

**Item 9 - Question Time**

To the Leader of the Council

“What guidance or training has specifically been given to Highland Council employees to ensure that they deal efficiently and sensitively with citizens who engage with the Council’s services as a result of bereavement?”

Response to Mr R MacWilliam

There are a range of staff across the organisation who may come into contact with individuals experiencing bereavement. This may be through the type of work they are involved with e.g. registration services, burials and cremations teams, or through interactions with individuals accessing services and seeking support when bereaved. Our Care and Learning service also provide direct support to families experiencing bereavement. Depending upon the nature of each role, the training for individuals varies:

- Registration/Customer Services - training for Registration is provided in line with National Records for Scotland guidelines. The customer care element of training around death registration pulls together a number of elements which focus on the needs of the individual and their circumstances. If staff require further support around a challenging death registration, experienced staff are always on hand to talk through any issues and provide any support necessary.
- Benefits and Welfare Police Team – training around bereavement issues is identified through the ERD process and this is provided through the Customer Care Course which focuses on the needs and requirements of individual customers.
- Burials and Cremation Services - all training for staff is practical on the job training in respect to dealing with bereaved people at the graveside and carrying out the role of “Usher” in the Crematorium. Best practice is shared across Local Authorities and Highland Council are also part of the Cemetery and Crematoria Advisory group which enables further learning to be shared and passed on through the service. The administration team for the service also provide direct on the job training with support and experience being shared by members of the senior staff.
- Care and Learning – trauma and loss guidance has been developed for use within the service, to support staff in schools and in other caring roles where children and families are experiencing bereavement. Staff from Educational Psychology and Primary Mental Health Workers are used to provide support to children and staff teams.

The Council’s Learning and Development team has developed a range of generic training courses which support staff across the organisation in undertaking their role

and focuses on how best to support customers who are experiencing shock or distress; including where this may be the result of bereavement.

Work is underway to explore the development of a specific training course to support staff and members who have come into contact with individuals who are bereaved. The focus for this training includes both staff who are dealing with customers but also all staff and members in their roles as colleagues and those as managers.