

# *Attitudes and Experiences Towards Setting up a Bibliotherapy Service For the Bereavement Support Service*



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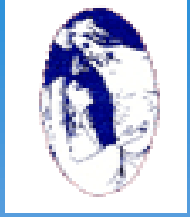
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# Milford Care Centre



- Founded in 1923 by the Little Company of Mary
- Milford Hospice (Specialist In-Patient and Community Based Palliative Care Services)
- Milford Day Care Centre (Older People / Palliative Care)
- Milford Nursing Home
- Mid West Ireland, a population of 378,410

# Bereavement Support Service

- Anyone who has a bereavement can seek support
- One-to-one
- Group support – parents, partners, teenagers, adult children, children
- Social Workers, bereavement support volunteers



# Grief

- Responses to grief may be emotional such as fear, guilt, anxiety, depression and anger; physical such as weight loss or gain, insomnia and increased risk of illness; behavioural and spiritual.
- Death of a spouse ranks first out of 43 stressful events Social Readjustment Rating Scale (Holmes & Holmes, 1970), which was designed to measure cumulative stress over a given period of time.

# Bibliotherapy

- Guided use of reading, always with a therapeutic outcome in mind” (Katz & Watt 1992) or “therapeutic use of reading material”
- Books used can be fiction, or non-fiction, poetry or self-help
- Bibliotherapy used alone, groups or in conjunction with other therapies



- **National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE)** Guidelines have shown that Bibliotherapy is effective in the early stages of stepped care programmes for anxiety and depression and for alleviating mild or moderate psychological distress (NICE 2004)

# To date:

- Literature has been used to support the work of the bereavement service in an unstructured way



# Aim

- Formalise and evaluate the use of literature by the bereavement support service within the concept of a structured bibliotherapy framework





# Qualitative Research

## SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

- Social workers (n= 5) – usually involved in one-to-one support

## FOCUS GROUP

- Bereavement support volunteers (n=5) – usually involved with group support

# Awareness of bibliotherapy

- Three social workers had heard of the word bibliotherapy
- One participant mentioned a book that she had read “Bibliotherapy for bereaved children”
- One participant had worked with an art therapist who used stories with children
- Two social workers had not heard of the word
- BSV had not heard of the word but that they had used bibliotherapy and recommended books to bereaved clients

# What experiences have you had so far?

- All of the participants had experience of using literature such as leaflets & pamphlets for bereavement from Cruse
- *“They’re easy reading I suppose and they synopsise things for people”*
- Some participants said they used it as “standard practice” a lot of the time or as the need arises
- *BSV: “I don’t think I’ve ever in a group situation said I think it would be good for people to read x,y,z books..which now that I think of it - I wonder about because I think reading can have many benefits.”*

# Comments

- *“It is good to give them something in writing as well as having a session.... To take away with them even if they don't read it straight away, they can go back to it...so I would use it quite a bit really in terms of bereavement work”*

# How do you decide when and with whom to use it?



- Participants explained that it depends on the individual situation
- Participants generally know from their own assessment whether it would be beneficial
- Can assist with normalization around grief
- Where an appointment with a social worker is not possible for awhile, sending out literature might provide a bridge
- If someone wasn't open to engaging in one-to-one direct support

# How do you decide what books or literature to use?



- Usually depended on what material was available in the Social Work Department
- Some searched for additional material on the internet that are freely available
- Importance of material that is suitable and specific to the need of the individual
- Academic ability of the person, their relationship to the person who had died, their experience of it and how they want to come at it

# What responses have you had with those whom you have used it?

- Reactions to bibliotherapy had been mixed but overall it was positive
- Can be difficult to know people's response to it sometimes
- Positive response: It can reduce people's sense of isolation and that a lot of people have the same feelings as them
- Negative effect: The opposite could be true. It may reinforce their sense of isolation further.

*"The negative has been that people feel that it doesn't really reflect their experience, it's the opposite effect. they feel there the only ones who feel that particular way."*

# What do you feel the benefits of bibliotherapy have been?

- Reassurance for people that what they are feeling is normal
- It allows people “to do for themselves”
- Less dependent on others for support
- Allows people to do use it in the privacy of their own home and in their own time
- People have more control over whether they take it on board and when
- Could be considered more objective when it is written down



# Do you think it would be beneficial in a bereavement support service ?

- All of the participants said it would be beneficial in bereavement support
- It can compliment other therapies

*“Some people aren’t open to one-to-one support..they just don’t want to go there..in that way bibliotherapy could be useful..they could get a bit of support from the literature”*

*“Looking for the more specific stuff is an ongoing thing”*

# Are there any barriers to it's implementation or use?

- Whether to loan books and the process for borrowing
- Who should ask for them back
- Difficulty getting books back
- Literacy
- Some people don't like reading
- Books might be written too theoretical/ academic, small print, no pictures- might be off-putting for some people

# Recommendations

- Books
  - “Tuesdays with Morrie” By Mitch Albom
  - Cruse leaflets
  - Grieving. A beginner’s guide. By J McCormack
- Specific books for people who have lost someone through suicide, on losing a grandparent, losing a same sex partner
- Translations of a generic leaflet “After the death of someone close” to other languages such as Polish
- CDs or DVDs
- Enable bereaved people to recommend books that they found useful to them

# Comment

*One booklet I gave to a woman recently was around communicating with her children around the suicide of her husband. She got quite hurt or offended by the advice that was been given in it .....in that the advice was to be open with your children...now this lady had been very open with them but she obviously felt she needed to be more open again and that it wasn't appropriate and they were too young....but when we discussed it she understood it...but I think she misinterpreted it a little bit...her feedback was quite negative around it.*

# Comment

*There was one lady who I gave an Irish Hospice foundation leaflet- "Coping with grief at Christmas". I gave it to a number of people. This lady came back to me and said she kept it under her pillow and read it every night going to bed. She got so much out of it.*

# Comment

*What I would find is that a lot of people come back and say I was finding it hard to find someone who knew what I was talking about but when I read the booklet, it showed me the feelings were normal....that I wasn't going mad cause, sometimes when people are grieving, they can be afraid they're losing their mind nearly, they're so distraught so it helps that as well*

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Go raibh maith agat  
Teşekkürler  
Thank you

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# Libraries

“Healing place of the soul”

Inscription above ancient Library at Thebes

