

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

NAFD ATTENDS LAUNCH OF GOOD GRIEF REPORT

Older people's experiences of partner bereavement

NAFD Immediate Past President Alison Crake and Education Manager Angela Allen recently attended the launch of the Good Grief research report from charity Independent Age, looking at older people's experiences of partner bereavement, how they are affected by the death of a partner, and what needs to change to better support bereaved people.

Keynote speakers at the event were Tracey Crouch MP, the Minister with responsibility for Loneliness, Baroness Rabbi Julia Neuberger, author of *Not Dead Yet* and Janet Morrison, Chief Executive of Independent Age.

NAFD Education Manager Angela Allen said: "Independent Age believes that an important part of this is talking about death, dying and bereavement and removing the stigma or discomfort that often accompanies these topics.

"The charity has an ambitious programme to increase awareness about the impact of Independent Age by 2020 – this directly links to the Government's agenda about reducing loneliness in the UK too – and to enable older people to stay independent and live well with dignity, choice and control."

The charity is working on the expansion of its services and Government campaigning activity to, in effect, achieve the following:-

1. increase support for the most vulnerable and in need tenfold;
2. distribute resources to over one million people annually, by expanding on information services (such as additional guidance);
3. respond to more Helpline queries – the aim is to answer over 100,000 enquiries each year - by extending its information and advice service;

4. double the number of regular visits and calls to lonely older people through its friendship services, as well as piloting new types of services;

5. increase its influence with the Government so that older people get a fairer deal and a say in their welfare by campaigning together with other organisations and supporters.

Of particular interest to NAFD members is information in the report that focuses on the impact of bereavement in later life. The outcomes are categorised under four headings - loneliness and social isolation, mental and physical health, financial and practical considerations and feelings and grief.

Adds Angela: "In terms of promoting community activity, some funeral businesses may be interested in considering extending their aftercare services for local residents, following the death of one partner, to assist in the support of the widow or widower. Perhaps create opportunities where participants can be free to talk to others about any aspect of death they wish?

"Several NAFD members already do this, not only through one-off events such as during Dying Matters Week, but other more regular activities such as the Forget-Me-Not bereavement group at Sinfin Funeral Home, part of Central England Co-operative. A simple drop-in service within the local area may well be worthwhile gently promoting. The longer bereaved people are left after the funeral, in many cases, the more difficult it becomes for them to engage with others, and have the confidence to do so."