

NBCP Bereavement Care toolkit

Working together



national bereavement
c a r e p a t h w a y
for pregnancy and baby loss

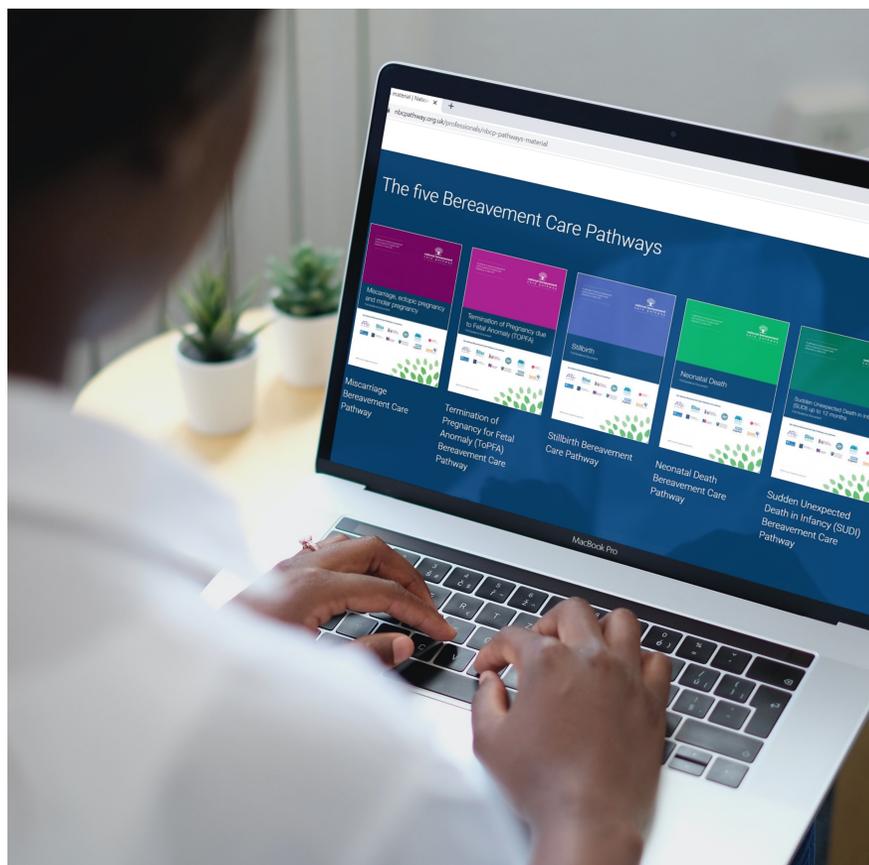


Introduction

The National Bereavement Care Pathway (NBCP) seeks to improve the quality and consistency of bereavement care received by parents from the NHS after pregnancy or baby loss.

[Sands](#) leads the NBCP in collaboration with bereaved families, other charities and Royal Colleges, providing health care professionals with frameworks, tools and educational resources to support excellent care.

The NBCP is based around [nine standards](#) of bereavement care and includes pathways for miscarriage, termination of pregnancy due to fetal anomaly, stillbirth, neonatal death and sudden unexpected death of an infant up to 12 months.





Introduction



One of Sands' core objectives is to ensure that every bereaved parent receives the highest standard of bereavement care possible. Feedback to Sands from healthcare professionals has highlighted a need for a specific toolkit to support the implementation and embedding of the NBCP. We have developed this toolkit in order to equip healthcare professionals with the resources they need to help bereavement care standards to 'stick' – to embed NBCP standards rather than seeing these as just a project.

We are grateful to everyone who has contributed to the development of this toolkit, including Gail Johnson (former RCM Education Advisor), the NBCP Core Group, the Professional Advisory Group, and the healthcare staff who generously contributed their time to be interviewed in the videos.

3. Working together

- NBCP standards summary
- Aspirations for your bereavement team:
 - Mapping your team
 - Looking to the future
- Diversity and inclusion
- Training
- Dedicated time



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Introduction: working together

The NBCP seeks to increase the quality of the bereavement care provided by healthcare professionals following the loss of a baby, and having a bereavement lead is one of the core 9 NBCP Standards.

