

What's Important to You?

Analysis of ranking and rating surveys of the main UK Commission on Bereavement recommendations

January 2024

With an expected general election due in 2024, the Childhood Bereavement Network and the National Bereavement Alliance organised three surveys aimed at finding out the current priorities for bereaved children (5-12), young people (13-18) and adults.

Using the recommendations from the UK Commission on Bereavement, each survey was tailored to age, and experience. Distributed to children and young people during Children's Grief Awareness Week 2023, and to adults during National Grief Awareness Week 2023, the surveys were open for approximately six weeks, before closing in early January 2024.

Adult surveys

227 adults responded to the adult survey, with the majority considering themselves as female (79%, n=180) although 18% (n=41) of respondents were men. Respondents also identified themselves as white (90%, n=205), with very low response rates from other ethnicities. All regions of the UK were represented, with higher response rates from South East and South West England and the West Midlands. 96% of respondents confirmed they were bereaved, with substantial majorities being bereaved of parents (59%, n=127) or partners (39%, n=84).

Key priorities for adults

The surveys asked people to either rate a statement or intention in terms of agreement (1 – 5 rating scale, with 5 indicating strong agreement), or rank a series of recommendations in preferred priority order. These recommendations were grouped according to the broad themes identified in the UK Commission on Bereavement: improved support across employers, schools and services; money, benefits and housing; death administration; funerals; public attitudes and education; and government action.

Of the four statements to be rated against the five-point scale, the top two recommendations highlighted difficulties faced in dealing with death administration, coupled with a desire to improve understanding of and compassionate responses to death, dying and bereavement:

- **72% of respondents strongly agreed** (91% agreed or strongly agreed) that the Government, businesses, and services should have clear customer service standards and processes so that bereaved customers are treated well.

- **68% of respondents strongly agreed** (91% agreed or strongly agreed) we should talk more about death, dying and bereavement, with the Government funding projects to help create compassionate communities around bereaved people and families.

One of the top ranked recommendations was a call for better funded palliative and end of life care. As this speaks to the calls made in the joint manifesto '[A manifesto for palliative and end of life care](#)', we will acknowledge this and amplify this policy call when where appropriate.

Other top ranked recommendations spoke to **improved support for children and young people in educational settings**; more **support from employers** including paid time off and **better funded bereavement support**.

When asked to rank the six themed areas that needed immediate improvement to progress support for bereaved children, young people, families and adults, the results were consistent with the top ranked and rated individual recommendations: **improved support across employers, schools and services**, along with better access and support in **money, finances and housing** were the top two areas prioritised by respondents. These reflect the ongoing daily stresses for bereaved people, which can remain long after their emotional and psychological needs have been met.

Additional comments

In the free text box designed to elicit further understanding about the needs of bereaved adults now, common themes emerged.

- A need for **signposting to support services** (both emotional and practical) was highlighted, echoing concerns raised as evidence in the UK Commission on Bereavement.
- **Changing public attitudes** was a related point – with several comments noting the loneliness and isolation that comes from being bereaved and unsupported by friends, family and other close communities.
- **Simplifying and humanising death administration** was particularly highlighted
- **Improved or extended financial support** for surviving partners and their families was also mentioned.
- **Support for children and young people** was also noted, including the idea of time limited free school meals for bereaved children and young people; and improved support for pupils.
- Improved **central government support and funding** of current bereavement services was also noted.

Children and young people

Children's responses

27 children aged 5 – 13 years responded to the child's survey, although not all the children answered every question. Most of these respondents were older children: 10 – 12 years old (48%, n=11). Most children identified as white (90%, n=20).

Responses came in from a broad mix of areas across all four nations, although several areas were not represented (Northern Ireland, Wales, North East England, West Midlands, South West England). Although not all respondents answered a question around being bereaved, 100% of those who did respond were bereaved, with a significant majority experiencing the death of a parent (50%, n=11) or grandparent (36%, n=8).

Children were asked to rate and rank a very short series of questions, based on the recommendations that would directly affect them. You can see these recommendations in Appendix 2.

Children echoed the thoughts of adults, wanting improved access to bereavement support and support for their parents if bereaved:

- **88% of respondents strongly agreed** (94% agreed or strongly agreed) that a family should automatically be told about the organisations that can help after a bereavement.
- **82% of respondents strongly agreed** (94% agreed or strongly agreed) that everyone should be able to get help to talk about their feelings and cope with their grief if they need it.

Children also thought that support for parents was critical, along with the support offered at school, with the recommendation for **time off work for parents** ranked the highest.

Young people

22 young people responded to a young person's survey, although not all respondents answered every question. Most respondents were young people aged 13 – 15 years (53%, n=9). They identified as white (69%, n=11), although there were responses from those who identified from minoritised communities.

Again, there was a good spread of respondents from around the United Kingdom, although some regions were not represented (Northern Ireland, North East England, East Midlands, East of England, South West England). 16 of a possible 22 respondents confirmed they were bereaved (73%), with 14 respondents noting they were bereaved of their parent or grandparent (n=10 and 4 respectively), although there was a breadth of experience, including friends, siblings and wider connections (such as the death of a best friend's father).

