



Codebook

*Capturing bereavement
support impact in feedback
comments*

Codebook User Guide

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1. Introduction: Who is this User Guide for and what is it about?

This **User Guide** is for bereavement services who would like to use the Codebook to analyse free-text comments provided by their service-users/clients on evaluation or feedback forms. The Codebook provides a structured way to analyse free-text comments and can help services better understand and demonstrate their impact and identify areas for improvement.

This guide provides a practical, step-by-step overview of how to use the Codebook. It covers:

- What the Codebook is and how it was developed
- How to prepare and enter data
- How to code free-text responses consistently and meaningfully
- How to filter and explore experiences across different service user groups
- How to interpret the automatically generated bar charts
- How to create concise qualitative summaries of themes
- Appendices with extended theme/code descriptions, example free text responses and how to code them, and a sample survey template

An **Example Codebook** is available [here](#) to accompany the User Guide and illustrate what the Codebook looks like, with coded examples of free-text survey data.

A copy of the **Codebook for use by services** is available free of charge and can be downloaded after completing a short registration survey which can be found [here](#).

2. Background, purpose & development of the Codebook

Background

Bereavement services commonly collect qualitative and quantitative evaluation data for the purposes of quality assurance, service improvement, reporting to funders, advocacy and fundraising. Qualitative data provides powerful insights into how a service is working and benefiting its clients. However, conducting rigorous analysis of this data can be challenging for services due to e.g. a lack of skills, time and access to specialist software for qualitative data analysis.

Purpose

To support services' analysis and interpretation of qualitative evaluation/feedback data, the *Marie Curie Research Centre* at *Cardiff University* in collaboration with the *National Bereavement Alliance (NBA)*, the *Childhood Bereavement Network (CBN)* and the *University of Bristol* have developed an analytical Codebook to help make the analysis of such data more efficient and robust.

The Codebook is designed to help services:

- better understand how their support benefits clients
- identify patterns in service impact and better understand what works well (or less well) for different socio-cultural groups of clients
- identify where improvements may be needed
- provide a way of robustly evidencing impact alongside quantitative metrics.

Development

The analytical framework that makes up the Codebook is underpinned by the analysis framework developed during our mixed-methods [Bereavement during Covid-19 \(BeCovid\)](#) study to categorise and describe the different ways in which bereaved people had felt helped by different kinds of support following their bereavement. The Codebook was then refined with insights from additional research in the field as well as input from an online workshop with stakeholders from the bereavement support sector and feedback from two pilot organisations who tested the Codebook.


The development of the resource was funded by a grant from Cardiff University’s ESRC IAA Fund and is freely accessible for wider use under licence (see [Terms of Use](#) at the end of this document).

3. Format of the Codebook

The Codebook is an electronic spreadsheet created in Microsoft Excel, containing two tabs/pages:

- **Codebook tab:** contains the actual Codebook where users import and analyse free text responses (see example below).
- **Bar chart tab:** displays bar charts that provide a basic quantitative overview of how support benefited services users and areas where support may have been less helpful, based on the free text analyses carried out in the Codebook tab.

Expressing feelings and feeling understood				Understanding and accepting grief and loss						
Feels more heard/understood/accepted/seen in their grief	Helped by expressing feelings with independent other(s) in a safe space	Helped by talking with others with similar experiences/ shared understandings	Helped by working through difficult feelings (e.g. anger & guilt)	Feels more able to understand, accept and manage grief/feelings	Feels more able to understand and accept the death and/or circumstances relating to the death	Feels more able to deal with feelings/memories relating to a difficult relationship with the deceased person.	Helped by learning about and understanding grieving process	Helped by recognising that feelings are normal & not alone feeling this way	Helped by talking about and sharing memories of the deceased person	Helped by other activities which maintain connection to the deceased/keep memory alive
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

 **Please note:** Older versions of Excel may not support the interactive tick box feature, showing instead the text TRUE or FALSE in the cells. If you experience this issue, please [get in touch](#) and we can provide an alternative version of the Codebook that does not rely on tick boxes.

Codebook tab

The **Codebook** tab contains the structured analysis framework which is used to code free text responses collected from e.g. feedback forms. Within the analysis framework, the ways in which service users felt helped are captured through a range of codes which are grouped into **five overarching themes**:

1. *Expressing feelings and feeling understood*
2. *Understanding and accepting grief and loss*
3. *Strengthening of social support and relationships*
4. *Managing and moving forwards with life*
5. *Delivery and accessibility of support*

A 6th category is included to capture any descriptions of negative or unhelpful support experiences that service users may share to help services identify areas for improvement or which highlight more systemic issues that may be beyond their immediate control. If needed, services can also add additional codes in the 'Other' theme.

6. *Negative experiences/areas for improvement*
7. *Other*



Themes and example quotes

A comprehensive table that outlines the main themes and the associated codes alongside illustrative quotes can be found in [Appendix A](#) to help services familiarise themselves with the analytical framework.

If services have captured sociodemographic information in their feedback/evaluation forms (e.g. age, gender or ethnicity of respondents), such data can be added to the Codebook tab and used to filter the free responses (see [Filtering data](#)) to understand how support is experienced by sub-groups of participants.



Any additional codes should only be added in the 'Other' section. Adding new columns within any of the other themes to accommodate additional codes may interfere with the auto-generated bar charts described below.

Bar charts tab

The primary focus of the codebook is the qualitative analysis of service users' feedback comments or free-text responses, aimed at gaining a nuanced understanding of service users' experiences and views of the support provided to them. However, the **Bar charts tab** aims to provide some basic quantitative insights into the free text responses, displaying for each specific code within each main theme the proportion of respondents that this code relates to. This offers some basic insights into which experiences are frequently described across the dataset, and which are less commonly mentioned across the sample of service users. If the dataset is filtered (see [Filtering data](#)) by demographic variables (e.g. female participants), the graphs will show the results for the filtered respondents only (e.g. female participants).

