

Best Grief Support Initiative

AWARDS

THIS CAN HAPPEN GLOBAL.

In association with

A&O SHEARMAN

THE INTERNAL SUPPORT AWARDS

Winner //

A&O SHEARMAN

This award recognises programmes offering outstanding support and raise awareness of the needs of employees experiencing grief.

This employee-led initiative transformed grief support at A&O Shearman – combining specialist expertise, peer connection and practical resources to create a psychologically safe space where people can access support when they need it.

Grief does not begin and end with bereavement leave. Employees recognised that loss can resurface over time and that many forms of grief – including infertility, miscarriage, divorce and childlessness – can go unrecognised at work.

The Grief Circle emerged directly from employee advocacy and lived experience, rather than as an HR-led programme. Employees helped shape the model, championed engagement and continue to sustain the community.



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From Bereavement Support to Ongoing Grief Care

Following planning in late 2024, a six-month pilot launched in February 2025. Strong feedback led to a funded, year-round programme with 10 sessions per year, held on the first Tuesday of each month to build consistency, trust and accessibility.

Sessions are led by a Chartered Counselling Psychologist specialising in grief, trauma and mental health, and supported by a Grief Circle Hub and Teams community offering resources, benefits, counselling pathways and HR guidance.



A string quartet accompanies an evening of reflection and remembrance hosted by A&O Shearman's London Grief Circle.

Awareness was built through intranet communications, newsletters, posters, HR advocacy and peer-to-peer promotion. A flagship candlelit string quartet event created a high-profile opportunity to open conversations around grief and attracted 250 registrations and 150 attendees – around 13% of the UK employee population.

Results & Impact

Monthly sessions attract 10–15 participants, including both regular attendees and new colleagues. Participants join for different reasons, from struggling to return to work after bereavement to seeking professional guidance or simply connecting with others who understand.

The strongest feedback centres on the reassurance of shared experience and access to specialist expertise – particularly the value of “having access to a professional” and “knowing they are not alone.”

Following the flagship event, around 10 additional employees joined the Grief Circle community, demonstrating continued engagement beyond the event itself.

Available to approximately 1,900 UK employees and contractors, the initiative has helped shift grief from something viewed as a short-term event requiring temporary support to a human experience that can affect people throughout their working lives. ■

Judges' comments

- + It's remarkable to have such a high take up on events around grief.
- + Amazing to read about this grass rooted initiative which recognises all types of grief.

Shortlisted

- A&O Shearman
- MUFG