



## What Influence Do Death, Dying and Bereavement Have on Philanthropic Giving Within Hospice Care?

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The article is relevant for people working in fundraising, as well as those working in patient support and medical research charities, as it provides crucial insights into donor motivations and stewardship in a sensitive context.

It researches a very important and under-researched area: what influence do death, dying, and bereavement have on philanthropic giving, and what approach should hospices adopt when stewarding bereaved donors?

The authors conclude that effective stewardship requires a bespoke approach, understanding each donor's evolving needs, and building trust through personal connections with staff rather than generic communications in order to fund hospice provision in the next decade.

[#HospiceFundingCrisis](#) [#Fundraising](#) [#DonorMotivation](#) [#InMemoriamGiving](#)  
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### Background & Context



- With the need for palliative care projected to increase by 25% by 2048 (Hospice UK 2024), **hospices will face a significant funding crisis** of around £200 million more per year on delivering their care than they expect to receive in income.
- Hospice fundraisers face a **complex task** due to **public misconceptions** about their services and cultural **difficulties in discussing death and dying**. There is also a lack of formal education preparing them for this type of fundraising.
- Existing literature underlines the self-evident fact that **personal experience with a cause significantly increases awareness of need and willingness to give**, but hospice leadership often underestimates the awareness of need, and the need to communicate on psychological benefits, reciprocity, gratitude, and nostalgia.
- Giving can also be helpful for the bereaved: **philanthropy can serve as an adaptive response to bereavement**. In memoriam giving, specifically, is found to help bereaved people cope with grief, express loss, and maintain an ongoing connection with the deceased. This highlights the emotional and psychological dimensions of giving in the context of loss.
- The **"Relationship fundraising" model is particularly relevant for the sensitive nature of hospice fundraising**, where emotional connections are paramount and resource intensive.

# ERNOP Research Note

## Academic articles on philanthropy through a practitioner lens

### Take aways & Learnings



This study, based on semi-structured interviews with 10 bereaved hospice donors in the UK, provides several key learnings for practitioners.

- **Timing is Crucial.** The importance of timing and ability to ask at an appropriate time after the emotion occurring in the first phase of the bereavement journey. Donors' motivations and engagement change over time, from initial distraction and connection with the deceased to, for some, a diminished involvement as they move forward with their lives. Early giving can aid in coping with grief. Tailored approaches that acknowledge where donors are in their bereavement journey are vital.
- **Connect Giving to Gratitude and Reciprocity:** Awareness, gratitude, and reciprocity are powerful drivers, but they need to be communicated and connected to the impact of the donation. Donors are motivated by a newly realised awareness of hospice needs, profound gratitude for the care received by loved ones, and a desire to reciprocate or "pay forward" the benefits to ensure future access for others.
- **Nurture Personal Bonds to Build Loyalty.** Donors develop strong loyalty and trust through positive interactions with both frontline care staff and the fundraising team. Given the turnover of staff, it's essential to document these personal ties to ensure the relationship with the donor endures beyond any one employee.
- **Generic communication can be a false economy:** Bespoke stewardship is essential; generic communications are not. While personal connections are highly valued, generic communications from hospices often lead to dissatisfaction and may not effectively prompt further giving.
- **Scale Personalisation with Technology.** Most hospice fundraisers are a one-person operation. With a 25% increase in care needs and a single fundraiser, achieving personalisation without technology is impossible. Small improvements in their CRM to predict when a donor may be ready for a higher-level ask, such as a permanent memorial or a legacy gift, and prompt the fundraiser with this insight at the optimal time can have a huge impact in revenue. This allows the lone fundraiser to scale their efforts, focusing their limited time on high-impact interactions rather than on manually tracking every donor, ultimately making personalised stewardship possible despite a significant increase in demand.

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