4. How to use the Codebook

The steps below describe how to add your feedback/evaluation data to the Codebook, code/analyse the free text responses, and use the filtering function in Excel to better understand the support experiences of different service user groups.

Adding your data to the Codebook

This may vary depending on how your service collects and manages evaluation/feedback data (e.g. export of online survey data or manual entry of data from hardcopy questionnaires into Microsoft Excel or other spreadsheet programmes). To import service users' responses from an existing spreadsheet/database you will need to copy and paste this data from your spreadsheet into the **Codebook** tab:

- 1 **Download** the Codebook Excel file.
- 2 **Save** the file with a file name of your choice.
- 3 **Open** the file and navigate to the Codebook tab.
- 4 **Adjust the number of columns** in the Codebook tab to match the number of questions in your evaluation/feedback questionnaire (including demographic questions of interest e.g. gender, age, ethnicity). By default, Columns B to K are set up to accommodate data from feedback questionnaires with up to 10 questions. Column A is reserved for respondent IDs – either add existing IDs or create new ones at this stage.
- 5 **Highlight and 'copy'** (right-click) the data you would like to add in your existing spreadsheet (make sure to include your column headers as they may show e.g. your feedback survey questions), then, in the Codebook, select **Cell A2** and **paste** your copied data along with the headers. Alternatively, if you're working from hardcopy questionnaires, manually enter your data, also adding in the appropriate column headers.
- 6 **Delete** any rows which include respondents who have not provided any free text comments.



Make sure that:

- **Column A** either shows an existing respondent ID or assigns new IDs to your respondents (this column must be populated for the graphs to function correctly).
- Your **column headers** are shown in **Row 2**.
- Starting **from Row 3**, **each row** represents the responses from **one service user**.



To help visualise how these steps translate into practice, please have a look at the screenshot below as well as the accompanying [Example Codebook](#) available [here](#) which shows the Codebook populated with example data.

Row 2: Column headers in Columns B to K show the feedback/evaluation questions. If your survey has more than 10 questions, add additional columns.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1											
2	Participant ID	Please tell us your gender/identity	How old are you?	Which of these broad ethnic groups do you identify with?	Please also describe your ethnic identity in your own words.	Did you receive counselling support from us?	If yes, please tell us how this support helped you.	Did you take part in peer-support group?	If yes, please tell us how this support helped you.	If you received any other support from us, please tell us what this was and how it helped you.	Please tell us about anything that did not work well for you or you think could be improved.
3	1	female	18-24	White	Welsh	no		yes	Knowing other people feel like I do makes you feel less alone.		
4	2				Caribbean	yes	She is a very skilled counsellor, and I feel safe with her. She understands the grief is a much longer process than most other people. It means I don't feel embarrassed explaining how lonely and desperate I still feel. Other people would not expect me to say those things as it is over two years.	yes	The widows club is useful as you can say how you feel and know that they understand as they have been through the same thing.		
5	3				Indian	yes	Grief counselling has helped me express my feelings without putting a burden on family. Have been able to explore my feelings, be reassured they are normal, and find ways to further process and come to terms with events.	no			
6	4	female	45-54	White	English	yes	Having the one to one counselling has really helped with managing my grief. It has helped me to understand the complexity, duration and feelings I am having.	no		The [online community] I can just vent all what I feel there and I always have a nice word from someone there. There is always someone to share experiences and to give you a boost.	

Column A is reserved for Participant IDs. The first ID should be placed in cell A3.

Capturing the type(s) of support accessed

The codebook is designed to be applied to feedback relating to different **types and modalities of support that may be captured in feedback questionnaires** (e.g. counselling/creative therapy/online community support) as well as **feedback for the service as a whole**.

If you are interested in distinguishing the impact of different support types (e.g. counselling vs. online bereavement forum), it's important to capture which kind(s) of support a respondent's free text comments refer to so you can filter the free text comments by support type.

Select ▼

Use the yellow **'Type of support accessed'** column to select the relevant support type that a respondent's free text comments(s) refer to from the **drop-down menu**. If a respondent mentions more than one type of type of support (e.g. counselling and a support group), choose 'Multiple types of support accessed'. This column can then be used for filtering data by support-type (e.g. by 'counselling', 'group support', 'multiple').

L
Type of support accessed (if to be coded from free text responses - click on cell and then on the small arrow in the bottom right corner of the cell to open and select from drop-down menu)
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Self-help resources (e.g information from website)</p> <p>Online community support (e.g. online forum)</p> <p>Telephone helpline</p> <p>Webchat/email support</p> <p>Support group (in-person/virtually) or group counselling</p> <p>One-to-one support (e.g. counselling)</p> <p>Specialist mental health support</p> <p>Other</p> <p>Not sure</p> <p>Multiple types of support accessed</p> </div>



Managing free text that refers to more than one type of support

If you have a data set in which respondents commonly describe their experiences with *multiple* support types, the coding will not be able to distinguish the unique impacts of the different support types for these respondents. Instead, the coding (and the associated bar charts) will reflect the combined impacts of the different types of support used by these clients.

If you would like to analyse the impacts of different support types separately you will need to duplicate and separate your responses before coding. For instructions on how to do this, see [Appendix B: Distinguishing unique support impacts](#).

Coding the free text responses

As a first step, spend some time familiarising yourself with the coding framework in [Appendix A](#) or the [Example Codebook](#) (available [here](#)).

For each survey respondent's free text responses, think about which code(s) can be applied to that response (i.e. they describe what is being said by the respondent) and then scroll across the spreadsheet and place a tick into the corresponding tick box(es). It may be helpful to begin with a small subset of your data until you feel more confident in using the Codebook.



