

Diealog and the Five Ways to Wellbeing

Diealog is a grass roots up community movement, focusing on people supporting each other in the last stages of life. It was set up 6 years ago by a former GP with expertise in palliative care who saw that the medicalised model for people at the end of life was not working. Diealog's ambition is that we should live in communities where everybody recognises that they have a role to play in supporting each other in times of crisis and loss; where people are ready, willing and confident to have conversations about living and dying well and to support each other in emotional and practical ways: Compassionate Communities.

Diealog is part of a wider coalition in the community that aims to help people talk more openly about dying, death and bereavement, and to make plans for the end of life. In the South West, this is made up of the groups Living Well/Dying Well, Diealog and Dying Matters. Diealog is a small movement, with a hub based in West Dorset and an income of about £14,000 a year. Kindness and collaboration are Diealog's core values.

The wellbeing of people nearing the end of life and those supporting them is central to Diealog's work and can be recorded using the Five Ways to Wellbeing.

Connecting People

Diealog connects people through Death Cafés and Diealog groups. The cafés are pop ups, based in local coffee shops where people are invited to attend using advertising in the local media. Over tea, coffee and cake, they are an opportunity for people to talk and share thoughts and information around the end of life issues. The mood is not mawkish or morbid, but rather of understanding. It is a chance to express thoughts and feelings that can sometimes be overlooked in modern life. For example, worries about the cost of funerals, memories of a loved one's death or considerations about how to plan for the end of life. Sometimes the connections made here develop into friendships and informal support networks, much needed at the end of life. The cafes are also a way for people to find out about the workshops and groups run by the movement. Diealog set up 7 cafés in 2016 and 143 people attended. Diealog has also engaged through social media- gaining 6000 followers by the end of 2016. "My mother says you have become part of her extended family."



Keep Learning



There are opportunities to learn from other's experiences as people feel safe and connections are made. Workshops and Diealog groups are run on particular issues, for example, funeral plans, or talking to your family about your death. In 2016, 73 people attended Diealog groups in Dorset and 41 people participated in Advance Planning End of Life Workshops.

Workshops are also available where people can train to be End of Life Doulas, or "soul midwives". These are run by Living Well Dying Well and promoted by Diealog. They train people for a non-medical end of life role: They help those who are dying, and their families, to feel safe and

supported, as they make the transition from this life to what's next.

" I feel I am more in control of my dying choices."

Being Active

Diealog encourages people to visit each other or get together. Once connections form through the cafes, people make arrangements to meet or visit each other in order to talk or just to support each other by being together, perhaps by visiting a local park or garden for a walk. Other opportunities for people to get out and about have included a film screening and a performance of a specially commissioned play. 121 people attended community events organised by Diealog last year.



“Thank-you for an informative forum yesterday discussing end of life planning.”

Take Notice

By enabling connections to develop between people and relationships to grow, people start to take notice of each other and consider how to support others with small acts of kindness, for example an attendee at a death café befriending a person whose mum has dementia, and encouraging her to come out or visit once a week.

People have a chance to share stories and talk about how they and others feel. In this way, people can start to really take notice of how they feel, for example, being afraid of dying, and express it.

“I can be open about my fear of dying. I thought I was the only one before.”

Give

Diealog followers are constantly giving support to each other either on a one to one basis or as part of a group with other members or at a Death café.

There are also opportunities for volunteers to give of their time and energy by baking a cake for a café or planning and organising a meeting or training session. People can give financial donations via its website and Diealog raises some money by requesting donations for the movement’s “End of Life” booklet.

“It's such a relief to talk about dying: there's so much to talk about!”



Diealog’s ambitions for 2017 include doubling its following on social media, and increasing the number of community engagement events. They would like to ensure the participation of hard to reach and socially isolated people. They regard their strength as the energy and goodwill of their individual volunteers, working face to face with people. They hope to increase this grass roots up approach, growing their first hub and replicating their model to create other local compassionate communities. Diealog runs as a 'free affiliate scheme' so anybody can use the name, and local activities are self-sustaining. Micro-charity Conscious Ageing Trust acts as the 'Home of Diealog' for governance purposes, and can support local people make funding bids if needed.

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Bournemouth CVS and Poole CVS are working with Public Health Dorset to support local voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations to deliver better public health outcomes. This project is to help the sector measure and demonstrate the impact their work has on health and wellbeing in their communities. These case studies are designed to highlight the varied and substantial impact VCSE organisations have on the Five Ways to Wellbeing. The Five Ways to Wellbeing is a tool comprising of a set of five, evidence based public health indicators about the kinds of activities that individuals can do that are known to improve their health and wellbeing:

Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning and Give.

To learn more about the work of the Bournemouth and Poole VCSE sector please contact Liz Cooper 01202 682046, liz.cooper@poolecvcs.org.uk

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