Bereavement Café
More with less in bereavement support

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Aim
To extend the Hospice’s bereavement support to more people across its care area by building a network of collaborative partnerships between the Hospice and community/faith groups.

Background
Bereavement support is well-established within the culture of palliative care. However, while the need for good quality bereavement support is exponential, a hospice’s ability to address this need is limited. The Commission into the Future of Hospice Care has identified that hospices need to develop partnership collaborations in order to extend the care they provide (Calanzani, Higginson and Gomes 2013). Partnering with volunteer community/faith groups suggests an opportunity to extend bereavement support beyond what a hospice might hope to achieve alone. It also furthers the goal of building compassionate communities (Kellehear 2005).

Conclusion
Currently, there are nine Cafés operating across the Hospice care area, with several more in the planning stage. The model has proved replicable and sustainable, and is achieving the Hospice’s ambition of expanding its bereavement support to more people.

Methods
Through its chaplain, Princess Alice Hospice partnered with three community/faith groups that had expressed interest in offering support to bereaved people. The partnership involved setting up a Bereavement Café in each local community. The groups agreed to provide the venue, volunteers to staff the Bereavement Café and modest refreshments; the Hospice committed to offer a two-day training course, publicity materials, guidance on setting up and running the Café, and ongoing support and mentoring through the first year.

Results
Initial meetings were held in March 2016 and a two-day training course delivered in June. The first two Cafés opened on a once-monthly basis in October 2016, each opening for up to 90 minutes, starting at different times and on different days of the week in order to maximise coverage. The Cafés welcome any bereaved person (regardless of their previous involvement with the Hospice).

Average attendance is 4–8 people per session. The Hospice provides regular supervision for Café volunteers through a short debrief after the Café has closed. The partnerships require no financial commitment from the community/faith groups.

Two-day Training Programme
The interactive and experiential training includes:

- thinking about bereavement and loss (theories of grief)
- case studies
- active listening
- mapping a family’s loss and grief (family ‘sculpt’)
- boundaries and self-care
- dealing with difficult situations

“Everyone is welcomed on arrival and offered a seat next to another member or a volunteer”

“The volunteers use cards with words or sentences such as ‘Loss’ or ‘Money’ or ‘People avoid me’. No one is forced to talk.”