

Larkfield View Care Home

Circles of Care

A Reflection; John Eden, Independent Sector Lead,
Scottish Care, Inverclyde HSCP



“I did not anticipate that the visit would turn out to be such a memorable, moving and profoundly humbling experience.”

As the newly appointed Independent Sector Lead for Inverclyde HSCP, it was a privilege to be invited to meet with Elsie MacLennan, the Care Home Manager at Larkfield View Care Centre. I wanted to learn more about good practices in palliative care that are carried out in the home. I did not anticipate that it would turn out to be such a memorable, moving and profoundly humbling experience.

Death and dying remain a difficult subject to talk about and yet are a part of life that touches us all. It may feel that admission to a care home is a step nearer to the end of someone's life, but people do not come to care homes to die, rather, as Elsie told us, 'to live until they are ready to die.' Care homes must celebrate life while at the same time helping the people who live there and their families to plan for a good death. A crucial part of that preparation is open communication.

CIRCLES OF CARE - A REFLECTION



Good care starts with a conversation

Elsie told me about two residents who had recently died around the same time. She told us about having conversations with the residents soon after they were admitted, in which they discussed what each person would want in the event of their death. She described how anxious one family was at the time of admission to what was, for them, an unknown care home.

However, it didn't take long for the person and their family's worries to be transformed into confidence in the skill, compassion and care of Elsie and her team.



Family and friends

During the days that led up to the death of both residents, their respective families got to know one another. Elsie shared with us the immense mutual support they enjoyed, the humour, and the day-by-day sharing of the latest news about their respective family members. I was struck by how the team at Larkfield View felt so much like a large extended family and one where there is a great deal of love.



Commitment to the end!

Elsie told us about staff who had attended the funeral and received the most heartfelt and humbling gratitude for the quality of care they had provided. There can be no greater measure of the lasting impact that the team at Larkfield View had on the lives of those they have cared for and their loved ones.

CIRCLES OF CARE - A REFLECTION



Demonstrating Leadership

When I asked Elsie what she thought was important in building a successful approach to caring for people through the dying process, she was quick to say that leadership is important. Leaders must show their staff, not only in the way they care for people living in care homes, but in the way they care for their staff, underpinned with the values of the care home.

Bereavement Champion

To be able to understand the difficulties associated with Palliative and End of Life Care, it is important for the full team to be offered education and support. Aligning to Scotland's Bereavement Charter, Larkfield have developed a Bereavement Champion whose role it is to support and promote bereavement excellence.

Creating a new space

Elsie asked staff if they would welcome a space to talk about the losses they had experienced: their own and the people they cared for. In response, Elsie established 'Circles', which is a space for people to get together to discuss death and bereavement. This was warmly received by staff.

Elsie made time for team members who wished to participate, and they sat together in an informal space with some delicious cakes, handmade by the chef, and a warm beverage. It was a quiet space for staff to talk and receive comfort, to reflect and share stories about the person who had died.

It is very rare for staff to have an opportunity like this, to have an open and supportive conversation with their peers about death and bereavement. Death has a ripple effect that touches everyone. The staff who have formed close relationships with the people they care for are no exception.

The plan going forward is to move the group to a venue outside of Larkfield View to create a space free from the inevitable interruptions of a busy care home.



“Larkfield View is a community who support people to have a good life and a good death and to have lived life as they had wished”

CIRCLES OF CARE - A REFLECTION



This is a team who have thought hard about loss, death, and bereavement. They have actively sought to embrace the principles of compassion, empathy and kindness and a person-led approach to care with the creation of Larkfield View Bereavement Charter

On the day we visited the care home, which is owned by the Holmes Care Group, the company were running activities as part of a week-long reward and recognition of staff. There was a wonderful, vibrant atmosphere and a sense of anticipation. Elsie had nominated several of her staff for an award. Some already knew they had received one; some were still to find out.

I left Larkfield View deeply moved by what I had heard and seen. Here is a care home that delivers a high standard of clinical care and marries that with a profound understanding and commitment to providing social, psychological, and emotional care to the people who live there, their families and the staff that provide that care.

John Eden, Scottish Care
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BEREAVEMENT CHARTER FOR SCOTLAND

Scottish Care, the organisation I work for is a key partner and signatory to the Bereavement Charter for Scotland. Elsie and her team have embraced the Charter and made it their own. [Bereavement Charter for Scotland](#) can be downloaded here.

