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# Bereavement in Childhood:

Alison Penny,

Director, Childhood Bereavement Network



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- Who we are and what we do
- Childhood bereavement in 'usual' times
- The impact of COVID-19 and lockdown
- Resources and suggestions



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Help around a death | Schools | Running a service | Campaigns | Research | Shop | About | Jobs | Training | DONATE

**HELP AROUND A DEATH**  
Practicalities  
About bereavement  
What you can do  
Find help near you  
Planning ahead  
Major incidents  
Lost for Words  
Covid-19

**SCHOOLS**  
**RUNNING A SERVICE**  
**CAMPAIGNS**  
**RESEARCH**  
**SHOP**  
**ABOUT**  
**JOBS**  
**TRAINING**

**FIND SUPPORT**  
Because of the restrictions on meeting and getting together as a result of the outbreak of COVID-19, many child bereavement services across the country are having to change the way they work. That means that some local services may not be running as usual. If you are looking for support for a bereaved child or young person, please check with the services listed below exactly what they are able to offer at the moment. You might also find it helpful to have a look at the national sources of support towards the bottom of this page.

**LOCAL SUPPORT**  
Type your postcode or nearest town into the search box below to find details of our member organisations that support bereaved children, whatever the cause of death. Families can refer themselves directly to these free services, and other children's professionals (teachers, GPs etc) can get information, guidance and support too.  
Some work with children on their own; others provide opportunities for them to meet others who have been bereaved.  
Scroll down to under the map for details of services offered across the whole country.

Search [ ]  
Map Satellite

National Bereavement Alliance

**Bereavement services: planning as lockdown eases**  
Bereavement services across the country responded very quickly to the lockdown by adopting and converting the support they offer, often very hurriedly and with little time to reflect and prepare. The easing of lockdown brings a whole new set of questions for organisations to consider. While there is pressure to resume services quickly, it is important to take time to consider and learn from what has worked well and what has worked less well during this extraordinary time. That includes thinking about which suspended services to resume, and which new services to retain. These prompts, developed by Fiona Pope at St Barnabas Hospice, may be a useful starting point for discussions. Involving managers, staff, volunteers, bereaved people and trustees will give you a range of perspectives.

**Suspended services**

- What services have you put on hold during the pandemic?
- What was the impact on bereaved people using your services? Were any groups particularly affected, either positively or negatively?
- What was the impact on staff and volunteers?
- What risks were incurred and what costs were saved by doing this?
- What evidence do you have of demand to restart this service?
- If you do restart this service, how will you comply with current and future measures to reduce the spread of coronavirus?

Introduced? Why?  
to this?  
been received by bereaved people, staff and volunteers?  
narrated as a result?  
ongoing need for / demand for the service?  
new service's effectiveness in meeting bereaved people's  
no been able to measure?  
yes to those achieved by your old service?

Why?  
where to improve what you used to do?  
or new services?  
top a new wave of services that meet bereaved people's  
this re-design?  
resources be in terms of people, money, time and energy? How  
you develop to best meet bereaved people's needs in your

- What we do
  - Signposting
  - Supporting professionals
  - Advocating
  - Generating approaches



**Is someone you love very ill?**  
**Ideas to help you stay connected when you can't visit**  
It can be so hard when someone you love is seriously ill and you can't visit them. Even though they are surrounded by people who are caring gently and kindly for them, it can be very tough to be apart from them. Here are some ways that you can feel closer together, and look after yourself. Tick the ones you feel like trying, and keep this as a reminder.