Often, that will mean working together as a team to ensure that the bereavement care that is provided is of a high standard. It's important to think of the bereavement care team as **the different professionals a parent will meet on their journey through bereavement care.**



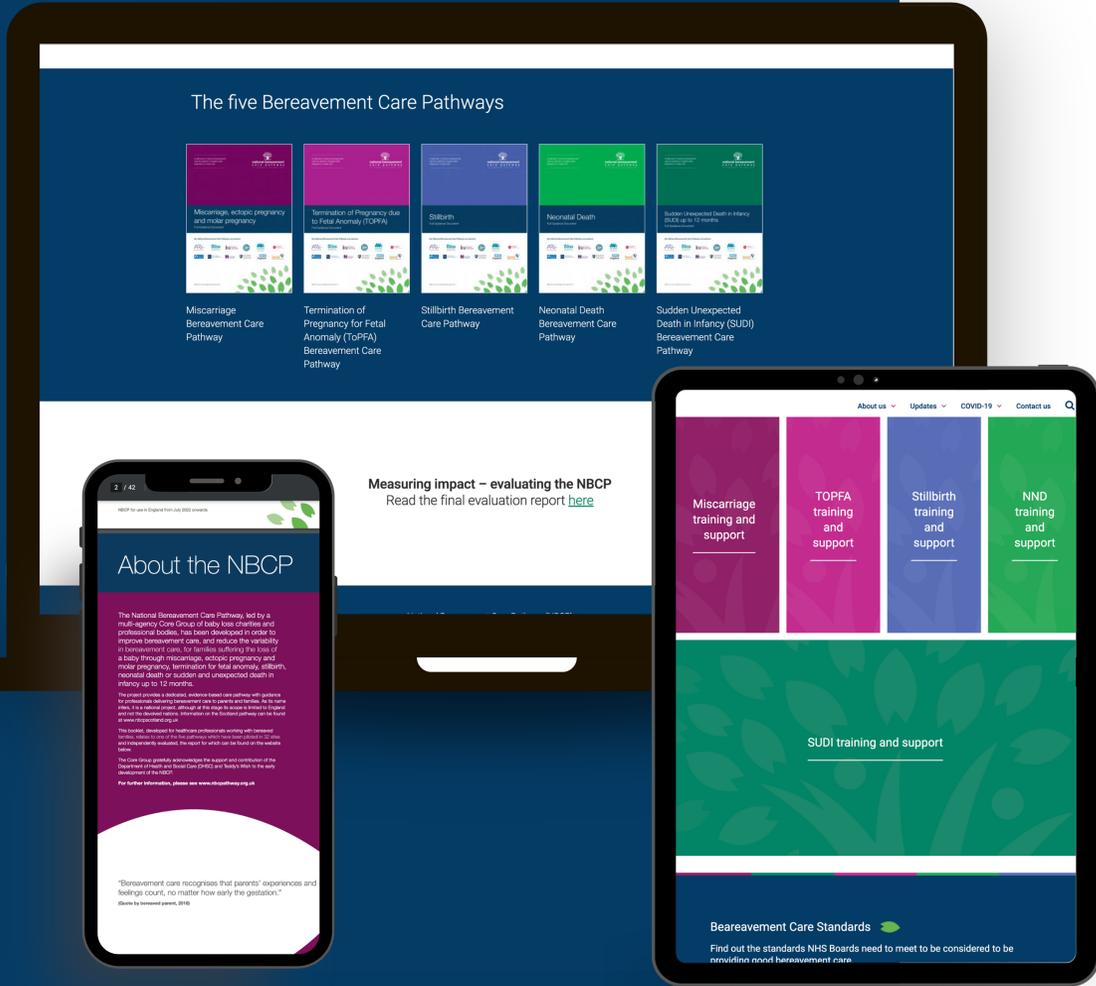


Introduction: working together

- This module is designed for existing bereavement care teams or those trying to establish a new bereavement team. You may be working alone to champion bereavement care, or you may be part of a larger team in your Trust. Regardless of the current size of your network, the principle of working together to influence and lead change remains the same.
- We recognise that being part of a bereavement care team can be rewarding, fulfilling and potentially challenging and exhausting. See our [toolkit on staff wellbeing for support](#) and resources.
- Having the right team in place to provide care is essential for families, and ensuring that care meets the needs of families is a team approach. Often, bereavement care has fallen to one person or a small group of staff who have an 'interest' in bereavement care. In this section, we'll support you to develop your team, and build the capacity within your Trust to provide high quality bereavement care.