Young people were asked to rate and rank a short series of questions, based on the recommendations that would directly affect them. You can see these recommendations in Appendix 3.

Young people echoed the thoughts of adults, wanting improved access to bereavement support and support for their parents if bereaved:

- **73% of respondents strongly agreed** (91% agreed or strongly agreed) that everyone should be able to get help to talk about their feelings and cope with their grief if they need it.
- **63% of respondents strongly agreed** (91% agreed or strongly agreed) that a family should automatically be told about the organisations that can help after a bereavement.

When asked to rank a series of statements, young people agreed that **support in school was critical**, followed by **improved understanding and support from adults**.

Interestingly, both sets of children and young people respondents rated learning about death and grief lower than schools having a plan to support bereaved pupils. Further insights into children and young people's attitudes to learning about death and grief at school can be found in the results of the Childhood Bereavement Network's collaboration with VotesforSchools. Children and young people were asked to vote on the question ['Would you know how to support a friend if someone important to them died?'](#) after a gentle and sensitive introduction to grief and peer support. Each question highlights different feelings and attitudes toward grief education.

Both sets of children and young people respondents thought that a supportive school structure was essential, speaking to the [whole school approach on bereavement](#) championed by the Childhood Bereavement Network.

Appendix 1: Full list of ranked and rated statements (adult survey)

Ranked statements (all in priority order)

Improved support across employers, schools and services

- All children and young people should be supported at school if they are bereaved, including a plan to help with homework, exams and time off school if needed.
- All workplaces should help you with a bereavement, including paid time off if someone closes to you dies.
- All professionals who deal with or support bereaved people should have the right training so they can understand and support these people.
- There should be quality standards for bereavement support to make sure bereaved people are supported in the best possible way.

Money, benefits and housing

- New laws should be passed to make sure it is easier to get financial support following a bereavement (some groups of people are currently excluded from financial support).
- Every year, all bereavement benefits should increase in line with inflation.
- New laws should be passed so that landlords need to give at least 6 months notice for an eviction of remaining tenants, if the person who is named on the tenancy dies.

Government action

- The Government should fund palliative and end-of-life care, so more people can have a good death.
- The Government should make sure that bereavement support is also funded, so everyone that needs it can be supported after a death.
- The Government should create a bereavement strategy to make sure all efforts to improve bereaved peoples' lives are joined up.
- The Government should fund research to understand different bereavement experiences, and use that knowledge to improve bereavement support.

Funerals

- When people need to organise a funeral, it should be easy to find out and understand how much it will cost.

- The local council should make sure people can register a death at any time of day and night, to help families who need an immediate funeral for religious reasons.
- The Government should create minimum standards for public health funerals (for those people who do not have relatives or friends to organise a funeral for them).

Rated statements (all in priority order)

Grief education

- We should talk more about death, dying and bereavement, with the Government funding projects to help create compassionate communities around bereaved people and families.

68% strongly agree, 22% agree

- Every child and young person should be offered age-appropriate lessons on coping with grief and bereavement at school.

62% strongly agree, 23% agree

Death administration

- The Government, businesses and services should have clear customer service standards and processes so that bereaved customers are treated well.

72% strongly agree, 18% agree

- People should have a choice about registering a death either in person or online.

46% strongly agree, 32% agree

Overall ranked areas of priority

- Improved support across employers, schools and services
- Money, benefits and housing
- Death administration
- Public attitudes and education
- Government action
- Funerals

Appendix 2: Full list of ranked and rated statements – children's survey

Rated

- Some children and young people find it difficult to get support if they need it after someone important dies. They or their family might not know about the organisations that can help. When someone dies, should their family automatically be told about the organisations that can help?

88% strongly agree, 6% agree

- Everyone should be able to get help to talk about their feelings and cope with their grief, if they need it.

82% strongly agree, 12% agree

- It should be easy to talk about death and grief with anyone I know.

35% strongly agree, 41% agree

Ranked (in priority order)

- If one of your parents or carers dies, the other one should have some time off work.
- Your teachers and other people at school should help you if someone you know dies.
- Learning about death and grief at school will help people talk about it simply and easily.

Appendix 3: Full list of ranked and rated statements – young people's survey

Rated

- Everyone should be able to get help to talk about their feelings and cope with their grief, if they need it.

(73% strongly agree, 18% agree)

- Some children and young people find it difficult to get support if they need it after someone important dies. They or their family might not know about the organisations that can help. When someone dies, should their family automatically be told about the organisations that can help?

(64% strongly agree, 28% agree)

- It should be easy and simple to talk about death, dying and grief.

(9% strongly agree, 55% agree)

Ranked (in priority order)

- Your school should support you if you are bereaved, including a plan to help you with homework, exams and time off school if you need it.
- If someone I know dies, then I want everyone who deals with me to understand what it might be like and the feelings I may have.
- Learning about death, dying and grief at school will make it easier for everyone to talk about these topics.
- Your workplace should help you with a bereavement, including paid time off if someone close to you dies.