|  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to music that they like or eat their favourite food  | <input type="checkbox"/> Write them a letter or card, or draw them a picture and send it by phone   | <input type="checkbox"/> Give them something to hug and think of me  | <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure I look after myself by exercising, eating well and getting enough sleep                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ask questions about what is happening even if people get upset. I need the facts to understand, and talking about it will help me | <input type="checkbox"/> Share with others if I start to think I am to blame                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Tell people what helps me feel better and keeps me feeling safe                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Keep something that reminds me of them with me in my pocket or in a special place                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stay connected with friends and family even when we are to be apart   | <input type="checkbox"/> Find ways of expressing my feelings by writing, drawing, music or exercise | <input type="checkbox"/> Ask for any extra help I might need with school work, especially while schools are closed | <input type="checkbox"/> Record them a message telling them how much I love them, or things about my day. Make a recording of the sounds of home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ask ..... for help and support whenever I need it.  | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm going to try .....   |  |  |



Our school is Growing in Grief Awareness



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# Outline

- Numbers of bereaved children
- Risks of bereavement
- What helps

- 1 in 29 five to sixteen year olds in Great Britain have been bereaved of a parent, brother or sister – roughly one per class (Fauth et al, 2009)



- 70% of primary schools have at least one recently bereaved pupil on roll (Holland, 1993)
- $\frac{3}{4}$  of 11-16 year olds have been bereaved of someone close to them (Harrison and Harrington, 2001)



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- In Northern Ireland
  - Around 800 parents died last year, leaving dependent children – that's one every 11 hours
  - Around 1500 children and young people were bereaved of a parent last year (approx.30 per week, 4 per day)



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# Common reactions

- Anxiety
- Vivid memories
- Sleep difficulties
- Sadness and longing
- Anger and acting out behaviour
- Guilt, self-reproach and shame
- School problems
- Physical complaints

## Also find:

- Regressive behaviour
  - Social isolation
  - Fantasies
  - Personality changes
  - Pessimism about the future
  - Preoccupation with cause and meaning
  - Sense of maturation and growth
- (Dyregrov 2008)



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# Potential risks of bereavement

- Physical health
- Early mortality
- Health behaviours
- Emotional and mental health
- Education 'opposite effects' (Ribbens McCarthy 2005)
  - Attendance
  - Bullying
  - Concentration
- Employment
- Involvement in the criminal justice system





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# Sense of growth and meaning

‘I mean I love my life as it is now and I know it’s been hard and I know I haven’t been the greatest person but I do think I’ve grown and I’m the person that I am now because my dad died, and I’d like to think that he’d be proud of me for who I am’. (13 years on)

‘I mean you experience your lows but once you’ve experienced the lows the happiness is, you sort of appreciate it more’. (11 years on)

(Brewer and Sparkes, 2011)