NBCP standards and pathways summary



- The **NBCP standards** provide a benchmark for the development and ongoing role of the team. Whether you are establishing a new team or building on a current team, you can use the NBCP standards to assess where and how your team and network needs developing. The NBCP self assessment is a helpful tool for reviewing the standards at your Trust. See our [toolkit on parent engagement](#) for guidance on using it.
- The NBCP aims to offer a service to families across the whole pregnancy and baby loss spectrum, this further adds to the challenges of working with a team with different needs and with aspects of care you are not familiar with, and of working with departments where there is a high turnover of staff.

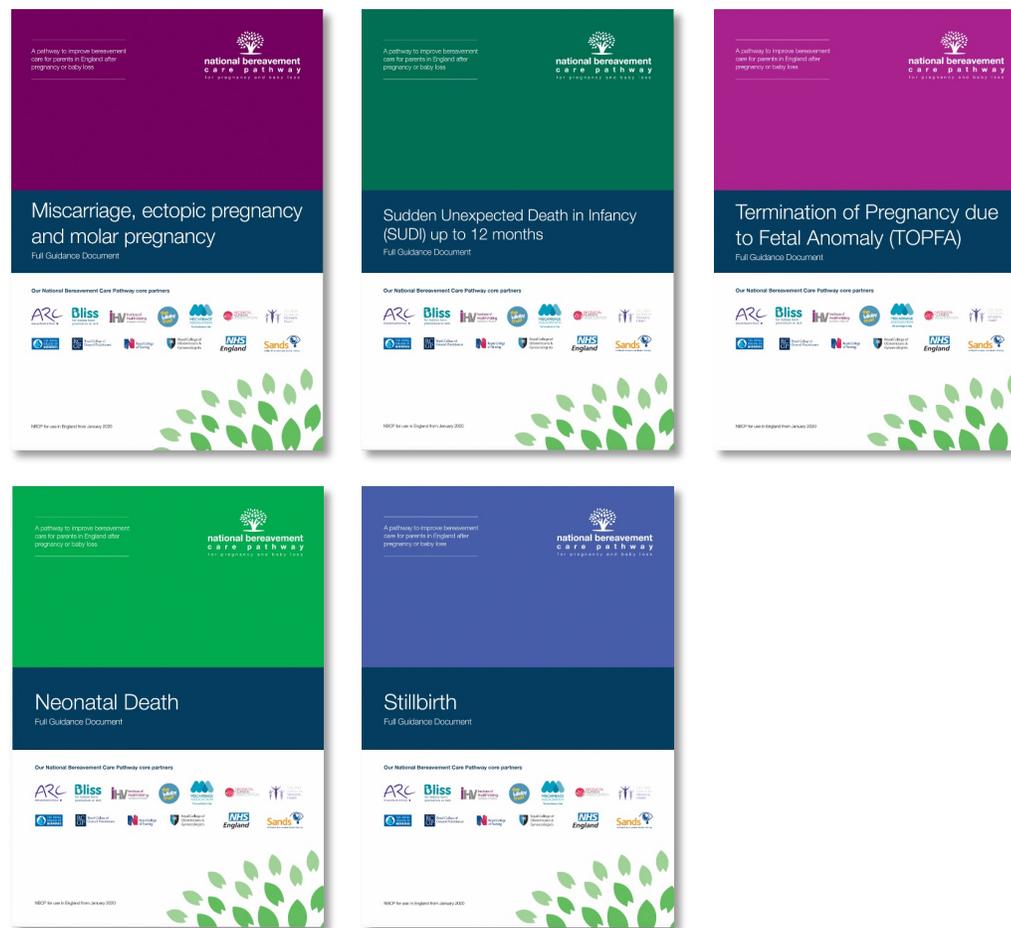


NBCP standards and pathways summary

- The five pathways cover five diverse experiences of pregnancy and baby loss. This diversity may mean it is difficult to control or influence all the pathways across your Trust. Depending on the size of your Trust and bereavement care service, your team may be able to support one, a few or indeed all of the five pathways.
- It is useful to think about who you need in the team, and what it is you are able to control. You want the team to be not only effective and efficient, and to address the pathways, but to also be sustainable.

