



UNIVERSITY OF
LINCOLN

Bereavement Guidelines

Version 3.1 / April 2023

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1. Purpose

This document aims to give Managers the knowledge and understanding of how to support colleagues who have been bereaved.

2. Bereavement experienced by a colleague

Compassionate leave is normally only granted in the case of bereavement in a person's immediate family. Please refer to the Leave of Absence Policy available on the Portal.

Who is to give support?

Support is to be provided by the immediate Line Manager. However, it is recognised that providing support is a demanding process and the immediate Line Manager should seek the personal support of another emotionally mature person with understanding of the bereavement process if necessary.

Support can also be provided by the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), details of which are available on the University portal. Managers can also refer to the Stress in the Workplace Policy for further advice.

In the case of a death of a colleague, it is also important to be aware of the effects of residual grief that Managers themselves may be suffering from, as this may affect the Manager's ability to help the recently bereaved person.

Timescales and help available

Every bereavement is unique and therefore it is not possible to estimate the time it will take to go through the mourning process. When someone close is lost the overwhelming grief suffered in the beginning may ease after a few days / week but the full process can take months and even years. The signs of progress are when the mourner experiences increasing periods of feeling normal.

If after a few weeks the mourner still appears to be overwhelmed by extreme grief, help could be sought from the EAP helpline or the family doctor.

Work

On a practical level the University needs to be sympathetic to the need for additional time off work, not only the funeral but the legal aftermath of death. The amount of time needed will vary according to the closeness of the relationship between the deceased and the employee. See Leave of Absence Policy.

Safety

As the levels of stress and tiredness are affected by bereavement it is important to ensure colleagues' safety if operating machinery or driving and avoidance in the early weeks of intensive or concentrated work, also awareness that people can be clumsy and accident prone. Some relatively easy, undemanding work could ease colleagues back in. Further information on safety and the bereaved can be gained from the University's Health and Safety Department.

3. Death of a colleague

Contact and essential procedural matters

Either the Line Manager or a close colleague should make initial contact with the family within the first few days of the bereavement although requests for privacy must be respected. This is possibly the first opportunity the Line Manager or close colleague will have to talk with the bereaved and is an important part of the healing process. The Line Manager or close colleague should obtain answers to the following fundamental questions:

1. The family's wishes regarding the funeral arrangements
2. If colleagues' attendance would be welcomed
3. Whether donations to a charity in lieu of flowers would be preferred
4. Practical details regarding location, date and time of the funeral and memorial service

The Line Manager should inform the Department of People, Performance and Culture (PPC) who will then deal with any payroll and pension implications.

Correspondence

Condolences should be sent as soon as possible, both from the colleagues' Department and a letter will be sent from the Vice-Chancellor's office. Other departments who have worked closely with the colleague may also wish to write to the family.

Funeral attendance

Following agreement with the family of the deceased there may be departmental and PPC representation in addition to colleagues wishing to pay their last respects.

Unless requested otherwise, attendance at the funeral should be encouraged. This has been found to provide comfort to the close relatives and arrangements should be made to enable all staff who wish to attend to be able to do so.

Committees

Acknowledgement should be made at any future committees highlighting valuable contribution for work previously completed and the loss of respected friend and colleague.

4. Terminal Illness

A colleague with a potentially terminal illness has different needs including the need for effective pain relief and care (both emotional and practical) as well as financial concerns. Another is the need for time with loved ones. The Line Manager should regard it as their responsibility to see if these needs are being met. A flexible approach to leave entitlement can be crucial to the person who is ill and the family. A referral to the University's Occupational Health Adviser is recommended.

The colleague's illness should be acknowledged frequently with empathy and discretion if the colleague requires this. The colleague will feel comforted to know the University remains committed to the welfare of staff and their families particularly in such circumstances and also reassured that it understands and accepts that work effectiveness may be affected.

The Line Manager must ask questions with regard to medication which may influence duties requested to perform, particularly if machinery is involved. Tasks which require concentration and creative thought may prove difficult and should be avoided to minimise stress whilst tact must be applied so that the colleague feels they are contributing.

Whilst the Line Manager is advised to keep regular informal meetings to see how the colleague and illness is progressing, they must ensure that confidentiality is respected and clarify what information, if any, is to be released to other members of staff.

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Owner	Last Reviewed
Operations	April 2023



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