The quickest way to navigate between codes is to use the [arrow keys](#) on your keyboard and select/de-select tick boxes by pressing the [space bar](#).



Alternatively, you can also click on the tick boxes with your mouse.

For ease of coding, we also recommend hiding your demographic data columns when coding so that you can only see the free-text responses that you are coding.

Important reminders when coding:



Respondents may share thoughts or experiences that express more than one way in which they have felt helped so it is appropriate to assign multiple codes (which may also be codes from different themes) to a single comment when relevant. Also, not all themes/codes will be relevant to every type or setting of support.



Make sure to stay close to the data and try not to over-interpret/make assumptions-the codes that are selected should directly reflect what is being described by the respondent (for some illustrative examples, see [Appendix A](#)).



When in doubt, refer to the code definitions and examples provided in [Appendix A](#) and use your judgement to ensure consistent and meaningful coding. When you start out, it can be helpful to ask a colleague to check some of your codes to see if they also agree with your chosen codes and/or to revisit your early coding once you have become more familiar with applying the codes to check for consistency.



Depending on your specific support setting, you may also feel that you need to add additional codes. You can do this by creating your own column headers in the 'Other' theme in the codebook.

Filtering data

If you would like to filter the free text responses e.g. based on socio-demographic information, support-type or specific impact/experience codes, scroll to the top of the column you would like to filter, click on the small drop-down arrow in the column title and select the criteria you are interested in (e.g. female respondents). Excel will then hide all rows that do not match your criteria and show only the relevant data. If you would like to filter by impact/experience codes, select 'TRUE' from the drop-down menu.

Remember to 'undo' the filtering (by 'selecting all' in tab) to return to full dataset and before applying further filters.

Interpreting the bar charts

The auto-generated bar charts on the **Bar charts tab** show the proportions of respondents for whom a specific code was selected. For example, if 12 out of 30 service users who completed a feedback form mentioned that they benefited from 'sharing with others with similar experiences', the chart would show 40% for this particular code.

If a filter is applied on the **Codebook tab** (e.g. data are filtered to show responses from female respondents only), the bar charts automatically update to show only the included respondents and the percentages are based on this sub-group of respondents only (e.g. 20 female respondents).



Small sample sizes

Percentages can exaggerate or distort findings when working with small sample sizes. Always consider the actual number of respondents behind the percentages (shown at the top right of the bar charts tab) to avoid misleading conclusions.

'Not mentioned' doesn't mean 'not helpful in that way'

The bar charts reflect only what respondents explicitly stated in their comments. A respondent not mentioning a particular type of helpful impact does *not* mean they did not experience it - it may simply not have been something they thought to write about.

Creating a qualitative summary of each theme

To create a narrative summary of each theme, start by filtering one code within the theme to retrieve all data relating to that code. Write a sentence or two which describes the different experiences relating to that code/type of impact and then repeat for all other codes within that theme.

These can then be connected to create a narrative/paragraph which summarises that wider theme (e.g. understanding and accepting grief and loss), with one or two extracts/quotes selected to illustrate the theme.



Remember to 'undo' any filtering, before applying filtering for another code.

If you would like to qualitatively describe the experiences of a particular group of respondents (e.g. male clients, clients from a particular ethnic group), first of all filter the data by your group of interest (e.g. male clients), and then – **retaining that filtering** – follow the steps above (all responses shown for each code will then be those of men).

If you would like to see examples of how we summarised and described our support impact themes based on the survey data from our [BeCovid study](#), you can download our mixed-methods paper here:

Goss S, Barawi K, Sutton E, Oates R, Seddon K, Sivell S, et al. Support needs, support use and perceived helpfulness of support in a cohort of people bereaved during the COVID-19 pandemic: Insights from a longitudinal survey [Preprint]. medRxiv. 2026;2026.01.06.26343556. Available from [here](#).

5. Terms of use

The Codebook is available free of charge, but we kindly request that all users of the Codebook register their details with the team at Cardiff University.

 **PLEASE REGISTER**

To register and receive a free copy of the Codebook, please complete the short registration form [here](#).

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To acknowledge the Codebook in any publications, please use the following citation:

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<https://nationalbereavementalliance.org.uk/codebook>

To acknowledge this User Guide in any publications, please use the following citation:

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<https://nationalbereavementalliance.org.uk/codebook>

6. Get in touch



If you have any questions or would like to share feedback (e.g. suggestions for improving the Codebook), please contact harrope@cardiff.ac.uk or goss1@cardiff.ac.uk.

7. Supporting evidence

The Codebook's analytical framework is grounded in the following research:

Goss S, Barawi K, Sutton E, Oates R, Seddon K, Sivell S, et al. Support needs, support use and perceived helpfulness of support in a cohort of people bereaved during the COVID-19 pandemic: Insights from a longitudinal survey [Preprint]. medRxiv. 2026;2026.01.06.26343556. Available from: <http://medrxiv.org/content/early/2026/01/08/2026.01.06.26343556.abstract>

Harrop E, Morgan F, Longo M, Semedo L, Fitzgibbon J, Pickett S, et al. The impacts and effectiveness of support for people bereaved through advanced illness: A systematic review and thematic synthesis. Palliat Med. 2020;34(7):871–88. doi: 10.1177/0269216320920533.

Harrop E, Scott H, Sivell S, Seddon K, Fitzgibbon J, Morgan F, et al. Coping and wellbeing in bereavement: Two core outcomes for evaluating bereavement support in palliative care. BMC Palliat Care. 2020;19(1). doi: 10.1186/s12904-020-0532-4

Childhood Bereavement Network. Childhood bereavement services outcomes framework. <https://childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/files/Child-bereavement-services-outcomes-framework.pdf>

Unpublished MSc dissertation by Gail Precious (Childhood Bereavement Network) which identified core outcomes for all bereavement services (2024).

