



## PRESS RELEASE June 2020

### Overwhelming take-up of virtual training sessions for health care professionals dealing with baby death during Covid 19

When a baby dies it is a tragedy at any time, but during the current pandemic, bereaved families and the professionals supporting them, have been faced with additional and often **distressing challenges**. Restrictions around visiting has made access to hospitals difficult for partners and other family members, while **support services that would normally be provided for bereaved parents, have been unavailable or severely limited**.

Witnessing and coping with this impact on families has been very difficult for professionals. Doctors, nurses and midwives have been telling us about the impact covid-19 is having on them. **PPE equipment has removed the personal touch** quite literally. Face masks and visors limit the effect of facial expressions and muffle voices and the natural instinct of being tactile with mothers and babies has been denied to them.

**For healthcare professionals this has had a huge impact on their emotional wellbeing.** Many of them say they feel they have not been able to provide the level of care they would normally, at a time when parents need it the most. A recent survey conducted by the Royal College of Midwives found that 57% of midwives, maternity support workers and student midwives felt the current crisis had impacted on their mental health. 34% of respondents also said they did not feel their employer gives them adequate support in the workplace when it comes to their mental health.<sup>1</sup>

**Professionals need access to specialised bereavement training and support now more than ever.** In normal times many of them are able to access face to face training, but during the pandemic something else was urgently needed. Recognising this need, **baby loss charity, Abigail's Footsteps** has launched a series of **virtual baby loss training sessions**. These 2 hour sessions are fully funded by the charity and provided by **Paula Abramson of Bereavement Training International (BTI)**.

Paula Abramson said, *"We could see the need was there and we've proved that we can help even during the pandemic by providing accessible virtual training. **The take up rates and the positive feedback from attendees has been phenomenal** and we are delighted to have been able to adapt our training in this way."*

The first three virtual training sessions were announced at the beginning of June and were **fully booked within hours**. Due to the high level of demand four further dates were added and all places were immediately reserved.

Faye Hill from Abigail's Footsteps told us, *"**The response has been overwhelming**. There is clearly a huge need for this type of training and as the demand has been so high, we hope to announce future dates as soon as possible."*

**The training is free** and suitable for any professional providing care for parents following a pregnancy loss and when a baby dies, including midwives and student midwives, neonatal teams, sonographers, obstetricians, and gynaecology staff. These bitesize sessions are a taster of Bereavement Training

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.rcm.org.uk/media-releases/2020/may/midwives-mental-health-hit-by-pandemic/>

International's full day training workshops and have been **tailored specifically to address some of the covid-19 challenges faced by health care professionals.**

Subjects covered include, how to communicate sensitively, the challenges of working during a pandemic, grief theories, and how we take care of ourselves.

Professionals attending the sessions have overwhelmingly endorsed the training, saying it has provided a much needed and easily accessible service during a very stressful time. One of the first doctors to attend told us that the training had, *"provided a great learning platform and **an opportunity to share experiences to help improve bereavement and self-care.**"*

More sessions are planned throughout the summer. For more information and to request a place on the course contact Paula Abramson at <http://bereavementtraining.com/bereavement-training-international-introduces-virtual-training-new-sessions/>

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**Abigail's Footsteps** is a baby loss charity providing support and counselling for bereaved parents and families as well as specialist bereavement training for midwives and healthcare professionals.

<https://www.abigailsfootsteps.co.uk/>

**Bereavement Training International** provides specialist training for professionals to ensure bereaved families receive the best possible support and care.

For more details about this story, photos and interview requests please contact Paula Abramson at Bereavement Training International on 0771 2631509 or email [paula@bereavementtraining.com](mailto:paula@bereavementtraining.com)