

Scottish Bereavement Summit



Summary Report

June 2023



Overview

The Scottish Bereavement Summit explored ways of improving experiences of bereavement in Scotland.

This summary report shares an overview of the key findings from the summit. The full report can be accessed here:

<https://www.palliativecarescotland.org.uk/content/publications/?cat=14>

The Summit was a chance to...

Share experiences of current challenges facing the bereavement sector.



Take stock of recent reports and recommendations.



Discuss ideas and priorities for the future.

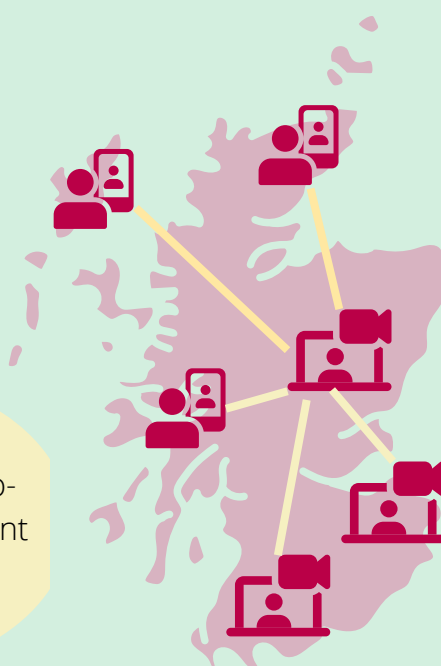


136 people joined the discussions online, mainly those working within the bereavement sector in Scotland– as practitioners, researchers, managers or policy makers. Delegates were also informed by personal and family experiences of bereavement.

Delegates shared valuable insights:

Initiatives, projects and networks that can be learnt from, built on or scaled up.

Changes that are do-able within the current environment.



Priority areas for action.

Ways that the 'system' can be improved.

The barriers to accessing, providing and improving services.

Acknowledging ongoing work...

...such as the Child Death Review Process; the Bereavement Charter for Children and Adults in Scotland, the National Bereavement Care Pathway; the Standards for Mortuary Services, and the Scottish Bereavement Networks.

..taking stock of recent reports

There were presentations on five recent reports and recommendations relating to bereavement:

Bereavement is Everyone's Business, Report of the UK Commission on Bereavement

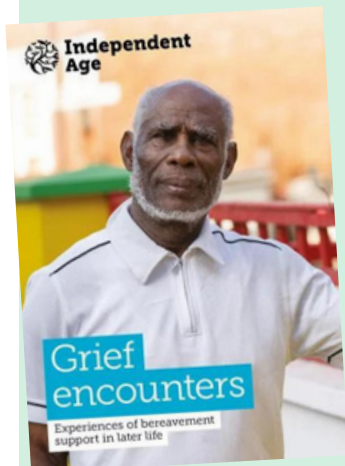
Growing up Grieving, National Childhood Bereavement Project Final Report

Grief Encounters: Experiences of Bereavement Support in Later Life, Independent Age

A better route through grief: support for people facing grief across the UK, Sue Ryder

Every Story's Ending, Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care

This was an opportunity to look at areas of overlap and difference, and for recommendations to be sense-checked with those working within the system.



... and discussing the key issues.

Shaping policy to enable improvements.

Informal support by wider society to bereaved people.

Next steps - how do we make change happen?

Improving bereavement support services.

Improving NHS bereavement support.

Improving the experiences of bereaved children and young people.

Improving bereavement support by social care

Support for social care and NHS staff who've experienced multiple workplaces bereavements.

Research.



Bereavement: Where are we now?

In addition to the usual difficulties associated with bereavement, the Covid-19 pandemic has left many bereaved people with unresolved issues that are having a negative impact on their wellbeing.

Wider societal issues, such as the energy crisis and the cost of living crises are having a negative effect on people's experiences of bereavement.

People need to feel supported wherever they are, which means that everyone needs to be able to feel able and confident to offer informal support when someone is bereaved – whether that person is a friend, a cousin, a colleague, a student or a child.

Delegates agreed that many people don't get the informal support they need from others, particularly highlighting workplace and school environments as places where improvement is needed. It was felt that many people lack the skills, confidence or opportunities to offer support, and that education and culture change are needed to enable this.

Wider societal issues are making things worse.

Bereavement services face many challenges.

The health & social care workforce needs bereavement support.

Everyone has a role to play.

Delegates were clear that bereavement services are facing a number of challenges, highlighting the top four challenges as: joining up systems; equitable access to services; demand for services is greater than service capacity; shortage of funding.

Delegates agreed that many barriers exist that make it harder for people to access formal bereavement support services, with the top three issues being that: many people don't know about the services available; many need encouragement to access support; and cultural barriers exist for many who might benefit from services.

Many people working in health and social care experience multiple deaths at work as part of their job, and this affects their wellbeing. Even when staff's needs are understood and recognised, circumstances at work make it difficult for colleagues and managers to provide support, and staff and resource shortages make it difficult to give staff the time and space they need to take care of their wellbeing.

Recommendations

The summit proposes ten recommendations which reinforce and augment findings of previously published reports.

- 1** Improve signposting to available support. 
- 2** Increase public awareness, confidence, comfort and skills relating to bereavement issues. 
- 3** Ensure strategic direction, accountability and responsibility for improving bereavement support. 
- 4** Enable schools and educational institutions to be more supportive of people who are bereaved. 
- 5** Address equity/equality issues and improve access to services for people with a range of needs. 
- 6** Encourage and support workplaces to be better at supporting bereaved staff. 
- 7** Support opportunities for professionals to network, learn and share good practice. 
- 8** Improve bereavement support for health and social care staff. 
- 9** Improve how bereavement services, projects and initiatives are funded. 
- 10** Ensure future action is informed by evidence, information and builds on existing work. 

The full report contains more detail on why each area is important, what work exists that can be built on, and some potential practical ways of achieving these recommendations. It can be accessed here:

<https://www.palliativecarescotland.org.uk/content/publications/?cat=14>

The Scottish Bereavement Summit took place on 13 October 2022.

It was supported by a collaboration of organisations working to improve bereavement support in Scotland:



Lead Author: Rebecca Patterson, Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care

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