8. Appendix A: Summary of themes and codes with example quotes

The table below outlines the five main themes – each with associated codes – that describe how people felt helped by the support provided, as well as a separate theme capturing negative experiences or challenges. Additional notes and example quotations are provided to illustrate the different themes and codes. Most example quotations below are excerpts from free text responses from our [BeCovid bereavement study](#). Where appropriate, it is also highlighted where quotations reflect more than one code and should be double-coded. A separate table containing just the basic framework can also be downloaded [here](#) - it may be useful to print or keep this short version to hand when you first start coding and are not yet familiar with the coding structure.

A quick reminder about staying close to the data...





When coding, it is important not to over-interpret/make assumptions - the codes that are selected should directly reflect what is being described by the respondent.

For example:


A quote such as **'I found the group helpful in making sense of my grief.'** should only be coded as **'Feels more able to understand, accept and manage grief/feelings'** as the respondent does not go any further in describing e.g. *how* attending the support group helped them make more sense of their grief.



Similarly, if a respondent states **'I found it helpful hearing about other people's similar experiences to mine.'** without further explaining *why* this was helpful or *what impact* it had on them, this should only be coded as **'Helped by sharing with others with similar experiences/ who understand'**. However, if the respondent goes on to say that hearing about others' experiences helped them understand that what they are feeling is normal and that it also helped them understand their own feelings better, this statement should also then be coded as **'Helped by recognising that feelings are normal & not alone feeling this way'** and **'Feels more able to understand, accept and manage grief/feelings'**.


Codebook framework – extended with additional quotes and example quotes

Themes	Codes	Additional notes	Example quotations
Expressing feelings and feeling understood	Feels more heard/understood/accepted/seen in their grief	Includes feeling validated in their grief/not judged. Includes feeling understood with regards to cultural/religious/ spiritual experiences and needs.	<p>"She is a very skilled counsellor, and I feel safe with her. She understands the grief is a much longer process than most other people. It means I don't feel embarrassed explaining how lonely and desperate I still feel. Other people would not expect me to say those things as it is over two years."</p> <p> Also code as: 'Values positive relationships/rapport developed with practitioner'</p>
	Helped by expressing feelings with independent other(s)/in a safe space	Includes feeling helped by not having to burden or upset family.	<p>"Weekly counselling gives me an anchor to my week. A safe space to connect with challenging feelings, say things some people might find hard to listen to. She wasn't emotionally connected to my partner so I don't have to take care of her grief. That is greatly valued."</p> <p> Also code as: 'Helped by working through difficult feelings'</p> <p>"Talking to someone who doesn't know you enabled me to open up a lot more about my true thoughts and feelings. I felt extremely comfortable talking about everything without feeling the pressure of burdening a friend, even though I know they would never admit to feeling burdened, you automatically believe that will be the case and feel less worried about telling all to a 'stranger', especially someone naturally so empathetic with expertise in how to talk to you in a way that makes you feel completely at ease and understood."</p>



	Helped by sharing with others with similar experiences/ who understand	Similar experiences could relate to e.g. type of loss (e.g. parental/spousal/ child loss; suicide) or cultural/ religious/spiritual backgrounds.	<p>"Connecting with others in a similar situation very helpful-not having to feel like you have to 'explain yourself' or validate your feelings."</p> <p>"The widows club is useful as you can say how you feel and know that they understand as they have been through the same thing."</p> <p>"Finding a group of people who have also lost their same sex partners felt like coming home. I have been floundering around trying to make connections with people who whilst grieving had little idea of the cultural world my partner and I lived in. I was missing so much of the things we shared together in that world. This group share jokes, cultural references and experiences which feel so comfortable and familiar."</p>
	Helped by working through difficult feelings (e.g. anger & guilt)	Includes feelings relating to complex relationship to the person who died	<p>"Bereavement counsellor helped significantly in dealing with guilt and regret. [...] I've needed to address these feelings on several occasions."</p> <p>"My bereavement counsellor has used what I think is called NLP techniques to help me separate anger with what happened from grief for death of my partner. This helped me greatly as they were all bundled together in my head before the counselling started."</p>
Understanding and accepting grief and loss	Feels more able to understand, accept and manage grief/feelings	also: 'newness' of feelings; understanding that grief fluctuates/ comes in waves;	"Having the one-to-one counselling has really helped with managing my grief. It has helped me to understand the complexity, duration and feelings I am having."
	Feels more able to understand and accept the death and/or circumstances		"[Counselling] was a significant factor in my coming to terms with [name of friend]'s death."


	<p>relating to the death</p>		
	<p>Feels more able to deal with feelings/memories relating to a difficult relationship with the deceased person</p>		<p>"... although my dad was a lovely man in the last years, he was not always like that. When I was young [...] he could be very unpredictable and sometimes violent. After he died, I was hit by a firehose of really bad memories. Things I had completely forgotten came flooding back. I was not sure if they were real memories or me just mis-remembering things. I asked the counsellor about it and she said that if I remembered a lot of details about them (which I do) then they are real memories that I have pushed away for the last 50 years or so. She said it is quite common for this to happen after someone dies, which has helped me to manage these."</p> <p> Also code as: 'Learning about grief and the grieving process'</p>
	<p>Helped by learning about grief and the grieving process</p>		<p>"I read some information on a grief website I think was [bereavement charity] that explains that when your parents die even if they are elderly it has a profound effect and changes you for ever and I feel this is very true. It helped relieve some guilt about being so devastated as I felt I should be able to get over it better."</p> <p>"I found articles on how men and women grieve differently to be useful as my way of grieving was quite different from my husband's and it caused some extra stress and pain for several weeks during the early days."</p> <p>"[Counsellor] has also emailed me various papers and models which have helped me to understand the grieving process."</p>

