



# Identifying needs and mapping services

**F**inding out what kind of demand there is for your service and how it fits with other agencies in the local area is a key step in your development. This kind of exercise can confirm there is a real need for the service and provide you with useful data for approaching funders. It will also give you valuable information on how best to meet the needs and expectations of the people who are likely to use the service you are setting up. This factsheet gathers the experiences of Childhood Bereavement Network (CBN) subscribers on ways of identifying needs and mapping service provision.

## Why do you want to set up a service?

Before getting into any detailed analysis of local needs and available services, it can help to write down what it was that made you see the need for a childhood bereavement service in the first place. It may have been personal experience, a newspaper article, frustrations as a practitioner, conversations with a colleague or knowledge of a family not being able to find appropriate support for their child. Doing this can help to define the vision for your service, if you have not already done so. It should also inform the kinds of questions you need to find answers to in your needs analysis and service mapping exercise. Such an exercise will give you a more comprehensive picture of:

- the people you want to help
- the kind of services and support they want and need
- the range and availability of services already operating in the area.

There are a number of benefits in carrying out this kind of research:

- You can check your vision and make sure you are on the right track. If you are not, you can revisit your vision for the service and tailor your service model accordingly.
- Supporters (including funders) will want to know that your service is offering something necessary and not duplicating existing provision.
- You need to know there is a need for your service to keep your momentum and enthusiasm going.
- It can provide useful background information for your monitoring and evaluation activity, for example by giving you information on what the local situation was like before you set up your service. You will be able to use this information later to draw conclusions about the impact and reach of your service.

 The Childhood Bereavement Network is a multi-professional, national federation of organisations that work in various settings with bereaved children and young people, their families and other caregivers. We provide information, networking opportunities and good practice guidance to our subscribers, and signpost bereaved families and others to sources of information and support. In this series of factsheets we have gathered information and practical advice on key topics, to support those interested in developing childhood bereavement support services.

**“Write down what it was that made you see the need for a childhood bereavement service in the first place”**

# Identifying levels of need in the local population

## Why?

This exercise will satisfy yourself and others that there is a real need for your service. It helps to be as knowledgeable as possible about bereaved children and young people in your area, and what their needs and expectations are.

Useful things to explore are:

- approximately how many bereaved children and young people there are locally
- the proportion of bereavements through sudden and expected deaths
- what kind of issues they are likely to face
- what kind of support they are likely to benefit from
- what kind of short and long-term impact this can be expected to have

- whether particular local circumstances might affect how you deliver your service (e.g. travel arrangements)

- population data which will give you information about the cultural, language and faith needs of the people you are aiming to serve.

## How?

There are a number of methods you might use to obtain this kind of information.

### 1. Gathering statistics

Finding statistics on childhood bereavement is difficult as there is a lack of comprehensive official data. CBN is lobbying government to collect and report on the incidence of bereavement in childhood, in the way that they do on the

numbers of children affected by parental divorce. However, there are some sources you can access to get a proxy figure for numbers in your local area (see **Box 1**). All of the publications and organisations referred to are listed in **Resources** on the back page of this factsheet.

### 2. Undertaking a survey

See page 3.

### 3. Carrying out a consultation

See page 4.

## A review of bereaved children's needs in Telford and Wrekin

**Heather Brown, Telford and Wrekin Mental Health Promotion Programme and 'Forget Me Not' childhood bereavement support service**

Our aim was to find out about the needs of bereaved children and young people in our area and start the process of developing a business plan for a new service. We secured funding from the local Children's Fund and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services to research the needs of bereaved children and practitioners locally. First we undertook a literature review which helped us identify good practice and gave us examples of relevant questionnaires and interview schedules, which we adapted to carry out our own local mapping of need and existing service provision.

We interviewed several parents and children and carried out a series of focus groups with 12 to 19 year olds at the local hospice. We asked what bereavement support they felt they needed, what had been available to them in the short and long term and whether there were any barriers to access. We also asked the children how they felt their schools had dealt with their bereavement.

Next we surveyed local schools and children's agencies to find out how many bereaved families they been in touch with in the last year, whether they offered support and how confident they felt in doing this. They told us what further support they would like either for themselves (for example training or support in developing policies) or for bereaved families directly. We then interviewed about 20 headteachers in more depth, particularly from schools which had experienced traumatic bereavements. They were keen to contribute to the development of a service which could have helped them.

To find out more about the cultural aspects of bereavement in our area, we employed a consultant who interviewed workers and agencies supporting black and minority ethnic communities. This gave us valuable information about the traditions associated with different religious and cultural groups, and raised issues about how well these communities were served by local professionals.

