

BEREAVEMENT  
IN THE WORKPLACE

# Employer's dos and don'ts

As a manager, understanding the challenges a bereaved colleague faces and considering the effect and impact bereavement might have on work is key.

## DO...

- ✓ Be **caring** and **compassionate**.
- ✓ Offer your condolences.
- ✓ Ensure the bereaved employee knows they **don't need come to work** on the day of the death, and that **work comes second**.
- ✓ **Ask** how they would like to stay in contact.
- ✓ **Ask** how much information they want co-workers to know, and if they wish to be contacted by colleagues.
- ✓ **Consider** any family or children who are affected.
- ✓ **Be conscious of diversity**, and accommodate religious beliefs and customs where it is reasonable and practical.
- ✓ Stay in **regular contact**.
- ✓ **Consider what action** to take if the death is in the media.
- ✓ **Discuss with the employee when it is appropriate** to return to work, according to your organisation's bereavement policy.
- ✓ **Consider adjustments** that may be needed, such as a phased return to work or temporary change of duties, location of the employee's work, the business travel requirements and any need to stay away from home for work.
- ✓ On their return, **hold regular reviews** with the bereaved employee.
- ✓ Give the employee appropriate **leaflets and information (see support services below)**.
- ✓ Take bereavement into account if there is an **impact on performance**.
- ✓ **Be aware of changes** in personal circumstances, such as caring responsibilities.
- ✓ **Deal sensitively** with requests for further time off in line with your bereavement policy.
- ✓ **Consider the impact** on other members of the team, and watch out for bullying or harassment.
- ✓ **Be aware** that special dates such as inquests, birthdays and the anniversary of a death may have an impact on your employee.
- ✓ **Remember** that the full impact of a bereavement may not be felt until some time after the death.

# DON'T...

- ✗ Ignore the situation.
- ✗ Assume you know how the bereaved employee is feeling – every bereavement is unique.
- ✗ Say anything that may minimise or undermine the loss, such as 'we all have to go sometime' or 'she had a good innings'.

## Points to consider...

- Grief can lead to short-term loss of efficiency, effectiveness and performance.
- You may want to consider discretionary use of annual leave, unpaid absence or, if appropriate, sickness absence if there is an extreme level of distress and their health is diversely affected.
- Ensure that compassionate leave provisions are known to the employee concerned and to anyone who may have managerial responsibility.
- If it is someone abroad, the employee may need extended time off but it would not be unreasonable to expect the employee to remain in regular contact with work so cover may be planned for them etc.

- ✗ Say anything to make light of bereavement, such as "time will heal", "pull yourself together", or "it must be a great relief for you."
- ✗ Make the assumption that just because they are back at work they are 'over it' and 'back to normal'.

## Support services

### St Catherine's Hospice

Information and support for those facing terminal illness and bereavement in East Surrey and Mid-Sussex.

[www.stch.org.uk](http://www.stch.org.uk)

### Child Bereavement UK

Supports families and educates professionals both when a baby or child of any age dies or is dying, and when a child is facing bereavement.

[www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)

### Cruse Bereavement Care

A bereavement care service.

[www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)

### Hospice UK

Find details of your local hospice.

[www.hospiceuk.org/about-hospice-care/find-a-hospice](http://www.hospiceuk.org/about-hospice-care/find-a-hospice)

### Dying Matters

Raising awareness of dying, death and bereavement.

[www.dyingmatters.org](http://www.dyingmatters.org)

### Citizens Advice

Provides the advice people need for the problems they face.

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

### Acas

Help and advice for employers and employees.

[www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)

### UK Government

The best place to find government services and information.

[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)