met by less people
- Greater concerns about whether basic needs are being met (i.e. do those who are self-isolating have food in the house)
- Harder for people to reintegrate into society after bereavement as usual networks and activities have stopped



What has helped - pastoral and bereavement support

- More proactive support – more regularly checking in, with increased phone contact (rather than email)
- Making more self-care suggestions (such as writing a journal or taking memory walks)
- Focusing on hope / God is the light that will guide us through
- If people were not able to visit the person who died before they died, emphasizing that this is one moment in a long life and focusing on the time that was spent together
- Taking care to validate the pain and trauma of the loss and restrictions



Some positives

- Services can be more intimate and personal and may allow more free expression of emotion
- Family more willing to speak when less concerned about performance / public speaking
- Recordings / photos create keepsake which may be consoling with long-term benefit
- Increased use of technology has enabled many people to engage with funerals and each other where this may otherwise not have been possible
- Developed new skills and resilience around more efficient communication methods
- Less pressure to communicate bereavement immediately as people can not attend
- Florists have strengthened relationship with British growers



Inspiring funeral choices

- Family walking in front of hearse
- Flowers from the garden
- Dancing to a final song
- Streets lined in acknowledgment
- Creative routes to pass important places
- Bubble wands to support children at the funeral
- Take-away miniatures when a toast is not possible
- More sympathy flowers, rather than funeral flowers




What now?

Sorry – busy slide!

- This guide is freely available to all
- Up-to-date information about COVID funeral restrictions is available on our website
- We have arranged training “Bereavement care in a virtual world” with Leeds Bereavement Forum – please sign up if you would like to attend
- Information about bereavement support resources can be found at:<http://lbforum.org.uk/news-and-events/covid-19-useful-bereavement-links-and-resources/>
- Please join the closed Facebook group - Delivering pandemic bereavement care - Yorkshire professionals peer support (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/374374427141029>)



A collection of colorful, knitted items, including socks and hats, displayed on a wooden surface. The items are in various colors like yellow, pink, blue, green, and purple. Some are socks, some are hats, and some are small knitted pouches. They are arranged in a somewhat haphazard manner, with some overlapping. The background is a light-colored wall with a grid pattern.

**Thank you to everyone who contributed –
please don't hesitate to get in touch if
there is anything we can do to help**

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