The research project generated lots of information and ideas and to help plan a way forward, we invited all the research participants to a 'visioning day' where we shared the findings from the research and discussed a model for addressing the needs and service gaps identified. This included the development of an information and training programme for schools and the establishment of an independent charity – Forget Me Not – to develop a business plan and seek funding for a bereavement support service.

The research report will be available from November 2006. For more information contact [heather.brown@shropshireha.wmids.nhs.uk](mailto:heather.brown@shropshireha.wmids.nhs.uk)

## Box 1: Useful sources of statistical information

1. Winston's Wish have produced national statistics on the numbers of children bereaved each day. You could extrapolate this figure for your local area by using census data to work out the size of your local population as a proportion of the national population.
2. You can refer to the CBN paper *Summary of Some of the Key Issues for Bereaved Children and Young People* which has statistics on some of their needs, in the context of the government's Every Child Matters programme.
3. Contact your local registrar to discuss collection of statistics locally. You can find their details on your local authority's website.
4. Get hold of your local health service Cancer Plan for details of the number of deaths from cancer in your area.
5. The police may be able to provide statistics on the number of deaths through road traffic accidents.
6. Your mapping exercise may provide some estimates or proxy indicators from other practitioners or agencies working with bereaved children and their families.
7. There is a big focus on local needs assessment in the development of services for both children and adults. See if you can obtain a copy of any needs assessments carried out for the development of the Children and Young People's Plan, or the plan for adult mental health services. See if there is an opportunity to influence these exercises in future, so that the kind of information you are seeking is collected routinely as part of a coherent local exercise.

# Mapping services already available

## Why?

This part of the exercise will help you find out what's already available in your local community and build up a clearer picture of the needs of your local population by drawing on the knowledge of those already working with them. Doing this part of the exercise thoroughly will bring a number of benefits. In particular, it will give you:

- qualitative and quantitative information on what other services exist and are planned for the future (this will help you to avoid duplicating other services or competing for funding and service users)
- contact with potential referrers who can give you more knowledge of the needs of bereaved children and families in your area (for example what support they already receive, what their main issues and concerns are and what existing providers think about the scale of the issue and how it could be addressed)
- confidence and support that you are working in an honest and open way
- an idea of the potential level of referral to your service, to help you budget effectively
- a clearer picture of who is interested in and supports the concept of your service (they may be useful champions later).

## Who?

To start with you will need to find out which local agencies are in contact with bereaved children and are offering bereavement support. A good starting point is to draw up a list of all those agencies that are concerned with end of life or bereavement support provision, as well as those agencies who may – directly or indirectly – come into contact with bereaved children and their families. Use your local service directory, existing contacts and the internet to get contact details for education services, health services and others. This is a very broad field and you may end up with many potential contacts:

- education services span early years, primary and secondary education and educational support services provided by the local authority
- health services span primary and acute health care services for children and adults
- other agencies are located across the voluntary, public and private sectors, for example charities, faith groups, social care services and funeral directors.

## How?

Start by devising a simple questionnaire. Some example questions are suggested in **Box 2**.

- Think about what questions you want answered, then write them up using clear, accessible language.
- Compile a comprehensive mailing list, to ensure that your responses are as representative as possible.
- Pilot your questionnaire with a few people or get some input from someone with research experience to check that your questions are objective and that responses will be unambiguous and easy to analyse.
- If possible, follow up with a phone call to make sure that people have received the questionnaire, to answer any queries and to encourage them to respond.

Following this up with some more in-depth interviews with practitioners from some of the key agencies is likely to give you more descriptive information which can add a useful dimension to the survey data. For example you might wish to explore the range of needs and issues that bereaved children and families appear to be facing, what type of work is carried out with them, what the impact of this is at the moment, and why particular services might be helpful.

## Finding out about local provision

### Alison Harker, 'Luke's' Children's Community Bereavement Service

We started looking at local provision for bereaved children when a family were facing the death of their mother at our hospice. Staff and the family got together and talked about what was needed, and the hospice's library carried out a literature search about what was available.

Hospice staff including nursing staff, health assistants, the Macmillan acute and community team and social workers, formed a working party together with the bereaved family, which met monthly for a couple of years to identify local needs, existing provision and plan the development of a service. Members used their professional contacts throughout the community to visit local services and discuss needs and the provision of support. We found a need for individual and group work for bereaved children and young people.

To identify potential demand for these services, we looked back at the annual statistics at the hospice. This suggested that 100 children and young people might be affected each year by the death of a significant person in the hospice's care. From our conversations with other professionals, we realised that the service needed to be open to families bereaved through other causes, and so we estimated that 150 children might be offered the service each year in Basildon and Thurrock.

The information that we got from our informal survey of local professionals helped us make the case for a community-based childhood bereavement service, targeted at seven to 13 year olds as this age range would work well together as a group.

