

Ways of working with children and families

DEVELOPING CHILDHOOD BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

You probably already have an idea of the kind of service you want to provide: have a look at our Factsheet One 'Setting up a service' if not. However, your needs assessment may have prompted you to look again at what's really needed locally, or you may want to be sure that you have considered all the options. This factsheet gives an overview of the main types of interventions that are being delivered across the Childhood Bereavement Network (CBN) and suggests useful resources for exploring the options in more detail.

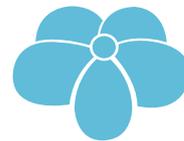
There are many types of services in operation across the country for bereaved children and young people, offering a range of interventions. (see **Box 1**). In deciding what to offer, organisations consider a number of factors, in particular their principles or philosophy of bereavement, the needs they have identified locally and the resources available. For example:

- a service in an area where few people are available to volunteer develops interventions led by paid staff
- a service in an area where other agencies provide one-to-one support for bereaved children and young people concentrates on providing group activities
- a service in a rural area with poor public transport establishes telephone, email, SMS and other online support services.

Many services start small and add to their range of interventions as they build up experience and listen to suggestions from families, referring agencies and other childhood bereavement services. In the table on pages 2, 3 and 4, overleaf, we show some of the different models of

Box 1: The national picture

95% of services offer information and advice
 86% offer individual family support
 74% provide a service to 'secondary users' such as schools and emergency services
 64% offer pre-bereavement support
 62% offer one-to-one work with children
 53% offer group work with families
 45% offer group work with children
 32% offer training to other agencies



Childhood
Bereavement
Network



The Childhood Bereavement Network (CBN) is the hub for those working with bereaved children, young people and their families across the UK. We underpin our members' work with essential support and representation: bringing them together across localities, disciplines and sectors to improve bereavement care for children. Collectively, we share a **vision** that all children and young people in the UK, together with their caregivers, can easily access a choice of high quality local and national information, guidance and support to enable them to manage the impact of death on their lives. See childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk for more information and details of how to join. In this series of factsheets we have worked with local services and other stakeholders to gather information and practical advice on key topics for those interested in developing childhood bereavement support services.

intervention most commonly delivered by childhood bereavement services, and highlight some of the practical issues, challenges and reasons why they are believed to be helpful. This information has been provided by CBN members.

You will need to do further research to decide which of these interventions is appropriate for your service. You can find out more by:

- attending training offered by CBN members childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/events
- applying for a place on the undergraduate diploma and postgraduate certificate in childhood bereavement offered by St Christopher's Hospice Candle Project and Hospice UK. Search 'childhood bereavement' at hospiceuk.org
- following up the resources and further reading suggested on page 6
- contacting and visiting existing services to see the range of their interventions and the rationale behind them.

Interventions with bereaved children and families

Type of intervention	Why do it?	Staffing implications	Other things to think about
<p>One to one/family support</p> <p>Support delivered by a skilled, trained practitioner to an individual child or family.</p> <p>Aims to provide opportunities for child or family to share their feelings and develop strategies for managing their bereavement.</p> <p>Content and structure varies significantly depending on age of child, skills base of the practitioner and philosophy of the organisation – can range from befriending to in-depth counselling.</p>	<p>Opportunity to meet the needs of bereaved children who, for whatever reason, may need additional support.</p> <p>Helps enable children to manage significant life events, so that they can achieve their preferred outcomes.</p>	<p>One skilled, trained worker per child or family with administrative support to manage referrals.</p> <p>Training and regular, quality supervision required for staff and volunteers.</p>	<p>Referrals: need clear process for managing these.</p> <p>Space and privacy: support may be delivered in child's home, at school or in a therapeutic setting, again depending on organisational approach.</p> <p>Assessment procedure: may be informal or formal but very important in identifying what kind of support is most appropriate in that child's particular circumstances.</p> <p>Resources: either well-stocked playroom, or if delivered on an outreach basis, the worker needs to be able to transport appropriate equipment, for example drawing and writing materials, dolls etc.</p>
<p>Closed groups for children/ young people and their parents/carers</p> <p>A set number of sessions with a set group of children or young people and their parents/carers.</p> <p>Generally aims to provide opportunities for meeting others, peer support, remembering and sharing experiences and issues.</p> <p>Some follow a very structured programme (e.g. for younger children). Others are led by what participants want to do and talk about. Parent groups often run alongside children's, so that experiences are shared.</p> <p>Some services offer residential groups, run over two days. Groups for particular experiences (eg those bereaved through suicide, teenagers) can be helpful if there are sufficient numbers.</p>	<p>Access to peer support is widely held to be an important way of helping children manage their bereavement.</p> <p>Tends to be cost effective and can be a vehicle for involving parents simultaneously, so that they can better support their child. For example, carrying out the same activities as the child opens up opportunities for discussion and sharing.</p> <p>Residential groups can increase children's confidence and give adults opportunities to explore their own grief as well as considering how to support their children.</p> <p>Groups for those bereaved through a particular cause can reduce isolation and stigma.</p>	<p>Depends on level of support you want to offer. Some involve just a few workers. Others have a high ratio (e.g. one adult to 1.5 children) to ensure that someone is always on hand during small group work to encourage and support the child when they start talking about their feelings.</p> <p>Parent groups require fewer workers – typically two facilitators and one person to provide administrative support.</p> <p>Residential groups need high numbers of trained staff and volunteers as well as practical helpers. Certain activities may need trained (external) staff (e.g. archery).</p>	<p>Appropriate venue, catering and equipment for games and activities.</p> <p>Organisation: need to ensure that all resources are prepared in advance, there is a list of attendees and volunteers and a timetable setting out expectations on volunteers and paid staff etc</p> <p>Safety: have a first aider and first aid kit to hand. As with all interventions, the service will need a confidentiality policy and clarity on safeguarding children.</p>

