



**Compassionate
Communities UK**

The Compassionate City Charter

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People who live with life-threatening or life limiting illness, their caregivers, and the bereaved are segmented social groups, forced to experience lifestyles that are commonly socially hidden and disenfranchised from the wider society. Outside of the health services that deal specifically with their immediate problems, these populations suffer from a range of other troubles that are separate but linked to their health conditions or social circumstances – loneliness, isolation, job loss, stigma, depression, anxiety and fear, or even suicide. These populations also suffer from a range of other debilitating health problems often caused by their social and psychological troubles - insomnia, cardiac arrhythmias, chronic fatigue and headaches, hypertension, and gastric-intestinal disorders.

THE COMPASSIONATE CITY

- A CHARTER OF ACTIONS -

Compassionate Cities are communities that recognize that all natural cycles of sickness and health, birth and death, and love and loss happen daily within the orbits of its institutions and regular activities. A compassionate city is a community that recognizes that care for one another at times of crisis and loss is not simply a task solely for health and social services but is everyone's responsibility.

Compassionate Cities are communities that publicly encourage, facilitate, supports and celebrates care for one another during life's most testing moments and experiences, especially those pertaining to life-threatening and life-limiting

illness, chronic disability, frail ageing and dementia, grief and bereavement, and the trials and burdens of long term care. Though local government strives to maintain and strengthen quality services for the most fragile and vulnerable in our midst, those persons are not the limits of our experience of fragility and vulnerability. Serious personal crises of illness, dying, death and loss may visit any of us, at any time during the normal course our lives. A compassionate city is a community that squarely recognizes and addresses this social fact.

Through auspices of the Mayor's office a compassionate city will - by public marketing and advertising; by use of the cities' network and influences; by dint of collaboration and co-operation; in partnership with social media and its own offices – develop and support the following 13 social changes to the cities' key institutions and activities.

1. Our **schools** will have annually reviewed policies or guidance documents for dying, death, loss and care
2. Our **workplaces** will have annually reviewed policies or guidance documents for dying, death, loss and care
3. Our **trade unions** will have annually reviewed policies or guidance documents for dying, death, loss and care
4. Our **places of worship** will have at least one dedicated group for end of life care support
5. Our **city's hospices and nursing homes** will have a community development program involving local area citizens in end of life care activities and programs
6. Our city's major **museums and art galleries** will hold annual exhibitions on the experiences of ageing, dying, death, loss or care
7. Our city will host an **annual peacetime memorial parade** representing the major sectors of human loss outside military campaigns – cancer, motor neuron disease, AIDS, child loss, suicide survivors, animal companion loss, widowhood, industrial and vehicle accidents, the loss of emergency workers and all end of life care personnel, etc.
8. Our city will promote **compassionate communities** programmes to engage neighbourhoods and local streets in direct care activities for their local residents living with health crisis, ageing, caregiving, and grief.

9. Our city will create an **incentives scheme** to celebrate and highlight the most creative compassionate organization, event, and individual/s. The scheme will take the form of an annual award administered by a committee drawn from the end of life care sector. A 'Mayor's Prize' will recognise individual/s for that year those who most exemplify the city's values of compassionate care.

10. Our city will publicly showcase, in **print and in social media**, our **local government policies, services**, funding opportunities, partnerships, and public events that address 'our compassionate concerns' with living with ageing, life-threatening and life-limiting illness, loss and bereavement, and long term caring. All end of life care-related services within the city limits will be encouraged to distribute this material or these web links including veterinarians and funeral organizations

11. Our city will work with local social or print media to encourage an **annual city-wide short story or art competition** that helps raise awareness of ageing, dying, death, loss, or caring.

12. All our compassionate policies and services, and in the policies and practices of our official compassionate partners and alliances, will demonstrate an understanding of how **diversity** shapes the experience of ageing, dying, death, loss and care – through ethnic, religious, gendered, and sexual identity and through the social experiences of poverty, inequality, and disenfranchisement.

13. We will seek to encourage and to invite evidence that institutions for the **homeless and the imprisoned** have support plans in place for end of life care and loss and bereavement.

Our city will establish and review these targets and goals in the first two years and thereafter will add one more sector annually to our action plans for a compassionate city – e.g. hospitals, further & higher education, charities, community & voluntary organizations, police & emergency services, and so on.

This charter represents a commitment by the city to embrace a view of health and wellbeing that embraces social empathy, reminding its inhabitants and all who would view us from beyond its borders that 'compassion' means to embrace mutual sharing. A city is not merely a place to work and access services but equally a place to enjoy support in the safety and protection of each other's company, even to the end of our days.