




## **Bereavement and bereavement care research at The Robert Gordon University**


Since 2005 BRIGG members from The Robert Gordon University have been involved in the development of a bereavement and bereavement care research theme. The work has been established through the Joanna Briggs Collaborating Centre based at the university.

Two initial projects were undertaken. These were commissioned and funded by The Scottish Executive Health Department, NHS Quality Improvement Scotland and NHS Education for Scotland. You can see the project reports below.

2005 Literature Review on Bereavement and Bereavement Care (Phase 1)  [Literature Review - Bereavement Care](#)

 [Literature Review - Bereavement Care Executive Summary](#)

2006 Bereavement and Bereavement Care: Consultation and Mapping of Practice (Phase 2)  [Consultation and Mapping - Full Report](#)

 [Consultation and Mapping - Summary Report](#)

13 key messages which cover bereavement care before, during and after death were identified from the literature review.

- 1. Grief is a normal process.**
- 2. A compassionate approach to all procedures and processes surrounding death can impact positively on bereavement. The involvement of relatives and families is essential.**
- 3. Risk factors for abnormal responses are amenable to assessment.**
- 4. Interventions should be tailored to need. Specific groups of bereaved may require different forms of intervention.**
- 5. Follow-up has been identified as important, particularly by the bereaved.**
- 6. There are a range of information needs that need to be addressed at local and national levels.**
- 7. There are 'hidden' socio economic factors, particularly for some groups of bereaved that need to be considered.**

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| <p><b>8. Cultural and spiritual factors, including issues of stigma need to be incorporated into all areas of bereavement care.</b></p> <p><b>9. A co-ordinated approach to bereavement and bereavement care that cuts across statutory and voluntary agencies is required.</b></p> <p><b>10. Standards, policies and guidelines for Bereavement Care should be considered in all settings.</b></p> <p><b>11. Education for health and social care professionals is identified as in need of development.</b></p> <p><b>12. Research into bereavement and bereavement care is particularly difficult but essential in developing services.</b></p> <p><b>13. Establishing a <i>Centre for Bereavement Care</i> may provide a focal point for developing research, education and practice in Scotland.</b></p> |
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The second phase of work was developed to prioritise the messages and identify gaps between these and current practice. It was also an opportunity to explore current practice. 59 practitioners were interviewed.

Top 3 ranked key messages:

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| <b>1. Education for health and social care professionals is identified as in need of development.</b>  |
| <b>2. A compassionate approach to all procedures and processes surrounding death can impact positively on bereavement. The involvement of relatives and families is essential.</b> |
| <b>3. Grief is a normal process.</b>   |

Nine key themes were identified from the interview study that described current practice.

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| <b>1. The impact of bereavement and bereavement care in Scotland</b> |
| <b>2. The level of expertise and enthusiasm</b>                      |
| <b>3. Equitable service provision</b>                                |
| <b>4. Awareness of the impact of grief, loss and bereavement</b>     |
| <b>5. Range and type of approaches to bereavement care</b>           |
| <b>6. Co-ordination and Communication</b>                            |
| <b>7. Follow up for the bereaved</b>                                 |
| <b>8. Guidance</b>   |
| <b>9. Professional educational needs</b>                             |

Considerable involvement with bereavement and bereavement care was found across the sectors in Scotland though evidence of effectiveness is limited.

Additionally, Phase 2 involved a facilitated meeting that used 'World Café' and 'Open Space' approaches to determine how the findings of the research could be used to shape future policy and practice. 84 selected delegates attended. Six key areas were identified for action:

<b>1. Encouraging culture change along the lifespan</b>
<b>2. Professional education and training</b>
<b>3. A national framework for bereavement care</b>
<b>4. Intervening in schools</b>
<b>5. Research</b>
<b>6. Information and coordination</b>

Common themes emerged through all phases of the research and it is feasible that the issues raised could begin to be addressed through national and local evidence based policy. The results of the research are being used by the funding bodies to influence the development of bereavement care policy through the Scottish Executive.

## **New developments**

Bereavement and bereavement care research is set to continue at RGU. We are pleased to announce that BRIGG member, Audrey Stephen, has been awarded a Research Training Fellowship by the Chief Scientist Office (CSO). Among other things, Audrey will be carrying out research into bereavement care for older people who have contact with NHS services. The aims of her project are:

<b>1. To explore current service provision for bereaved older people who use NHS services.</b>
<b>2. To develop a protocol for practice that will enable effective case management and communication about bereaved individuals across the sectors.</b>
<b>3. To develop an intervention programme that includes the protocol.</b>

Initially an interview study will take place with staff in selected areas and a sample of bereaved people. Interview data will be used to develop a suitable protocol. The fellowship will begin in September 2007.

## **Links**

[The Robert Gordon University](#)  
[Joanna Briggs Collaborating Centre](#)  
[The Chief Scientist Office](#)