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<p>Open groups for children/ young people and their parents/carers</p> <p>A group with a less formal structure that people can attend on an ongoing basis to discuss issues as they arise. Sessions may have specific themes or be focused on having fun together. Attendance at an open group may follow from one-to-one work or closed group work.</p>	<p>Reflects the reality that grief is ongoing and can take different forms over time.</p> <p>Provides 'open door' support for children and parents who can dip in and out as required for as long as they need.</p>	<p>Need a team of staff and volunteers with the skills to respond flexibly to whatever arises in sessions and to variations in numbers attending.</p> <p>Returning families may wish to see the same worker: clarity is helpful that it is the service, not an individual, providing the support.</p>	<p>Venue and activities: appropriate to all likely attendees.</p> <p>Refreshments</p> <p>Communication: make sure families are aware of the offer of additional support should they need it.</p>
<p>Drop-in service for children/ young people and their parents/carers</p> <p>The service is available at a set time and in a set place every week for informal contact from those who are not otherwise supported by the service.</p>	<p>Provides an opportunity for those who are hesitant about seeking support to 'taste' the service.</p> <p>Demonstrates that the service tries to be accessible to all.</p>	<p>Need a team of staff who can respond to whoever attends and volunteers to provide refreshments and encouragement.</p>	<p>Venue: with the potential for private spaces for conversation with families.</p> <p>Refreshments and activities for those waiting.</p>
<p>Family days / Remembrance events</p> <p>Social therapeutic event to which parents and children are invited. Can take a variety of forms. Some are annual, some held more frequently e.g. at Christmas and in the summer. Usually held at a family-friendly venue with different areas and activities which are conducive to developing social networks and remembering the person who has died.</p>	<p>Opportunities for remembrance and social connection and communication with others are important parts of bereavement support.</p>	<p>For remembrance events, lots of preparation work is required, often requiring one dedicated administrator plus a planning team. On the day itself, most staff and volunteers tend to get involved. Some organisations bring in volunteers from local companies to help out, e.g. by serving food or overseeing parking</p>	<p>Cost may not be that great if you can get support from local companies – e.g getting venue and/or catering free or reduced rate, getting a sponsor.</p> <p>Getting the balance right: between remembering those who have died, and providing opportunities for fun and socialising. Sometimes it helps to have different activities and areas clearly dedicated to each.</p> <p>May need to help shy families meet others, without appearing to interfere.</p>
<p>Pre-bereavement support</p> <p>Support for children before someone close to them dies, to prepare them for bereavement.</p> <p>Traditionally offered through hospices, though being run as a community service in some areas.</p>	<p>Enables the child and family to be better prepared for the bereavement. May reduce need for services post-bereavement, as support systems and strategies in place.</p>	<p>Depends on the model used. Can be run like 1:1 work (see above). May also work with other agencies to help them improve their pre-bereavement support.</p>	<p>As per one-to-one support (referrals, space, assessment, resources - see above)</p> <p>Clarity: about the scope of the service, e.g. is it for those affected by the illness of those with terminal</p>