	Helped by recognising that feelings are normal & not alone feeling this way		<p>"Knowing what/how I'm feeling is normal. That others feel the same."</p> <p>"Grief counselling has helped me express my feelings without putting a burden on family. Have been able to explore my feelings, be reassured they are normal, and find ways to further process and come to terms with events."</p> <p> Also code as: 'Helped by expressing feelings with independent other(s)/in a safe space'</p> <p>"I just needed someone to reassure me that how I was feeling in those early stages of grief was normal and that's exactly what [bereavement charity] did for me."</p>
	Helped by talking about and sharing memories of the deceased person	Includes: talking through bad memories relating to difficult relationship	<p>"Latterly [counsellor] has begun to encourage me to talk about positive and happy memories rather than returning obsessively to my feelings of guilt and loss. By talking about happy memories, I have begun to remember more of them."</p> <p>"The [online community group] was brilliant at first for just saying what is in your head. Sharing memories and upsets."</p> <p> Also, code as: 'Helped by expressing feelings with independent other(s)/in a safe space' & 'Feels more able to understand and accept the death and/or circumstances relating to the death'</p>
	Helped by other activities which maintain connection to the deceased/keep memory alive		<p>"My children have coped well. We have been honest with them and we talk about my Mum lots. We created a memory garden and we nourish and love this."</p> <p>"I always used to cook with [husband] and I have started to do things like bake bread and make meals and that process is quite therapeutic. I enjoy it, it brings back happy memories rather than memories that are painful and it also kind of feels productive."</p>
Strengthening of social support and relationships	Feels more able to communicate with family/friends/others about own		<p>"I've found it easier with time to talk to my partner, particularly after counselling from [hospice]."</p>

	grief/ feelings/ other support needs		
	Feels more able to cope with others' grief/expressions of grief		[childhood bereavement charity] helped me manage my feelings towards my children's grief. It is important to realise that parents take on their children's grief and ways to manage it too. "They have helped us with ways of talking to our daughter following her tragic loss."
	Feels more able to cope with others' reactions to own grief and/or manage relationships with others		"Advice with how to deal with well-meaning people, who tell me to 'be strong', 'holding up well', or the best 'oh, you are doing so well, I know I would crumb!' this last one felt like judgement. I don't how I am supposed to feel, this has never happened before!" "[Counselling] has also given me the courage to say no to friends and family if they suggest something I am not yet ready to do."
	Feels less isolated or lonely/ more connected to others		"A very supportive group of people, linked by widowhood. It feels like a good community." "Knowing other people feel like I do makes you feel less alone."
	Helped by knowing that others understand, care and are there when needed		"The [online community] I can just vent all what I feel there and I always have a nice word from someone there. There is always someone to share experiences and to give you hope."  Also code as: 'Helped by expressing feelings with independent other(s)/in a safe space'
	Helped by also helping others – the mutuality of support	e.g. in support groups/online communities	"It also helped that I could offer some support however small to other people going through what I was going through."

Managing and moving forwards with life	Feels more optimistic/hopeful /purposeful		<p>"The [bereavement support charity for bereaved partners] site has helped me to see that hopefully I will come out the other end in one piece!"</p>
	Feels generally better about themselves e.g. more confident/in control/aware of strengths/ improved self-esteem		<p>"I've noticed my self-esteem improving. The sessions have helped me recognise strengths in myself that I couldn't see after the loss."</p>
	Feels less overwhelmed/ burdened/more able to cope with daily life/ activities/tasks (e.g. work, education, family life)		<p>"I could not have managed to continue with work and managed my grief without that outlet [counselling]."</p>
	Helped by self-care or wellbeing activities/ approaches encouraged/ enabled by the support	<p>e.g. learning self-compassion, mindfulness, meditation, art & music, exercise</p>	<p>"My counsellor encourages me to do artwork to get her out my head."</p>

	<p>Helped with loss of identity/finding new identity and/or meaning/purpose</p>		<p>"Belonging to this group has given me back my own identity which I lost when my partner died, here I can be all I was when we were together even though she has died."</p> <p>"My counsellor has been great at giving me techniques to manage my emotions and negative self-talk as I feel I've really lost my identity and I'm in the way in my own life as I have no roots now."</p>
	<p>Helped with broader life concerns or challenges e.g. managing relationships, decision-making, stressful/unsafe situations</p>	<p>Includes having safe-guarding needs met, e.g. feeling safer as a result of contact with service</p>	<p>"My counsellor helped me make decisions about practical things like selling the house."</p> <p>"I'm finding that [counselling] is helping me to cope with other difficult losses in the past 5 years and giving me the resources to cope with a current family illness which is very troubling. I find myself less likely to be overwhelmed by grief while recognising that sometimes I will feel very sad, I'm not immediately triggered by stressful situations in the same way."</p> <p> Also code as: 'Feels more able to understand, accept and manage grief/feelings'</p>
	<p>Helped with specific mental health needs e.g. anxiety, depression, trauma, suicidal thoughts</p>		<p>"Talking with a therapist has been very helpful. I had a period of depression that triggered my seeking professional help due to suicidal thoughts and feelings. This has enabled me to better manage my emotions and to find some meaning in life after [name]'s death."</p> <p> Also code as: 'Helped with loss of identity/finding new identity and/or meaning/purpose'</p> <p>"Therapy has definitely helped lessen my flashbacks and intrusive thoughts."</p>

