

Created	August 2020
By	Senior Team
Reviewed	July 2022
Next review	July 2023
Approved by	Governing Board
Dissemination	Staff Training, Shared folders on Gdrive

VLUK BEREAVEMENT POLICY 2022-2023

1. PURPOSE

Virtual Learning UK (VLUK) strives to ensure that all learners feel safe. Our values focus on openness, honesty and trust alongside working with the strengths of each individual learner to ensure they achieve to the best of their abilities.

Experiencing a bereavement can make learners and staff vulnerable. From time to time every further education establishment or Training Provider experiences the death of a learner, member of staff or an extended family member. As young people spend the vast majority of their time in an educational establishment, members of staff will be the primary source of care and support. Individuals and families react to bereavement in their own very unique ways. The trauma of bereavement can have a profound effect on the community. It is important for VLUK to reflect upon an appropriate response to bereavement and to develop flexible contingency plans that reflect how it could or should respond in these situations.

The purpose of the Bereavement Policy is to help everyone involved at a time when there may be shock, upset and confusion, ensuring there is as little disruption as possible, effective communication takes place and all members of the VLUK community are supported appropriately.

VLUK is committed to the emotional health and well-being of its staff and learners. We wish to work towards this in all aspects of life, and to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that prepares learners for coping with bereavement.

This policy is for all VLUK staff, learners, parents and carers, governors, visitors and partner organisations working with VLUK. It provides guidelines and procedures on how VLUK can best prepare for, and provide support in the case of a bereavement. .

2. SAFEGUARDING, CONFIDENTIALITY AND RECORDING

We follow VLUK's safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that the welfare and safety of the learner remains paramount throughout, and that all learners are protected from harm.

It is important to maintain confidentiality throughout the handling of any incident or disclosure. However, learners will need to be made aware that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

To retain the trust of learners and parents and carers, we will ensure the sharing of appropriate information is kept to a minimum. Sensitive information will only be disclosed internally or externally with careful attention to the rights and needs of individuals and in line with general data protection regulations.

If a learner is suffering from trauma, we will share this as appropriate with staff, but not necessarily the details of their experience.

We discuss with the bereaved learner and their family which adults in the VLUK community they would like made aware of the experiences impacting on the learner.

We use our usual VLUK systems, CPOMS to record and inform when a vulnerable learner has experienced a close bereavement, is at risk of suicide or has made a suicide attempt.

3. WHEN A DEATH OCCURS

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), including VLUK's internal Counsellor, with the support of the Tutor, will be the primary point of contact with a learners family or staff member when a death

has occurred. The DSL will gather factual information regarding the death and will consult with the family regarding their wishes in sharing the information with the college community. It is important that factual information is shared in a timely manner so that assumptions and rumour are not spread, as they can only add to the family's distress. It is essential that relevant staff are informed as soon as possible, ideally before learners. Learners, when relevant, should also be told. This is best done in familiar groups by someone they know. Staff need to have guidance on words to use and approach to take. Staff are encouraged to seek to identify learners who may be particularly vulnerable.

3.1. The Death of a Learner

In the case of the death of a learner, appropriate support should be provided for the whole VLUK campus. A book of remembrance could be set up in an appropriate location where the bereaved can come to express their grief and loss. If appropriate, a meeting of remembrance, for relevant learners, may be held. Support for staff who are directly involved with grieving learners is important, and staff should have the opportunity to meet to provide an opportunity to share feelings and reactions.

In general it is best to have a minimum of disruption to the college timetable. The structure of the day is important to maintain, but some flexibility may be required.

3.2. The Death of a Member of Staff

In the case of the death of a member of staff, appropriate support should be provided for the whole VLUK community. A book of remembrance could be set up where the bereaved can come to express their grief and loss.

A meeting of remembrance may also be held. Special support, including appropriate cover may be needed for staff who worked particularly closely with the deceased. The Chief Operations Officer (COO) or Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will determine the appropriate period of time for this support to continue. If the press are involved in reporting on the death, the CEO or COO will consult with the The Chair of Governors regarding an official statement on behalf of VLUK.

In general it is best to have a minimum of disruption to the college timetable. The structure of the college day is important to maintain, but some flexibility may be required. Great sensitivity and care needs to be taken in determining how lessons will be covered immediately following the death.

3.3. The Death of a Family Member of a VLUK learner

In the case of the death of a family member of a learner, if the death happens while the young person is on campus, a representative for the family, preferably a parent should come to campus to inform the learner. Before notifying fellow learners, it should be decided if the DSL, VLUK Counsellor, Tutor or Enrichment Officer should speak with the bereaved learner's family to determine what information should be given to peers.

Peers should be informed on how the bereaved learner wants to manage what has happened (i.e. speak openly and take initiative, or let the bereaved learner decide when to talk about the death.) Following the death of a family member it can be expected that the bereaved learner may have a reduced capacity for work. The bereaved learner may need extra help at a later time, when working capacity becomes normal again.

4. FUNERAL PROCEDURE

When a funeral has been planned for the deceased, it is essential that VLUK is sensitive to the family's culture and abides by the family's wishes. The family may welcome involvement of members of VLUK staff, but equally, may wish to keep the funeral private. The Operations Director will identify which staff and learners may want to attend and the practicalities of issues such as staff cover and transport. The Chief Operating Officer may also consult with staff and learners in determining what is appropriate in terms of sending flowers, a collection and/or any further more permanent remembrance.

5. SUPPORT FOR BEREAVED STAFF

We are aware that staff also experience bereavement. When this happens, we ensure they are provided with support to take care of themselves, and to know where they can go for additional help should they need it.

This could include: their GP; Cruse Bereavement Care <http://www.cruse.org.uk/>; or counselling via VLUK's counsellor.

We work within our leave of absence policy to ensure staff are provided with appropriate leave and support at a time of bereavement.

Tutors who are dealing with their own bereavement are encouraged to speak with their line manager about any areas of the Study Programme which they feel uncomfortable to teach or want support to teach.

6. ADDITIONAL SUPPORT AND LINKS

As part of VLUK's Tutorial programme and our safeguarding work we will also signpost to appropriate sources of support for Learners and adults at VLUK.

Winston's Wish: www.winstonswish.org Support information and guidance for bereaved learners, young people and for those caring for bereaved families.

Cruse Bereavement Care: www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk Support for anyone who has been bereaved.

Childhood Bereavement Network: <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk> Find childhood bereavement support in your local area.

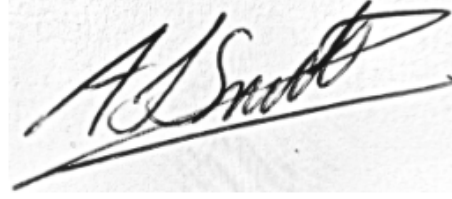
Hope Again: <http://hopeagain.org.uk/> A website for young people who have been bereaved.

Papyrus: <https://papyrus-uk.org/> Support and advice for young people struggling with thoughts of suicide, and anyone worried about a young person.

Samaritans: <http://www.samaritans.org/your-community/supporting-VLUKs> A range of guidance and support for VLUKs.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Smith', written in a cursive style.

CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Smith', written in a cursive style.

Chair of Governors