Type of intervention	Why do it?	Staffing implications	Other things to think about
			<p>conditions or, more broadly, those with life-limiting conditions?</p> <p>If both pre- and post-bereavement support will be offered, how will the two service models fit together? And if separate services, who will provide the complementary part?</p>
<p>Telephone, email or web support</p> <p>Helpline, email, website and online, providing opportunities for children and families to seek information, advice or support.</p> <p>Telephone and email services can provide individual responses from qualified or experienced staff or volunteers.</p> <p>A website can provide access to information and resources, as well as a message board function which enables young people to correspond with and support each other.</p> <p>Some services have developed an app to support children's grief and use social media such as Twitter and Facebook.</p>	<p>Can reach large numbers of people in an effective way.</p> <p>Winston's Wish, CBUK and Cruse, for example, run national services. Other services offer telephone support on a more local, informal basis as this is an important first point of contact for many service users.</p>	<p>Depends on model used.</p> <p>Helplines and email support: some services are staffed only by clinical practitioners to ensure a level of expertise, experience and continuity in support; others are staffed by helpline-specific volunteers.</p> <p>Website: also need IT support to develop and maintain appropriate functionality for the site e.g. message boards.</p> <p>Social media: needs regular monitoring and updating</p>	<p>Infrastructure: need space, privacy, good equipment, answering machine and sufficient phone lines to offer professional helpline service.</p> <p>Similarly a good IT set-up for email support.</p> <p>Funding: continuity and quality of service is important so need specific funding strategy.</p> <p>Supervision: telephone calls can be as demanding as face to face work.</p> <p>Safety and quality: forum and social media messages need to be checked regularly and responded to promptly.</p>
<p>Training, consultancy and supervision</p> <p>Working with other professionals in the private, public and voluntary sectors to help them develop their skills in bereavement support.</p> <p>This may take the form of generic or bespoke training, workshops, conferences, consultancy support to other organisations, telephone support and supervision to individual practitioners.</p>	<p>Increases capacity of family and community-based services to understand bereavement and support bereaved children effectively. Helps to normalise bereavement.</p> <p>Can provide an income stream.</p>	<p>Generally carried out by paid staff with experience both in training and bereavement support.</p> <p>Good use of staff time as training others increases local capacity.</p> <p>Normal supervision arrangements apply. Some 'training the trainers' work required.</p>	<p>Preparation: becomes less onerous over time as materials are refined through ongoing evaluation and feedback. Remember there will be costs for staff time and for development and production of course materials.</p> <p>Training sessions can raise personal issues for those attending which the trainer needs to be able to manage.</p> <p>Marketing: people need to know the training is available.</p>

Typ of intervention	Why do it?	Staffing implications	Other things to think about
<p>Written information and resources</p> <p>Good quality, generic written material can help children and families to understand death and begin to think through practical and emotional issues.</p>	<p>Can reach a wide audience and provide a doorway to other services.</p> <p>Often it is what parents and carers say they want and need, particularly in relation to supporting their child.</p> <p>Some resources can be income generators.</p>	<p>Need people who can research, write and edit – these may be in-house or external.</p> <p>Designers and printers are also necessary to produce the materials to the desired quality and quantity.</p>	<p>Check if planned resource already exists, to avoid duplication.</p> <p>Need ongoing commitment to keeping resources up to date and relevant to as wide an audience as possible.</p> <p>Resources for young people benefit from being produced with the involvement of young people themselves.</p>

Service snapshots

Group support

For many bereaved children and young people, the chance to meet others and to give and receive peer support is key. SlideAway works in West Kent through groups of schools. Bereavement Contacts in each school identify bereaved children and refer them for workshops. Following assessment with the family, the parent attends a one-day workshop, and the children then attend a two-day workshop for primary or secondary age pupils. The workshops include memory activities, sharing the story, identifying and expressing feelings. They also talk about ways of coping on difficult days, and identify who is there for them, before a closing ceremony. Contact is made with all families following a young person's attendance at the workshops, and referrals can be made for children needing further 1:1 therapeutic support.

At Richmond's Hope in Edinburgh, young people aged 13-18 who have had 1:1 support can join the fortnightly teenagers' group on a rolling entry basis, usually committing to coming along for a term. The group of around 12 young people meets for an hour and a half, with structured grief-related activities and projects such as photography or creative activities. The group is currently producing a cookbook of recipes that remind them of those who have died. Each session also includes time to relax and get to know one another, helping to build a community of support.