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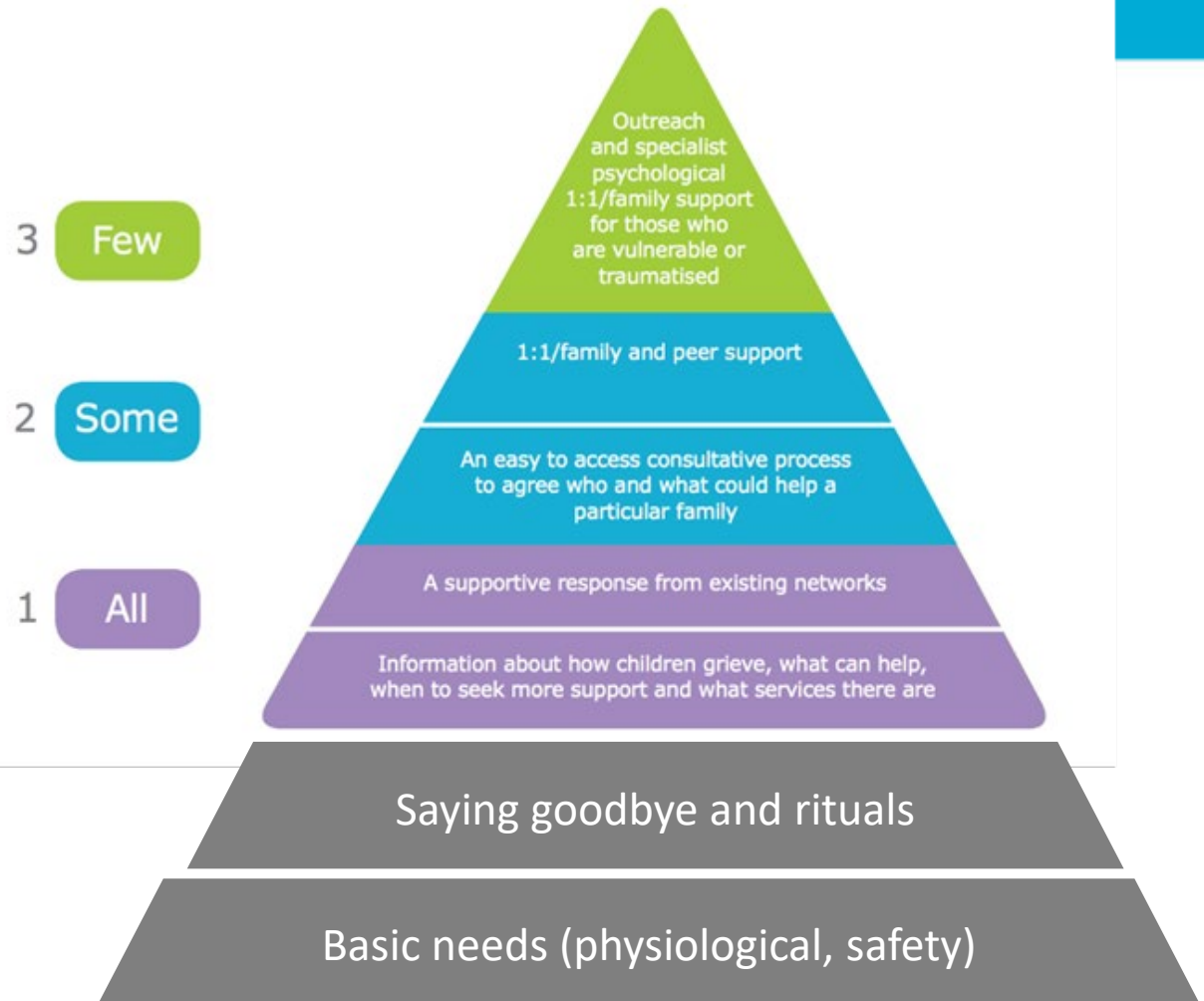
## Children and young people say that the following things can help

- having the death acknowledged
- having age-appropriate information about what has happened and what is going to happen
- having the chance to express feelings and thoughts
- being helped to remember
- taking part in opportunities to say goodbye and commemorate the person who has died
- knowing they are not to blame
- meeting others.



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# What does good support look like?