## Box 2: Example questions for local service providers

1. Are you in contact with bereaved families at the moment?
2. If yes, how many do you come into contact with on a monthly/yearly basis? What proportion of your client base does this represent?
3. Do you offer bereavement support? If so, what does it involve and who do you offer it to? If not, do you have any plans to develop support?
4. To which other organisations do you refer bereaved children, if any?
5. Do you see a need for or benefit in any additional services for bereaved children and young people in the area – and if so, what?
6. Are there particular issues which affect how families in this area access services, for example transport?
7. Would you be interested in helping develop a new service – with time, money, expertise or other resources (for example accommodation or equipment)?

# Getting the views of children and families

The information from the service mapping exercise should give you some indication of the kinds of services that professionals feel would be beneficial for bereaved children and families.

But remember the real experts are the children and families themselves. By building their participation into the philosophy of your service right from the start, you are more likely to ensure that it is relevant and appropriate to them. Moreover, children and young people want to be involved in making decisions that affect their lives. Participation empowers children and young people and helps them to manage their grief.

## Box 3: Top tips for needs assessment and mapping

1. You may find that you incur costs in running a focus group, printing a manifesto or carrying out some of the other activities listed here. If you do not have funding to cover these costs, try contacting your local CVS as they may be able to suggest local sources of seed funding.

2. Remember that consulting with members of the community about your planned service is likely to create some sort of expectation that the service will be set up in the near future. Make sure that you have planned how to deal with requests for support which come in before your service is up and running. It may help to draw up a short leaflet with sources of useful information and support for people to refer to in the meantime. It could include, for example the Cruse Bereavement Care website for young people and the Winston's Wish website which contains a number of activities (see **Resources** below).

3. These activities might all seem like a lot of work, but remember once the data is collected you can use it many times for many different purposes, and for a range of potential funders and supporters – you just need to keep it up to date.

4. Visit stakeholders / service users rather than send out a questionnaire – this can have a higher response rate.

5. If you want to quote from what children, families and others tell you, make sure you have their consent to do this.

## How?

There are many ways of finding out what services bereaved children and families would like, using existing source material as well as original consultation work.

### Existing sources

- The Childhood Bereavement Network has produced three videos that feature children and young people talking about the support they would have liked (see **Resources**).

- CBN also has details of similar videos produced by other organisations.

### Original consultation work

- There are suggestions and useful resources for arranging a consultation with children and families in the CBN's good practice guidance on participation (see **Resources**).

- A good way of finding attendees for a consultation event is to write an article for the local paper, for example about the impact of bereavement support, and inviting bereaved families to the consultation event.

- Alternatively consider doing retrospective work with adults who were bereaved as

children to find out about the support they would have liked and the usefulness of adult interventions at that time.

## Next steps

With all this information, you should have a clearer idea of what kind of provision is already out there, what is needed and how your service might provide it. This will allow you to refine your vision for the service you want to provide.

Revisit your service plan and be honest about the things that need to change in light of the information you have found. For example, if your mapping exercise has revealed an adult bereavement service in the area which is already experienced in working with children and is keen to formalise this work, consider working in partnership with them rather than going it alone. If bereaved children and families tell you that there is plenty of one-to-one support out there but what they would really like are opportunities to meet with others in the same situation, consider tailoring your service as a support and social network, with links into other agencies that people have said would be helpful.

## Resources

### Statistical sources

[winstonswish.org.uk](http://winstonswish.org.uk)

Go to 'about us' then click on 'facts and figures' for national statistics on bereaved children.

[childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk](http://childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk)

Search for 'Summary of key issues'.

[direct.gov.uk/mycouncil](http://direct.gov.uk/mycouncil)

This website will let you search for contact details for your local council.

[nhs.uk](http://nhs.uk)

Click on 'authorities and trusts' for details of your local PCT.

### Consultations

[childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/policyPractice\\_service.htm](http://childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/policyPractice_service.htm)

For details of a consultation on the needs of bereaved parents in rural Cornwall, carried out by Penhaligon's Friends.

[childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/policyPractice\\_guidelines.htm](http://childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/policyPractice_guidelines.htm)

For suggestions about good practice in involving children and young people in service development.

### Views of children and young people

[childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/publications.htm](http://childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/publications.htm)

For CBN videos featuring children and young people talking about the bereavement support they wanted and received.

### Websites for children and young people

[rd4u.org.uk](http://rd4u.org.uk)

Cruse Bereavement Care's website for young people.

[winstonswish.org.uk](http://winstonswish.org.uk)

Click on 'for young people'.

### Funding sources

[navca.org.uk](http://navca.org.uk)

For details of your local council for voluntary service.