Winston's Wish co-ordinate a range of groups: in most of these, parents and carers meet separately yet alongside their children. The children work in groups according to their age and within the context of a wider group of bereaved young people. These groups include: a group for under 5s; creative art groups; an 'outward-bound' style group for teenagers; day groups for those bereaved through accident or illness - usually held across two consecutive days but occasionally across two weeks. There are also residential groups for those bereaved through suicide and for those bereaved through murder or manslaughter. Because of the particular bereavement being faced, residential groups give participants a chance to share deeply with others who 'get' some of the additional pressures of being bereaved in this way. Conversations and support over supper, night walks and bonfires combine with the therapeutic work (and fun) that happens during the day to provide a powerful and helpful experience.

Resources

Please see the other factsheets in this series.

Books: *A Guide to Developing Good Practice in Childhood Bereavement Services*, Childhood Bereavement Network, 2014. Available on joining Childhood Bereavement Network childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

Brief Interventions with Bereaved Children. Second Edition B. Monroe and F. Kraus (Eds), OUP, 2009.

Interventions with bereaved children S. Smith and M. Pennells (Eds), Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1995.

Then, Now and Always. Supporting Children as they Journey Through Grief: J. Stokes, Winston's Wish, 2004

Consultations

Sometimes children don't need direct support – they need their parents, carers or the professionals supporting them to be a bit more confident (at a time where they feel things are out of their control). Spiral at Family Care in Nottingham offers bookable consultation sessions which parents or professionals can use to discuss practical strategies for supporting a child. This might be around helping a parent rehearse the story of what has happened so they can explain it to the child, or encouraging a teacher to think about the best way of supporting a whole class following a death in the school community. The emphasis is on building confidence and resilience within the child's existing social support networks, but Spiral staff can then go on to offer a full assessment to the family if this is needed.

Family memory days

Nottingham Children's Hospital runs an annual day for 150-180 siblings, parents and wider family members of children who have died at the Hospital. The day is held at a venue with plenty of outdoor space, and run by volunteers from among the hospital's staff. Families arrive in time for a buffet lunch and then wander around the grounds taking part in craft activities and games together. There is quiet area where they can light a candle and remember the child who has died. Together they make a memory board which is displayed in the Chapel for the following year. Towards the end of the day, the names of the children who have died are read out, and families release balloons.

One to one support

The St Christopher's Candle Child Bereavement Service offers one-to-one support for bereaved children and young people, however the death was caused. Candle covers five south-east London boroughs, and works with children and young people who are struggling within their existing support networks to manage their grief. With 4 part-time staff making up around 2 FTE, the service supports around 200 families a year. Families can refer themselves to the service or a professional can make the first contact on their behalf. After an initial assessment, the service offers a brief intervention of up to six sessions per child at St Christopher's premises. Knowing that children's grief often re-emerges as they go through further changes, the service is organised so that families can return at any time for bereavement-related follow up sessions, until the children are 18.

Pre-bereavement support

SeeSaw in Oxfordshire runs a pre-bereavement service, offering one-to-one support to families as well as consultancy support to other agencies. It is delivered by one member of staff who initially spent a lot of time making links with relevant agencies in the field, helping them to support more children themselves, and also to know when to refer to See Saw. The approach taken with children and families is flexible, depending on their needs, but it seeks to offer a seamless service before and after bereavement. SeeSaw has found that giving families the opportunity to explore feelings and put coping strategies in place before bereavement means that they are less likely to need additional support after bereavement.

Online support

Nelson's Journey recognised that many young people prefer to access support online. They worked with their Youth Panel and a digital company to develop a free smartphone app, 'Smiles and Tears' which allows young people to save their memories, write thoughts, feelings and emotions, remember their special person and seek support. The app, available on Android and iOS platforms, also includes tips on how to manage common emotions such as anger, confusion, guilt and loneliness. Nelson's Journey also offers a secure online forum for children and young people being supported by the service. It allows young people to interact online safely with others with similar experiences. Children receive login details when they are referred to the service, and all messages are moderated before being posted to the forum.

Training

Child Bereavement UK helps professionals respond appropriately to grieving families' varied emotional needs. Part of this involves delivering training in venues across the UK – one of their core charitable activities. Their approach has evolved by listening to professionals about their concerns, what they want to know and how they would like to learn. Consequently their training enables people to fill the gaps in their professional training around bereavement support, to have some theoretical basis to this new learning, to share with colleagues and to learn from families. There is a core training programme – mostly one-day workshops – plus a variety of bespoke training, national and regional conferences and study days, and an on line learning module for teachers and others working in schools.