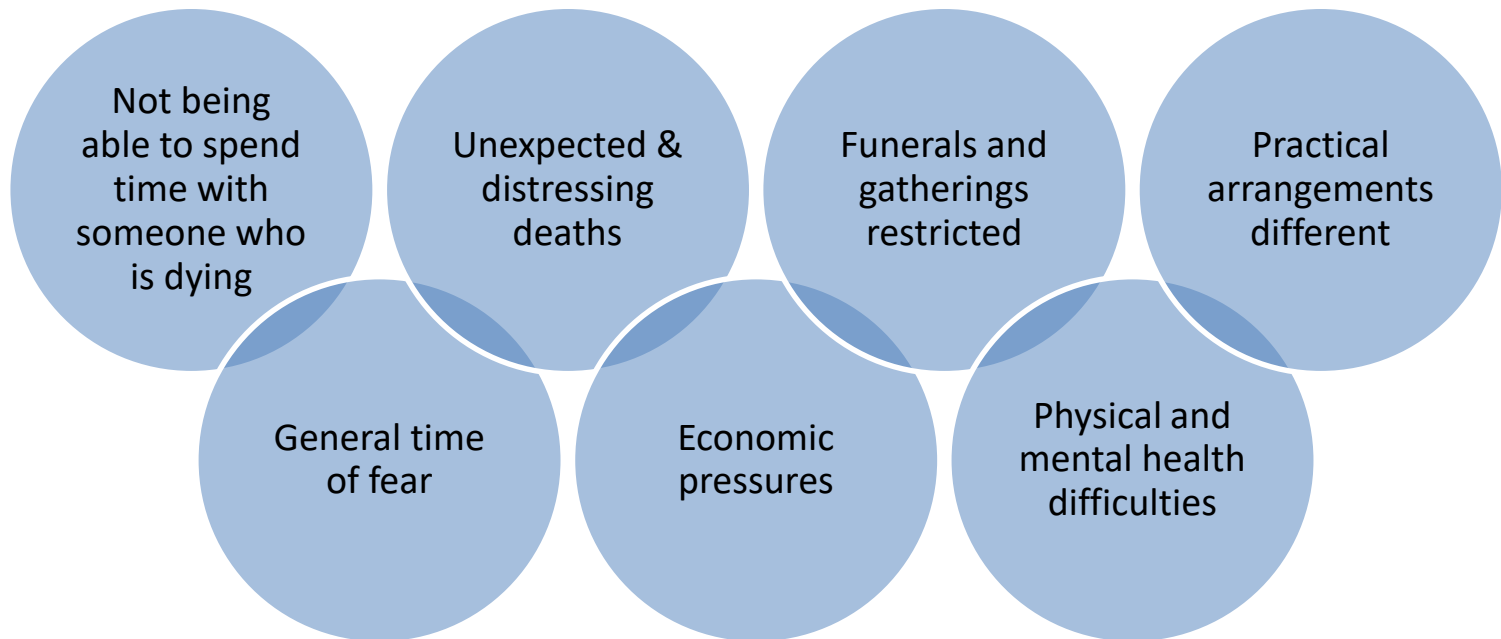




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# How COVID-19 and lockdown have affected bereavement

1. More deaths
2. Deaths in more complex circumstances





Workbook:

[http://www.hscbereavementnetwork.hscni.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Saying-Goodbye-workbook-for-children-Final-04\\_20.pdf](http://www.hscbereavementnetwork.hscni.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Saying-Goodbye-workbook-for-children-Final-04_20.pdf)