Activity

- [Listen to healthcare professionals discuss the different challenges that can arise in implementing the NBCP.](#)





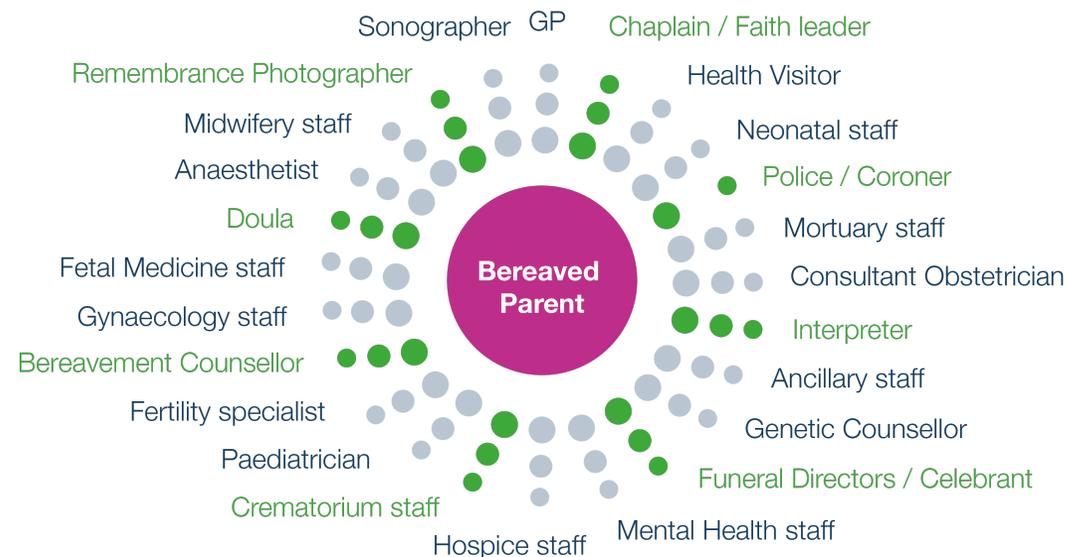
Mapping your bereavement team (1)

It's important to see the bereavement team as **the different professionals who may be involved in a parent's journey of loss.**

Activity

- What does your current team of bereavement care staff look like from the perspective of a parent? Map, or make a list of the different people, by role and name, who are part of your bereavement care service.
- Who do you need in your team in order to be compliant with the **NBCP standards in one area** of your service? Who do you need in your team in order to be compliant with the **NBCP standards across your Trust?**

Professionals who may be involved in a parent's journey of loss





Mapping your bereavement team (2)



