

c/o Childhood Bereavement Network
National Children's Bureau
23 Mentmore Terrace
London
E8 3PN

11 July 2023

For correspondence: apenny@ncb.org.uk

Dear Prime Minister

We are writing to ask you to identify the scale of childhood bereavement and record the number of children bereaved each year of someone important in their lives, such as a parent or sibling.

The death of a close family member is one of the most challenging and stressful experiences a child can face. Yet astonishingly, we do not know the scale of this experience, nor who these children are. It is a worrying paradox that bereaved people most in need may be least likely to seek support. Without knowing who these children are, it is difficult for bereavement services to reach out to all those in need of support.

Data are collected each year on the number of adults who are bereaved of their husband, wife or child. Until recently, data were collected on the number of children affected by the divorce of their parents. But no similar data are collected on the number of those who face the devastating loss of their mum, dad or someone else important in their lives.

If we don't know the true scale of childhood bereavement, the services that exist to help children, largely provided by the voluntary sector, face significant challenges in identifying and reaching children to provide the support they need to cope with their grief. Without support, unresolved grief in young people can lead to an increased risk of youth offending, family breakdown, underachievement in education and employment, long-term mental health conditions and premature mortality.

Mark Lemon, an award-winning author, podcaster, husband and father, writes powerfully:

At the age of 12, I experienced my dad's murder. I received no help until my 20s, yet a simple administrative change could've made me more visible to get the support I needed. This is why the change is so important, because there are thousands of children and families that would benefit from the support of services that exist to help them, if only they were on their radar. This will change lives for the better.

We are writing to you as we believe this is a problem that cuts across government departments, and could be solved in various ways. We would welcome the chance to meet with you to discuss options. We are clear that a simple administrative change could pave the way for more early support from the organisations that are there to extend their vital services to support the many grieving children and those caring for them, helping them through the devastation of bereavement.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Clarke	CEO	Balloons (Devon)
Diane Clarke	Founder and CEO	CatchU
Ann Chalmers MBE	CEO	Child Bereavement UK
Alison Penny MBE	Director	Childhood Bereavement Network
Kate Baxter	Chief Executive	Children's Bereavement Centre
Steven Wibberley	CEO	Cruse Bereavement Support
Laura Lewis	CEO	Daisy's Dream
Lynne Yousef	Service Manager	Escape Intervention Services Ltd
Suzy Turner-Jones	CEO	Grief Encounter
Odette Mould	CEO	Harry's Rainbow
Catherine Sotomayor-Robbins	Service Development Manager	Jigsaw South East
Claire Powell	Bereavement Support Manager	Jigsaw4u
Jane Robinson	Manager	Leeds Bereavement Forum
Beth French	Founder and Director	Let's Talk About Loss
Sam Royston	Executive Director of Policy and Research	Marie Curie
Simon Wright	CEO	Nelson's Journey
Charlotte Aldridge	Head of Holistic Services	Noah's Ark Children's Hospice
Emily Carter	CEO	Royal Trinity Hospice
Ines Thiru	CEO	Ruth Strauss Foundation
Lee Barnett	CEO	Sandy Bear Children's Bereavement Charity
Emilia McIntyre	Project Coordinator	Saying Goodbye Project at Kingston Bereavement Service

Judith Mulligan	Director	SeeSaw
Chandra McGowan	Chief Operating Officer	Simon Says Child Bereavement Service
Fiona Walkingshaw	Head of Adult and Child Bereavement Services	St Christopher's Hospice
Jackie Stone	Chief Executive	St Columba's Hospice Care
Nicola Colgan	Child Bereavement Worker	St Gemma's Hospice
Dr Nikki Speed	Co-founder and CEO	SUDC UK
Michelle Stebbings	Executive Lead	Support After Suicide Partnership
Jane Harris	Co-Founder	The Good Grief Project
Linda Magistris	CEO Founder	The Good Grief Trust
Stephanie Patrick	CEO	WAY Widowed and Young
Katherine Brownlee	Service Director	Wiltshire Treehouse
Fergus Crow	CEO	Winston's Wish

WAY Widowed and Young

WINSTON'S WISH WW
Giving hope to grieving children

Jigsaw4u
Helping put the pieces back together

Child Bereavement UK
REBUILDING LIVES TOGETHER

RUTH STRAUSS FOUNDATION

NOAH'S ARK
children's hospice

Daisy's Dream

SAYING GOODBYE Project
SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH BEREAVEMENT

Marie Curie

Nelson's Journey
Helping kids smile to bereaved children

St Columba's Hospice Care

CHILDHOOD BEREAVEMENT NETWORK

SUDC UK
Sudden Unexplained Death in Childhood
an alliance of UK charities

jigsaw south east

Help & hope in one place
good grief

balloons

Support After Suicide Partnership
supportaftersuicide.org.uk

Let's Talk About Loss
talking through the taboo

Children's Bereavement Centre
...you are not alone

Simon Says
Child Bereavement Support

Cruse Bereavement Support

grief encounter
supporting bereaved children & young people

LEEDS BEREAVEMENT FORUM

escape
Intervention services Ltd

St Christopher's
More than just a hospice

See Saw
Grief support for children and young people in Oxfordshire

harry's rainbow

ROYAL TRINITY HOSPICE