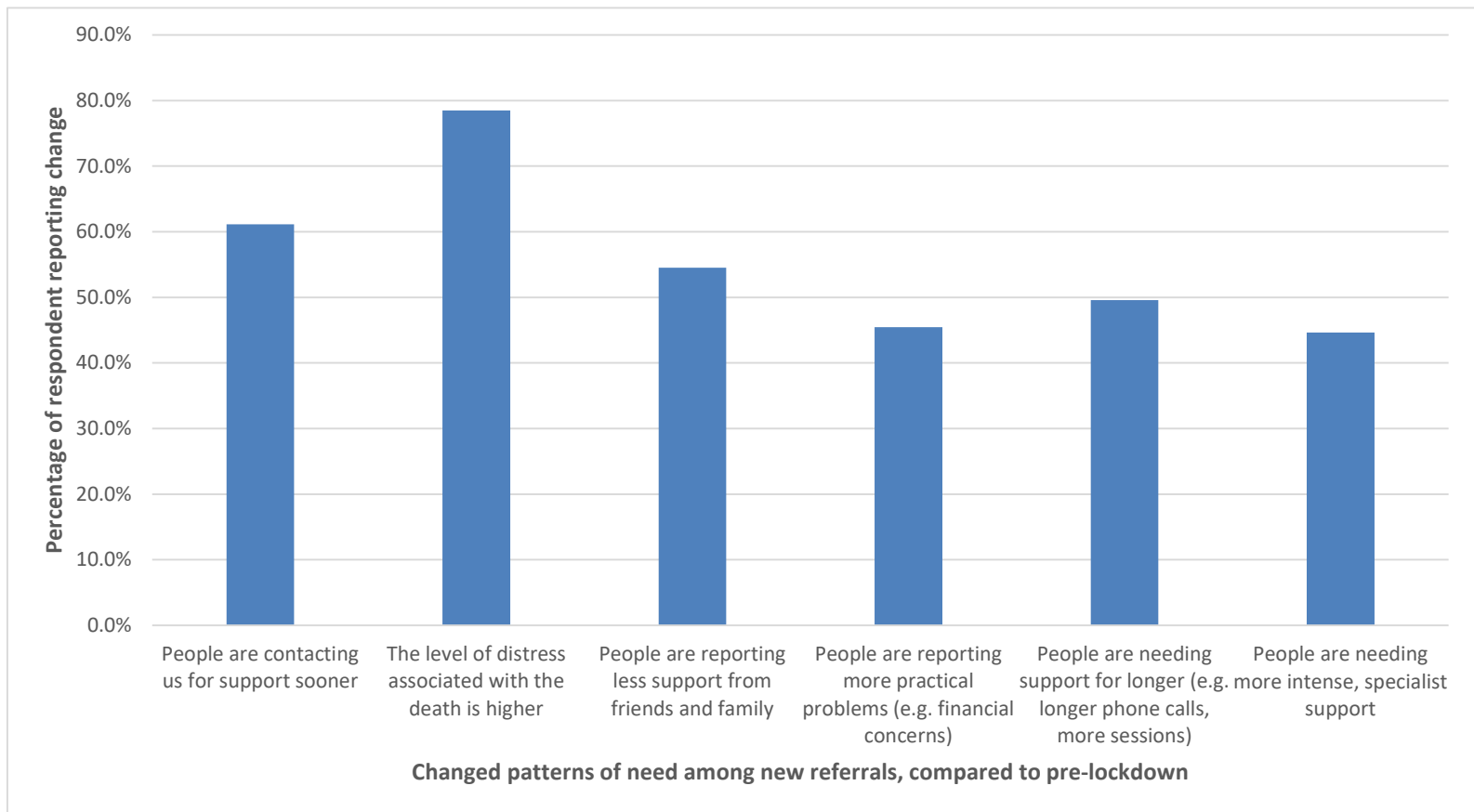
Film:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SnIYOmeAZE>



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# How COVID-19 and lockdown have affected bereavement





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# How COVID-19 and lockdown have affected bereavement

## 3. Support provided in different ways

- Remote rather than ‘in-room’
- Some services stopped
- Some started
- Challenges around visiting schools
- Challenges around supporting younger children remotely



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# How COVID-19 and lockdown have affected bereavement

## 4. Support more precarious

- Income expected to fall
- Income expected to go further
- Referrals dropped but now largely recovered
- Managers expecting demand to increase September – December and beyond





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# Resources to help: staying connected and saying goodbye



Keeping in touch  
when you can't be with someone  
who is so ill that they might die

National Bereavement  
Alliance



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APCSW  
Association of Palliative Care Social Workers


### Is someone you love very ill?

Ideas to help you stay connected when you can't visit

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- Write them a letter or card, or draw them a picture and send it by phone
- Send them something to hug and think of me
- Make sure I look after myself by exercising, eating well and getting enough sleep
- Ask questions about what is happening even if people get upset. I need the facts to understand, and talking about it will help me
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- Ask ..... for help and support whenever I need it.
- Stay connected with friends and family even though we have to be apart
- Find ways of expressing my feelings by writing, drawing, music or exercise
- Ask for any extra help I might need with school work, especially while schools are closed
- I'm going to try .....

Published by CIN at the National Children's Bureau reg. charity 258225, to help young people during the COVID19 outbreak. For more ideas and local and national support organisations, email [cin@ncb.org.uk](mailto:cin@ncb.org.uk)



NATIONAL CHILDREN'S BUREAU

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/help-around-a-death/covid-19.aspx>



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# Resources to help: a supportive response from existing networks

## Has someone important to you died?

### Ideas to give your parent or carer

People cope in all sorts of ways when someone dies. Sometimes others want to help you in your grief, but not always in the way you need. Here are some suggestions from other bereaved young people about ways your parent or carer could help. Tick the ones you think would help at the moment, and give it to your parent or carer to help start the conversation.