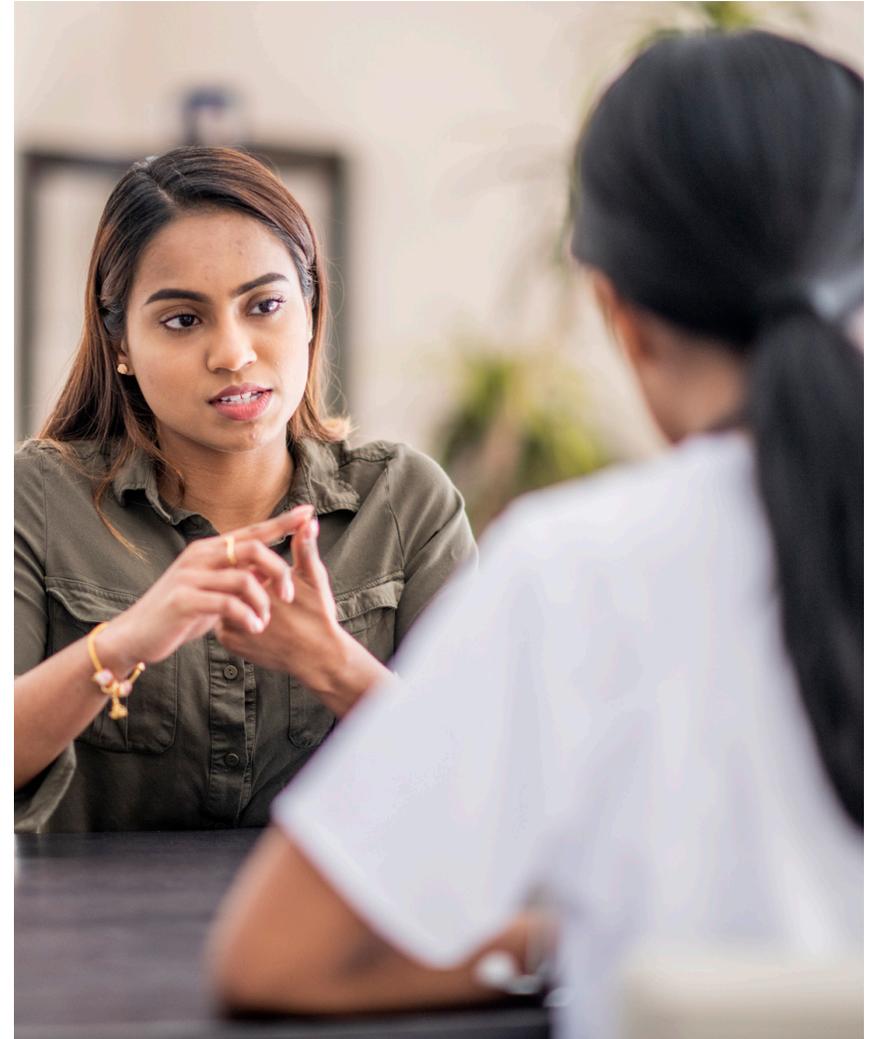
Activity

- Think broadly about who you might need to work with. Are there roles missing from your list? For example, GPs, pathology staff, or the perinatal mental health team? Hospital Liaison Volunteers who will provide a link between parents and staff? Practice specialists in the different areas of your service representing the five pathways? What about admin staff in the hospital, or HR who might be able to advise on job roles or finance? Building services who can provide support with business facilities?

Mapping your bereavement team (3)

Activity

- Develop your network list with the names or roles of people you've identified you need to work with in one area of your service, or across your Trust. **Map this network** using a large piece of paper, digitally, or using post-it notes.
- People you need to work with closely need to be near to you on the map, other people you might need to rely on for your team to be effective might also need to be near you, but you may not see them daily. Move them to demonstrate how closely you need to work with them; you could change the colour of the text to indicate importance/significance for your network.





Mapping your bereavement team (4)



- Some of the roles will overlap and practitioners will have areas of expertise that they can share. It is important to identify the roles, and to recognise that some of the activities will be shared in the team.
- Think about how often you might need to see or talk to different members of staff, how important are they to you being effective in your role.
- [Listen](#) to healthcare professionals explore the scope and diversity of the bereavement team, and explain what the team looks like from a bereaved family's perspective.

Aspirations for your team

- In this section, we'll consider the aspirations you have for your bereavement care team and service.
- What is the **aspiration** for your team? How will you deliver your aspiration?
- What **resources** have you got? Look at your network map, do you need to work or network with more people with a more diverse range of skills and experience? Are there skills and resources you can call on? What have you got, what do you need, and what is the gap in-between these?





Aspirations for your team

- How can you measure your **successes**? How can you build regular reviews into your service? Managers, budget holders and families will look for evidence of how the team is doing, they will want 'outputs', feedback and data that says the team is making a difference. This is why it is important to include measurable activities in your aspiration.
- How **effective** is your team? Is there something that you are currently doing that isn't working? How can that be fixed? Do you need to more of something and less of something else? To keep the pathway working effectively there needs to be a shared understanding of the purpose of the team and clarity in roles. This helps to keep the team invested in the purpose and supports the continuation of the team.



Sustaining the service



Working in isolation as a bereavement lead can be lonely, and it is important to include other people, their voices and perspectives. This is important for the sustainability of your service, and the development of a network of bereavement champions across the different departments involved in your bereavement service. It is also important for ensuring your own long-term wellbeing at work; see our toolkit module on [supporting staff wellbeing](#) for further resources.

It is also important in building capacity to ensure your Trust can deliver a sustainable, seven-day bereavement care service, as an immediate and essential action laid out in the [Ockenden review \(2022\)](#).



Sustaining the service

There will be many practitioners who are passionate about improving bereavement care and may volunteer to be part of the team. Their passion is to be welcomed, but sometimes people underestimate the impact of supporting bereaved families, for example there may be conflicts with other work commitments, changes in work roles, or they may not be able to commit to supporting the team.

There may not be quite the right mix of people to support and develop the team, hence the mapping exercise being so important. There may be a lack of clarity to the purpose of the team and some may sign up to the team without knowing what to expect, so it's important to be clear about roles, responsibilities and expectations early on. The training needs analysis [see below] will also help in this regard.





