



HR teams ‘struggling to deal with workplace bereavement’

Annie Makoff 10 Jan 2017  4 comments

Lack of policies and procedures highlighted as a concern; employees with terminal illnesses also lack support

Almost half of HR departments struggle to manage the impact of bereavement in the workplace, new research has revealed.

According to the study by MetLife Employee Benefits, 13 per cent of HR professionals said they had been required to manage the aftermath of an employee's death over the past two years, while 31 per cent provided support for staff coping with family bereavement.

Yet 45 per cent admitted they did not have agreed policies in place to deal with workplace bereavement, and almost two-thirds (64 per cent) said they did not have procedures for supporting

HR Jobs

[Learning & Development Manager - Business Services Department](#)

Leigh Day | Competitive

[Executive Director of HR & Organisational Development](#)

Bournemouth and Poole College | £65,000 – £70,000 plus excellent benefits

[View all PM Jobs](#)



Advertisement: open in new window

employees living with a terminal illness.

Katrina Pritchard, senior lecturer in organisation studies in the Department for People and Organisations at the Open University, told People Management: “HR departments have traditionally focused on childcare rather than caring across the lifetime. It’s been a neglected area but, now that the ageing population is drawing attention to caring responsibilities and how they have an impact in the workplace, it’s starting to come to light.

“There are organisations that have campaigned for this sort of attention for a long time, but maybe now more more thought is being given to ageing and terminal illness and that will lead HR leaders to look at it more seriously.”

Despite the lack of procedures in place to manage the impact of workplace bereavement, the research also found that the majority of HR departments recognised the importance of providing support, with 92 per cent already offering flexible working to staff suffering a bereavement, 24 per cent providing access to bereavement helplines and 13 per cent offering face-to-face counselling.

In addition, two out of five were currently considering bereavement training for line managers and a third were considering introducing specialist support services.

Tom Gaynor, employee benefits director at MetLife UK, said: “Bereavement is sadly something that will affect most employees and companies need to have agreed procedures in place to ensure staff and their families have support when they need it. Companies clearly want to be supportive and sympathetic, but it is surprising that so many do not have clear policies and procedures in place for bereavement in the workplace. HR departments recognise it is an issue but need support in addressing it.”

The issue of bereavement hit the headlines last year, after [campaigners lobbied for parents who lost a child under the age of 18 to receive two weeks’ statutory leave](#). At present, there is no requirement for any employee to receive time off following a bereavement, just ‘reasonable’ absence to cover an emergency, which is normally taken to include a family death or serious illness. The bill has received two readings in parliament and is likely to become law in the near future.

CIPD in HR Management Level 5 100% online

Complete in 4 to 24 months.

Find out more



Latest Posts

[Four in 10 workers believe they will never be able to retire](#)

9 hours ago

[BBC employee dubbed ‘shih tzu’ by manager, tribunal hears](#)

9 hours ago

[Opinion: HR is letting itself down by failing to combat the gender...](#)

11 hours ago

[Gearing up for the gig economy](#)

12 hours ago

[Most employers plan to enrol graduates in apprenticeship schemes,...](#)

1 day ago

Tweet



Share



in Share

137

Add Comment

Enter your comment below, or [Log in to your CIPD account](#) to use your saved details

Name

Email

Comment

Post Categories

[Brexit \(60\)](#)
[Corporate strategy \(3910\)](#)
[Diversity and equality \(2278\)](#)
[Employee Relations \(3029\)](#)
[Employment Law \(4337\)](#)
[Health safety and well-being \(908\)](#)
[HR function \(1185\)](#)
[Learning and Development \(3035\)](#)
[Management and business skills \(573\)](#)
[Performance management \(477\)](#)
[Recruitment \(1879\)](#)
[Reward management \(1726\)](#)
[Talent Management \(1344\)](#)
[Unassigned \(2778\)](#)

Join People Management

Tweet



Share



in

Share

137



Advertisement: open in new window

☐ I have read and accepted the [terms and conditions](#)

These comments are moderated. Your comment, if approved, may not appear immediately.

Post

Comment List

Comments (4)



Janet

23 days ago

Great article and perhaps time to look a a wide range of policies to provide help and support to those who most need it.

feedback



Kim

25 days ago

It was pointed out to me today by an associate that their company leave policies allow more time off on full pay for charity volunteering than they do for bereavement, compassionate or carer's leave.

How does that work??

I am all for giving back for the greater good, but strikes me that policies like this lack the very empathy and support ethic for employees that they are meant to exemplify.



Ian Scott

26 days ago

Legislation cannot replace common sense and a flexible approach when dealing with this most Human of Human Resources issue.



Tarik Altoubasi

28 days ago

It shouldn't be an impossible procedure to achieve, having it, among other benefits and interactions with efficiency, will build on employees attachment and work/life balance. Organizations needs to be initiative whenever the law lacks bereavement support (though baselines are required), as it is a critical point that is associated with emergency situations.

Management training is a positive step, but internal procedure in place will empower HR / employees engagement, and provide structured support to employees when they need it, on the other end.. if management was not on supportive side, then reference to procedure will be helpful.

Thanks Annie for the topic

Related Content



[Campaign for paid compassionate leave for bereaved parents](#)

3 months ago

1



[Handling Death and Bereavement at Work](#)

over 11 years ago

0



[Mental block](#)

over 17 years ago

0



[Government urged to consider statutory paid leave for bereaved staff](#)

over 3 years ago

3



[Better line managers help bring down sickness absence, CIPD reports](#)

over 2 years ago

0

[View More](#)



Email to a colleague



Share



Discuss



Print

New to HR and L&D

Learn, Develop & Connect

Knowledge hub

News & Views

About us

CIPD Bookshop

CIPD Training

Conferences and events

CIPD Community

Become a member

Membership fees

Rejoin CIPD membership

My membership

Progress your membership

Contact us

Media centre

Terms and conditions

Privacy policy

[CIPD People Management Awards](#)


[Cookie policy](#)

[CIPD Recruitment Marketing Awards](#)

[Social bookmarks](#)

People Management

PM Jobs

Cookies on this website We use cookies on our website to ensure we give you the best experience. Continue to use this site,  or click close if you are happy with that, or find out how to manage cookies

What are cookies? [Learn more](#)