- Talk to me honestly and explain what has happened in a way I can understand
- Help me start a memory box or book
- Give me space but talk to me if you are worried I'm not eating properly or I'm having sleep or other difficulties
- Talk to me about the funeral and how I can be involved, even if I can't be there
- Help me keep memories alive by talking and remembering
- Notice if I am feeling lonely and find out about groups and resources for me
- Help me to have fun and laugh sometimes. This doesn't mean I'm 'over it'
- Make sure school knows about my loss
- Remind me I am not to blame and it's not my fault. I may need to talk about this
- Help me keep in touch with other family and friends even if we're apart
- Please try .....

With thanks to young people and Seasons for Growth trainers at the Notre Dame Centre in Glasgow.  
Published by the Childhood Bereavement Network at the National Children's Bureau reg. charity 258825  
For more ideas and local and national support organisations, visit [www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk](http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk)



### Audit tool

To audit your school, give each indicator a rating in column B and summarise supporting evidence in column D. If you need to do more to meet this standard, add it to your Action Plan by choosing 'Yes' in column C. Once you have rated each indicator, you will be able to download a logo for your school from the bottom of this spreadsheet. For more resources to help you complete this audit, please visit <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/schools.aspx>

| Indicator   | Rating           | Add to action plan? |
|---|------------------|---------------------|
| <b>1: Responding to a death in the school community</b>   |                  |                     |
| When a pupil has been bereaved, we have clear procedures for responding to the death of a pupil, staff member or someone important in a pupil's life, or to news that a death is expected | Please Select... |                     |
| When a pupil has been bereaved, we check with the family how they would like the rest of the class to be informed   | Please Select... |                     |
| When a pupil has been bereaved, we offer them and their family choices about how they would like to be supported, and we review this over time  | Please Select... |                     |
| We provide or can access 1:1 support for bereaved pupils who need this  | Please Select... |                     |
| We provide or can access group support for bereaved pupils  | Please Select... |                     |



<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/campaigns/growing-in-grief-awareness.aspx>

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/help-around-a-death/what-you-can-do/for-young-people.aspx>



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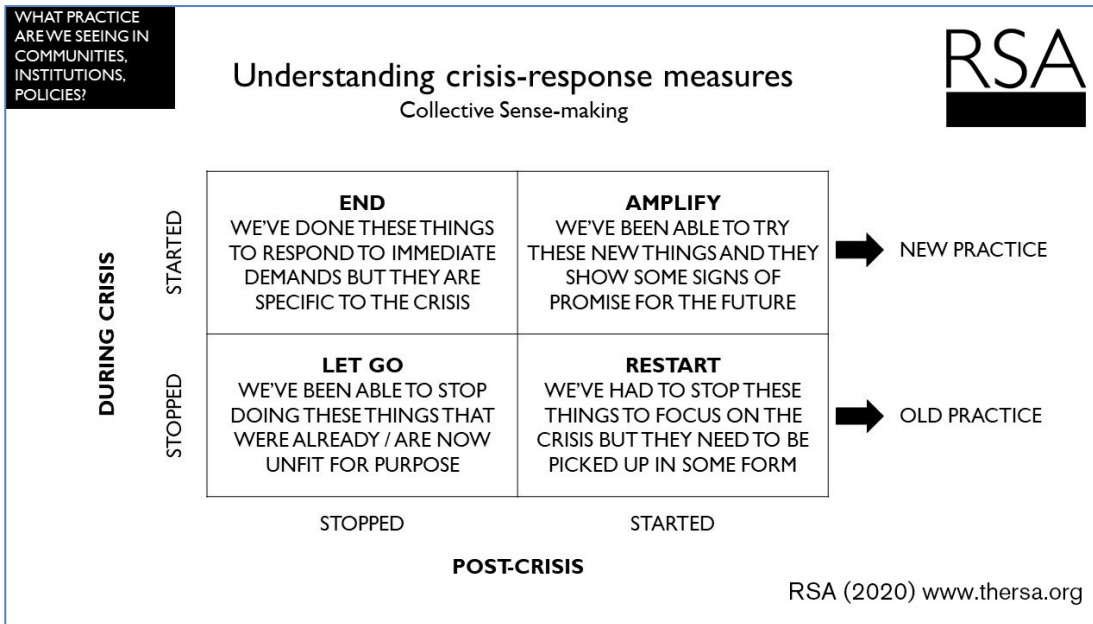
## Resources to help: support for those providing specialist & targeted support