Looking to the future

- Alongside sustainability is **succession planning**. A shared vision enables the team to have and maintain a focus and allows for evolution, future planning and continuous improvement.
- Often we think of succession planning when we know someone is leaving and the post needs to be filled. However, succession planning is more proactive and it includes exploring how the pathways might evolve. For example, the current aim might be to support one pathway, yet through evaluation and demonstrating effectiveness, further pathways could be supported. There may be work to do in extending the pathways out into the community setting. Succession planning is asking “what next or what else can we do?” This isn’t just about knowing someone is leaving, it’s about where or what else can be done and how is it achieved.





Looking to the future



- The **NBCP self assessment tool** is ideal for sustainability and succession planning. Even when the team can demonstrate that they are achieving and doing an excellent job, there are always opportunities to make things even better, however, a key aspect is ensuring that a minimum standard is maintained.
- It is very likely that the team have the skills to deliver kind and compassionate care to families and will be supportive of staff and their developing roles – but is there anyone in the team who can will be able to argue your case if you are wanting more funding or more allocated time to do the role? Is there someone who can effectively collate the data to back up your rationale for further development and sustainability?



Diversity and inclusion

- Successive reports highlight the vast disparities in outcomes for birthing people and babies in the UK. The most recent [MBRRACE report](#) shows worse outcomes for women and birthing people from Black, Asian and Mixed ethnic groups compared to white women, and for those living in the most deprived areas. Bereavement care needs to be part of the focus for action to address these disparities.
- It is important that the bereavement care that is provided meets the needs of a community, and that the staff demographic is also reflective of the community it serves. [Evidence shows](#) that when NHS staffing is representative of the community it cares for, both patient care and experience improves.





Diversity and inclusion

In your team, think about diversity and consider these steps:

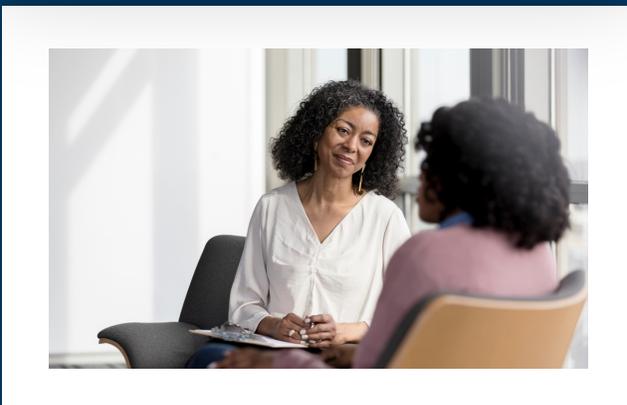
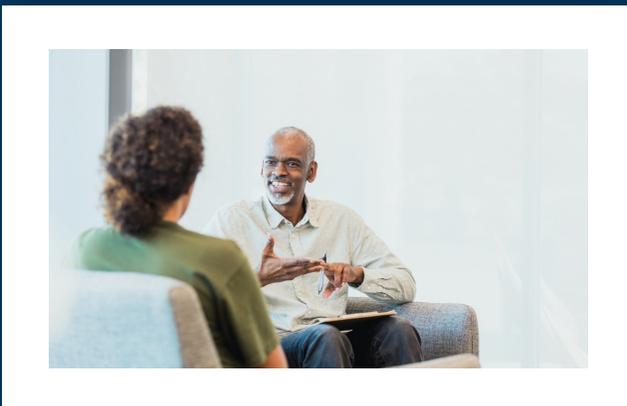
- **Look for biases in the team.** Does the team have the skills and experience to support the demographics of your area?
- **Develop leadership skills.** Identify role models and mentors to support development and bring these people on board. Encourage discussion, everyone should have a voice and everyone should be listened to.
- **Celebrate cultural differences.** Don't just think of culture as race, religion, and ethnicity, but consider the shared workplace culture and be aware of your own cultural biases, for example the professional differences of the team.

Activity:

- Watch this short video on [cultural competency](#) created by the NHS Leadership Academy.
- Access the free [Cultural Competence e-learning tool](#) developed in collaboration with the RCM.



