

Compton Care

specialist palliative and bereavement support

EXTENDING BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT BEYOND HOSPICE CARE: A COMMUNITY WALK AND TALK MODEL

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BACKGROUND

Bereavement support provided by hospices is often highly valued and accessible to patients and families already known to services. However, this can unintentionally create an inequity, where individuals without prior hospice involvement may have limited access to structured support. More widely, evidence highlights ongoing inequalities in access to palliative and bereavement care, particularly for socially excluded or underserved groups.[1]

At the same time, there is growing recognition of the therapeutic value of outdoor spaces. Time spent in nature, combined with social connection, is associated with improved wellbeing, reduced stress, and decreased isolation.[2, 3]

SERVICE INNOVATION

In response, Compton Care developed a "Walk and Talk" bereavement offer at Wightwick Manor, a National Trust historic house and gardens in Wolverhampton, just outside the city centre, designed specifically for individuals not previously known to hospice services.

The model provides a low-threshold, community-based alternative to traditional bereavement support, with no referral required.

The approach is intentionally informal - people walk side by side, at their own pace, supported by facilitators, with space for conversation or quiet reflection. By moving support into a public, familiar setting, the service reduces perceived barriers and stigma associated with hospice-based provision.

WHY THE NATIONAL TRUST?

The National Trust partnership offers more than just a place to walk.

Its peaceful, protected surroundings provide greater privacy than a typical public park, creating a safe space for people to connect and reflect at their own pace.

Participants can walk, pause, sit and talk, or take time for personal reflection before rejoining the group when they feel ready.

With beautiful gardens and spaces to pause, the setting creates a flexible, welcoming and low-pressure environment for bereavement support.

- Open to any member of the public bereaved within the last five years – no previous connection to Compton Care required.
- Participants can walk, talk, pause or sit and reflect, taking the session at their own pace with no pressure.
- Guided by specialist Counselling and Support team, allowing time for individual support or to step away from the group.
- The natural surroundings provide a safe, informal and less clinical environment for accessing bereavement support.

> *"It was nice to meet people in a similar position."*

IMPACT

Early feedback indicates that this model supports engagement from people who may not otherwise access bereavement services. The outdoor setting helps create a calmer, less clinical environment, making it easier for individuals to talk openly and connect with others who have similar experiences.

Walking together has been shown to ease loneliness and enable more natural conversation, while nature supports emotional regulation and presence.

3.17 → 4.17

Average wellbeing score out of 5, before and after the session



> *"Good event, no pressure of any sort. Look forward to the next one."*

CONCLUSION

This model demonstrates a practical approach to widening access to bereavement support by meeting people where they are – both geographically and emotionally.

By complementing existing hospice services with an inclusive, community-based offer, "Walk and Talk" helps address inequalities in access while making better use of the therapeutic benefits of outdoor spaces.

83% of respondents finished the session rating how they felt 4 or 5 out of 5



IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Simple, low-cost, nature-based interventions can extend the reach of hospice care, promote earlier engagement, and support a more equitable approach to bereavement support across communities.

> *"This has helped me with my grief"*

[1] sueryder.org, [2] england.nhs.uk, [3] psychreg.org