	Helped by advice or information on practical/financial/administrative matters relating to bereavement		<p>"I found out that I was entitled to a bereavement support grant via an online forum."</p> <p>"[Online community group] has provided helpful links and resources."</p> <p>"[...] help with benefits after the passing"</p>
Delivery and accessibility of support	Values being able to access support or connect with group members when needed (e.g. helplines, online communities)		<p>"Bereavement line that is open 24/7 - just able to listen when you need it."</p> <p>"... the knowledge that the helpline is there whenever I might need it."</p>
	Values being able to work through feelings privately, at own pace and at times that suit (e.g. self-help resources).		<p>"It (the podcast) has been something I can listen to while out walking and hear other people's experiences. Helps me to process my own feelings and recognise that what I'm feeling is normal."</p> <p> Also code as: 'Helped by recognising that feelings are normal & not alone feeling this way'</p>
	Values having dedicated sessions to focus on grief so that can focus on other areas of life at other times	e.g. counselling, support group	<p>"I don't have the freedom to grieve as I'm too busy. I started making some time when I had bereavement counselling. "</p> <p>"It's a regular slot when you know that's what you're going to do, so that bit about turning and facing the pain and all those sorts of things, you can jump in and out of it and those sorts of things, so that was valuable."</p>

	Values positive relationships/rapport developed with practitioner/ other group members	e.g. easy to talk to	"My counsellor's calm, gentle manner helped me feel safe enough to talk about the hardest parts of my grief. The relationship we built has been a huge part of why the sessions helped."
	Values having cultural and/or spiritual/religious beliefs/needs reflected in the support given		"It meant a great deal that the service connected me with a counsellor who shared my cultural background. I felt more at ease and able to talk honestly about pressures and expectations that others might not understand."
	Values support as a generally positive/enjoyable/helpful experience		"It's been a really helpful experience during a difficult time."
Negative experiences/ areas for improvement	Perceived lack of rapport with the practitioner		"I think I possibly didn't have the best rapport with this practitioner." "Therapist too 'spiritual' for me."

	Perceived lack of sensitivity, skill, knowledge or professionalism of practitioner	includes lack of sensitivity for/awareness of cultural/religious/spiritual needs etc.	<p>"... with a counsellor who appeared unprofessional and judgmental. She didn't let me lead the session and reacted with judgment when I said that my partner was 20 years older."</p> <p>"I sometimes feel they offer advice when they shouldn't."</p> <p>"[Counsellor] seemed to have her own agenda, very focused on the impact of not being able to visit my sister rather than the loss I was feeling."</p>
	Some needs or expectations not seen as being met		<p>"The counsellor seemed intent on reliving my childhood rather than helping me with the immediate grief I was experiencing over the death of my husband."</p> <p>"Although I appreciate the help I am receiving neither of my counsellors have lost a partner so they can't understand the feelings of loss and grief."</p> <p>"Not very [helpful]. didn't feel it gave me very many practical ways to feel better."</p> <p>"Bereavement services are good but would like to be given more coping mechanisms."</p> <p>"didn't feel it gave me very many practical ways to feel better."</p>
	Not enough sessions (amount or frequency)		<p>"Did access [bereavement charity] very good but not long enough."</p> <p>"I initially had done 1:1 counselling with [bereavement charity] but those sessions ended I felt abandoned when they ended."</p>

	<p>Not the right time (accessed too soon or too late)</p>		<p>"[bereavement charity] offered 6 weeks of free counselling. I did that far too early and need it now 4 months down the line. [...] . I am currently trying to get more counselling."</p> <p>"I feel awkward making a phone call to say that I am struggling, especially as a couple of months has passed since she died. I had hoped that time would settle things down (it has to an extent) and now it seems too late to seek help."</p>
	<p>Counselling process experienced as too upsetting or emotionally draining</p>		<p>"I found [counselling] helpful at first and was kept on track. However I have now stopped as before my last session I found my anxiety rising, I was dreading it. I realised it was because I knew it would be 'crying by appointment'."</p> <p>"I had bereavement counselling with [...] but it made me even more upset & I had to stop after 4 sessions."</p>
	<p>Difficult or triggering hearing about other people's grief and bereavement experiences</p>	<p>Includes experiencing groups as too emotionally charged. Feeling that group members who are 'stuck' impede own moving forwards.</p>	<p>"Could not cope with all that emotion [in online bereavement group]."</p> <p>"Initially found support groups and online chat very helpful, but over time realised that I had become immersed in other people's grief and it was stopping me from moving forward so I slowly engaged with these forums less and less."</p> <p>I joined the [online bereavement forum] but find that there are some very upset people on there who believe that life is 100 percent terrible and that they will never get over their loss so don't go on that anymore."</p> <p>"Sometimes I feel like the people in the support group are stuck and keep scratching off the scab of grief."</p>

	Challenges around referral in /long waiting lists		<p>"It took a lot of courage to ring them and I felt incredibly disheartened when the waiting list was so long."</p> <p>"I have had an assessment for counselling but it seems to be taking for ever to arrange my first appointment."</p> <p>"It's too long winded to access resources."</p>
	Challenges around referral out /signposting on	e.g. waiting lists/poor service from services they are referred onto	"I appreciated being signposted elsewhere for some additional support, but the service I was directed to had a huge waiting list, so it didn't feel helpful in the end."
	Accessibility issues relating to location/time of day/format	e.g. online/in person	<p>"Bereavement services support groups, walk and talk, groups etc are run in working hours. If you work full-time, it is hard to take the time to commit to these groups."</p> <p>"Zoom meetings difficult to take part in because I can't get a word in and feel overwhelmed."</p>

9. Appendix B: Distinguishing unique support impacts

Free text relating to single vs. multiple types of support

By default, each row in the Codebook represents one survey respondent and their feedback which may cover one or multiple types of support.