Training resources



- The provision of high-quality bereavement care training is one of the 9 NBCP standards, and all staff need to be trained in caring for bereaved families. Learning builds the confidence and capability for staff to provide compassionate, individualised and high-quality bereavement care.
- **Sands** has a range of training and learning opportunities for healthcare professionals and staff caring for bereaved families. Sands run free [Open-access webinars](#) on bereavement care for any professional interested in baby loss, as well as tailor-made, [in-house training](#) for specific teams or organisations. **All Sands' training is designed to build the confidence and skills to safely and effectively work with those who have experienced pregnancy loss or baby death.**



Training resources

Sands and the NBCP partners have developed two NBCP e-learning modules freely available via [Heath Education England's e-learning for healthcare \(HEE elfh\)](#). Over 10,000 of these modules were completed over the period 2020-22 and they are highly valued.

Activity:

A **training needs analysis** is a useful tool to identify the different needs of staff. It is important to look back at your network map and see who would benefit from training in caring for bereaved families. [Look at this site](#) to learn about conducting a training needs analysis to help support your staff.

The screenshot shows the top of the Health Education England (HEE) website. The header includes the 'elfh' logo (e-learning for healthcare) and the 'NHS Health Education England' logo. A navigation menu contains 'Home', 'Programmes', 'About', 'News', 'Support', 'Demo', and 'Contact us'. A search bar is present with the text 'Search this website'. Below the header, a 'Sections' dropdown menu is visible. The main content area features a heading for 'National Bereavement Care Pathway' and a large banner with the text 'National Bereavement Care Pathway' and 'Caring for individuals bereaved through pregnancy loss and baby death'. Below the banner, a blue bar states 'This programme is in partnership with...'. A grid of partner logos follows, including Sands, RCM, Miscarriage Association, ARC, Bliss, the Lullaby Trust, iW, Twins Trust, Child Bereavement UK, and NHS England.

The screenshot shows the CIPD website. The header includes the 'CIPD' logo and a search bar with the text 'Search CIPD'. A navigation menu contains 'Learn, develop and connect', 'For employers', 'Membership', 'Knowledge hub', 'News, views and policy', and 'About us'. Below the header, a breadcrumb trail reads 'Home / Knowledge hub / People management fundamentals / Getting, developing and keeping the right people / Developing your people / Identifying learning and development needs'. The main content area features a large purple banner with the date '10 Jun 2021' and the heading 'Identifying learning and development needs'. Below the banner, a sub-heading reads 'Learn how to identify learning and development needs at a range of levels, and leverage the results to enable greater business performance'. At the bottom, a section titled 'On this page' lists several links: 'Introduction', 'Learning needs analysis for smaller organisations', 'How are learning and development needs identified?', and 'Further reading'.

Dedicated Time

- Think about how you can ensure that you or your colleagues get dedicated time to undertake your role. What information do your colleagues need to be able to support you in your role?
- Have a clear agreement with your line manager on how the time will and can be managed. It is useful to include this in your business case and to have a record of the agreement.
- Blocking out time on the off duty is a good starting point. Depending how many hours you have for your role you might want to block out a few hours each week or work you time over a 2-4 week period, when you can take more hours together. Think about the timing of when you take the time.





Dedicated Time



- Your colleagues need to be clear on what your clinical/practice/NBCP hours are so that these can be planned into the day. It is important to move away from the clinical area if it is safely staffed so that you can concentrate on whatever activity you have identified. There will be times when it is difficult to manage your clinical shift and the NBCP role, monitor and record the times you are not freed up. See if there is a pattern and discuss with your manager the best way to address it.
- As part of the wider staff training, it is important that there is an understanding of the NBCP roles and an explanation about why you may be away from the clinical area.



NBCP network and monthly drop-in

- The **NBCP network** of healthcare professionals working to implement the NBCP in their local areas is an important resource to draw on.
- The [shared practice page](#) on the website is a place to search and share tools, resources and experiences.
- **Sands** run a **monthly drop-in session** for **healthcare staff working in bereavement care** and implementing the NBCP. This is an informal opportunity for you to meet up with other bereavement care professionals, share and reflect on the challenges you experience in your local area, and learn from other's experiences.
- This is held on Microsoft Teams, on the last Friday of every month. Please contact rebecca.ashley@sands.org.uk for more information.



End of toolkit module 3: Working together

Thank you for using this NBCP toolkit module on **working together** in bereavement care.

We want this resource to be useful, relevant and up-to-date for healthcare professionals and welcome your feedback. Please take a couple of minutes to share your comments using [this form](#).



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NBCP is led by



Saving babies' lives. Supporting bereaved families.

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