

Bereavement charities: *how can they help your funeral business?*

Funeral businesses are one of the first organisations an individual will call after the death of a loved one. Often it is a close family member or friend that will make that call in the hours and days after someone has died, which puts funeral directors in a unique situation.

Depending on the circumstances of the death, the person tasked with organising the funeral is likely to be in a state of shock and in the midst of grief. Planning a funeral can seem like an overwhelming process, made harder if a Will was not left with plans or wishes for their funeral.

Whilst funeral businesses are not designed to provide bereavement support, it can make all the difference for funeral directors and staff to have a good understanding of what grief is and how it can impact someone's life. Whilst we all grieve in our own individual way, there are a few things that they can do to show support and compassion whilst also delivering a first-class funeral service.

This is where bereavement charities can help. Bereavement charities are not only experts at supporting bereaved people, but they are also specialists at equipping businesses and individuals when they come into contact with people who have recently been bereaved. Cruse Bereavement Care offers a host of different training programmes that are designed to support businesses like funeral directors. Here are some of the ways they can help.

Understanding bereavement

There are a number of bereavement theories that can help to give an insight into what someone who has been bereaved may feel. Whilst it is impossible to predict how someone may be feeling in the days, weeks and months after the death of a loved one, having an awareness of grief is important. This will help people

coming into contact with bereaved people be sympathetic and respectful, whilst also delivering an excellent service.

As one of the first businesses a bereaved person will contact, funeral directors have a key role in identifying when a customer may need extra support with their grief. Charities can help funeral directors identify the difference between normal and complicated grief and the signs that suggests they may need some additional help.

Communication

Feeling confident in your ability to communicate effectively and compassionately with bereaved people is essential. There are still many taboos around death and there is awkwardness when it comes to talking to someone who has recently been bereaved. Offering your condolences with empathy and avoiding clichés around death and grief can make a big difference when communicating with people who are grieving.

Booklets and publications

Charities also have excellent resources available to support bereaved people. This information is usually available on their website and can be used within funeral businesses to offer comfort and guidance to customers who may feel they need extra support as they go through this difficult. These resources are invaluable and can contain a range of information, including advice about grief, when to seek support, signposting to organisations that may be able to help them, information about the emotions they may be feeling and stories from other bereaved people.

Find out more about training and courses available on the Cruse Bereavement Care website: www.cruse.org.uk/training. To get in touch call 0208 939 9542 or email training@cruse.org.uk.



Making a difference

Being a bereavement volunteer can be another valuable way of understanding how to support people who are grieving.

The Cruse National Helpline is often the first point of contact for people desperate for support. Last year it took more than 9,000 calls.

Not only is being a bereavement volunteer on the National Helpline incredibly rewarding, the insight and learning gained through this role can also be transferred to the workplace.

This year, Cruse Bereavement Care is marking its 60th anniversary. Cruse is the largest bereavement charity in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and offers bereavement support to adults, young people and children when someone they love dies.

Find out more about becoming a Cruse Bereavement Volunteer by visiting www.cruse.org.uk/volunteer