If a respondent's comments refer to a **single type of support** only (e.g. counselling), the associated coding reflects the **unique impact** of that specific support.

If the comments cover **multiple support types** (e.g. counselling and a support group), the coding will reflect the **combined impacts** of the different types of support used by the respondent. This is because each code can only be selected once per row. Once selected, you will not know if it reflects the impact of e.g. just one or all of the mentioned support types.

Depending on your analysis needs, obtaining insights into the *combined* impact of different support types may be all that you want/need.



However, if you do want to distinguish the unique impacts of different support types—for example, if your clients very commonly use multiple support types and you would like to better understand how each type benefits clients for more nuanced reporting – there are two ways to do this, depending on how the data you have were collected.

The following pages describe and provide examples for how to approach two different scenarios and what to do if you would like to distinguish the unique impacts of different support types:

Scenario	How impact is captured	What to do to distinguish impact by type of support
Scenario A	Separate questions for different support types	Duplicate entire codebook, one copy per support type
Scenario B	No separate questions for different support types; free text comments may include references to more than one support type	Duplicate rows for respondents who comment on more than one support type to allow separate coding



The information below also explains how to correctly interpret and report the statistics/bar charts in both scenarios as these will differ depending on whether you are working with sub-samples of respondents who used a particular type of support or duplicating rows to code responses that refer to more than one support type.

Scenario A

Where separate questions capture information about each different support type (similar to our survey template in Appendix C)

→ Create a separate duplicate Codebook for each support type.

- Create a copy of the main Codebook for each of your main support types and name the copied files accordingly (e.g. Codebook_counselling and Codebook_groupsupport).
- To make sure that each of the Codebook copies includes only the free text comments covering one type of support (e.g. counselling in the Codebook_counselling copy), use the filter function (see instructions for **Filtering data**) to identify all rows for respondents who had **not** used the support type the Codebook copy is relating to (e.g. counselling), then delete these rows and make sure to remove the filtering again. Only rows that include descriptions that refer to the specific support type (e.g. counselling) should now be in the file.
- This approach will leave you with a support-specific Codebook for each of your different support types in which you can easily distinguish and describe the unique impacts of each of your support types within separate Codebook files.

The example on the next page illustrates this approach. As shown in the main file, client experiences of different support types are captured through separate questions: Respondent PID 2 accessed the support group, PID 3 accessed counselling, and PID 1 accessed both.



Remember that these support-specific Codebooks now show sub-samples of your respondents (e.g. only those who used counselling; only those who used group support).

Number of data rows = number of respondents who had used a specific support type

An example quantitative reporting statement could be written as follows (including examples with additional filtering (e.g. based on gender)):

“68 respondents had accessed counselling. 60% of the respondents who used counselling support described experiences which suggested that that they felt more ‘heard/understood/seen in grief’ as a result of the counselling support.”

“Among male respondents who had used counselling, 40% described how they felt more ‘heard/understood/seen in grief’ as a result of the counselling support.”

Scenario A: Separate questions for different support types → Duplicate entire codebook, one copy per support type

Main file: All responses for all support types

PID	Gender	Age	Did you receive <u>counselling</u> support from us?	If yes, please tell us how this support helped you.	Did you take part in a <u>peer-support</u> group?	If yes, please tell us how this support helped you.
PID 1	Female	25-34	yes	"It has helped me to understand the complexity, duration and feelings I am having."	yes	"The widows club is useful as you can say how you feel and know that they understand as they have been through the same thing."
PID 2	Female	45-54	no		yes	"It also helped that I could offer some support however small to other people going through what I was going through."
PID 3	Male	35-44	yes	"I just needed someone to reassure me that how I was feeling in those early stages of grief was normal and that's exactly what [counselling] did for me."	no	

+ **Creating copies of the main file**
To be able to code the unique impact of the different types of support, create a **separate copy** of the main **file for each support**. In each copy, remove all rows for respondents who did not use that support type so each file contains only the relevant respondents.

Copy 1: Responses for Counselling only

PID	Gender	Age	Did you receive <u>counselling</u> support from us?	If yes, please tell us how this support helped you.
PID 1	Female	25-34	yes	"It has helped me to understand the complexity, duration and feelings I am having."
PID 3	Male	35-44	yes	"I just needed someone to reassure me that how I was feeling in those early stages of grief was normal and that's exactly what [counselling] did for me."

Copy 2: Responses for Support group only

PID	Gender	Age	Did you take part in a <u>peer-support</u> group?	If yes, please tell us how this support helped you.
PID 1	female	25-34	yes	"The widows club is useful as you can say how you feel and know that they understand as they have been through the same thing."
PID 2	female	45-54	yes	"It also helped that I could offer some support however small to other people going through what I was going through."

Scenario B

No separate questions for different support types; free text comments may include references to more than one support type

→ Duplicate rows for respondents who comment on more than one support type to allow separate coding.

- Where multiple support types are described in the same response, these responses can be duplicated so that experiences of only one type of support are being coded in each row.
- To do this insert a new row below the data-row being duplicated and then copy the entire row you would like to duplicate (rather than just the data) into this new empty row.
- For each of these rows decide which type of support you are coding in this row by selecting the support type in the “Type of support accessed” column, and then code experiences relating to that support type.
- This will mean that the impacts of all support types are distinguishable in the data set when filtered by support type.

The example on the next page illustrates this approach. In the file, respondent PID 1 describes in their response how they felt helped by two types of support – counselling and group support. To distinguish the impacts of each, the row for PID 1 is duplicated so the counselling-related impacts can be coded in one row and the group-support impacts in another.



Remember that the number of rows will no longer be the same as the number of overall respondents and instead represents the number of support types described, which will affect how you report your results. See below for examples of how to report results reflecting this approach to distinguishing support impacts for different support types.