- Monthly webinars: register [here](#). Next session 1 October 12-1 on Approaches to supporting those bereaved during the pandemic
- Training and events from our members [here](#)
- Prompts



# Resources to help: support for those providing specialist & targeted support

- Planning ahead



## Bereavement services: planning as lockdown eases

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- What was the impact on staff and volunteers?
- What risks were incurred and what costs were saved by doing this?
- What evidence do you have of demand to restart this service?
- If you do restart this service, how will you comply with current and future measures to reduce the spread of coronavirus?

### New services

- What new services have you introduced? Why?
- Where did you get the idea to do this?
- How well has your new service been received by bereaved people, staff and volunteers?
- What costs and risks have you incurred as a result?
- What evidence do you have of ongoing need for / demand for the service?
- What evidence do you have the new service's effectiveness in meeting bereaved people's needs? What outcomes have you been able to measure?
- Can you compare these outcomes to those achieved by your old service?

### As lockdown eases

- What do you want to re-start? Why?
- Are there changes you can introduce to improve what you used to do?
- Will you continue to operate your new services?
- Is there an opportunity to develop a new wave of services that meet bereaved people's needs? Who will you involve in this re-design?
- What will your own service's resources be in terms of people, money, time and energy? How will you allocate these?
- What new partnerships could you develop to best meet bereaved people's needs in your area?

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/running-a-service/covid-19.aspx>

<https://www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/rsa-blogs/2020/04/change-covid19-response>



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# Resources to help: research



- Setting out what we know about perceived research gaps and priorities
- Central point for information sharing about studies planned and underway
- Meetings for researchers in the field

Public register of current and planned bereavement research projects

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Funeral Experts by Experience - What Matters to Them?

| Project title   | Principal investigator or lead researcher | Lead institution  | Other collaborators  | Link to study website                               | Project start date | Project end date | Funding stage (please select)                              |
|---|---|---|--|---|--------------------|------------------|--|
| Grief at a Distance: A Mixed Methods Study of Grief at a Time of Covid-19 |   |   |  |   |                    |                  |  |
| Funeral Experts by Experience - What Matters to Them?                     | Sarah Jones / Dr Julie Rugg               | Full Circle Funerals  | SAIF / ICCM / Good Funeral Guide / adacemics from University of York | <a href="https://fullcircle">https://fullcircle</a> | June 2020          | September 21     | N/A  |
| Men Without Mothers: Exploring the lived experience of early motherloss   | John Sprackland                           | University of Salford   |  | <a href="http://bit.ly/38veSz0">bit.ly/38veSz0</a>  | October 2019       | January 2021     | N/A  |
| The Road Less Travelled: Understanding Grief and Loss in Rare Dementia    | Dr Kirsten Moore/Jill Walton              | UCL Rare Dementia Service and UCL Marie Curie Palliative Care Research Dept |  | n/a please email                                    | December 2019      | Spring 2021      | Pilot roll out scheduled to be complete by funding secured |



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## Resources to help

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/covid-19.aspx>



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# Children's Grief Awareness Week

Children's Grief Awareness Week  
19-26 November

Do join in!

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

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