Number of data rows = number of descriptions of unique support types

Quantitative reporting statements could be written as follows (including examples with additional filtering (e.g. based on gender)):

Experiences of 100 different types of support were described by 68 unique respondents.

Out of 100 support experiences described overall, 28% of these descriptions indicated that the client felt more ‘heard/understood/seen in grief’ as a result of the support.

Out of 50 experiences of counselling described, 80% of these descriptions indicated that the client felt more ‘heard/understood/seen in grief’ as a result of this support.

Out of 50 experiences of support described by male clients, 60% of these indicated that the client felt more ‘heard/understood/seen in grief’ as a result of the support received.

Scenario B: No separate questions for different support types; free text comments may include references to more than one support type → Duplicate rows where needed.

PID	Gender	Age	Please tell us how our support helped you.	Type of support accessed (select from drop-down menu)
PID 1	female	25-34	"[Counselling] has helped me to understand the complexity, duration and feelings I am having. The widows club is useful as you can say how you feel and know that they understand as they have been through the same thing."	Multiple types of support accessed
PID 2	male	35-44	"I just needed someone to reassure me that how I was feeling in those early stages of grief was normal and that's exactly what [counselling] did for me."	One-to-one support (e.g. counselling)

PID 1 describes how they felt helped by two different types of support, hence 'multiple types of support accessed' is selected in the yellow column.

PID 2 only accessed one type of support: one-to-one support.

PID	Gender	Age	Please tell us how our support helped you.	Type of support accessed (select from drop-down menu)
PID 1	female	25-34	"[Counselling] has helped me to understand the complexity, duration and feelings I am having. The widows club is useful as you can say how you feel and know that they understand as they have been through the same thing."	One-to-one support (e.g. counselling)
PID 1	female	25-34	"[Counselling] has helped me to understand the complexity, duration and feelings I am having. The widows club is useful as you can say how you feel and know that they understand as they have been through the same thing."	Support group (in-person/virtually) or group counselling
PID 2	male	35-44	"I just needed someone to reassure me that how I was feeling in those early stages of grief was normal and that's exactly what [counselling] did for me."	One-to-one support (e.g. counselling)

+ Duplicating rows for free text comments that refer to more than one type of support

The row for PID 1 has been duplicated to allow for separate coding for the two support types the respondent had accessed and commented on in their response.

The 'type of support accessed' column can now be used to filter by support type.

+ duplicate

! When duplicating, make sure that you duplicate the entire row (rather than just the data) as this is needed for the bar chart formulas to function correctly.

10. Appendix C: Example survey template

Below is an example survey template you can use (and adapt, as needed). It is designed to ensure comments are collected separately for each type of support your organisation/service provides, and to capture key demographic information. This approach makes it easier to identify the unique impacts of different support types during analysis and explore variations by demographic group.

Survey template

Demographic information

1. Please tell us your gender identity (male, female, non-binary, prefer not to say)
2. How old are you? (list of age categories)
3. Which of these broad ethnic groups do you identify with?
Give 5 overarching groups¹ e.g.:
 - a. *Asian or Asian British* (Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi/Chinese/ Any other Asian background)
 - b. *Black, Black British, Caribbean or African* (Caribbean/ African/ Any other Black, Black British or Caribbean background)
 - c. *Mixed or multiple ethnic groups* (White and Black Caribbean/ White and Black African/ White and Asian/ Any other mixed or multiple ethnic background)
 - d. *White* (English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British/ Irish/ Gypsy or Irish Traveller/ Roma/ Any other White background)
 - e. *Other ethnic group* (Arab/ Any other ethnic group)
 - f. *Prefer not to say*
4. Please also describe your ethnic identity (e.g. Bangladeshi, Caribbean) (free text).

Questions about support use and perceived helpfulness

- 5a. Did you receive counselling support from us? (yes/no)
 - 5b. If yes, please tell us how this support helped you.
 - 6a. Did you take part in a peer-support group? (yes/no)
 - 6b. If yes, please tell us how this support helped you.
7. If you received any other support from us, please tell us what this was and how it helped you.

If you are also interested in the **amount of support**, you could use alternative response options e.g. 'yes: 6 or more sessions', 'yes: under 6 sessions', 'no'.

If you're interested in the **support format**, use e.g. 'yes: in person', 'yes: remote', 'yes: hybrid', 'no'.

Question about what could be improved

8. Please tell us about anything that did not work well for you, or you think could be improved.

* [List of ethnic groups - GOV.UK](#)



If your organisation offers many different types of support, you could consider using a drop-down menu instead, listing all of your support options and asking respondents to select one option at a time and describe how that specific type of support helped them.

5a. Please select the type of bereavement support that you used (if you used more than one, please pick one to answer about in this question)



Dropdown menu listing all bereavement support offered by your organisation (with survey set to enable only one choice at a time).

5b. Please tell us how this support helped you.

6a. Please tell us about any other bereavement support that you used (if you used more than one type, please pick one to answer about in this question)



Dropdown menu listing all bereavement support offered by your organisation (with survey set to enable only one choice at a time).

6b. Please tell us how this support helped you.

7. If you received any other support from us, please tell us what this was and how it helped you.

Note if using drop-down menus: to distinguish the impact of each type of support used please refer to [Appendix B](#). Here you can follow [option B](#) (duplicating rows) exactly as explained. However, if you would prefer to create separate data-files for each support type (as in [option A](#)), you will need to apply the filtering in **all of the columns** which contain responses on 'type of support used' to create each new support-specific data-file (e.g. counselling, group-support), following the same instructions for filtering as option A. This is because, unlike in the first template box above where each question asks about a specific type of support, these alternative questions contain multiple support-types as response options.