



‘Seasons of Life: Nurturing Resilience in Children’s Grief Through Co-Design, Compassion, and Collaboration’

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Partnership Working to Improve the Experience Award 2025



Southern Health
and Social Care Trust

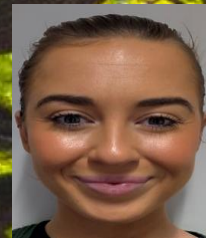
TOGETHER, IMPROVING CARE, TRANSFORMING LIVES

The Southern Health and Social Care Trust (Northern Ireland)

6 Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts provide integrated health and social care services across Northern Ireland:

- Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (Belfast)
- South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (Down, Newtownards and Lisburn)
- Northern Health and Social Care Trust (Coleraine, Larne, Antrim, Ballymena and Cookstown)
- Southern Health and Social Care Trust (Dungannon, Armagh, Craigavon, Banbridge and Newry)
- Western Health and Social Care Trust (Londonderry, Limavady, Strabane, Omagh and Fermanagh)
- Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust (covering all of Northern Ireland)





Seasons of Life Team

Working together across organisational boundaries



HSC Southern Health and Social Care Trust



Problem Statement

Bereaved children and young people are at an increased risk of:

Bereavement is a Public Health Issue.

A parent of a child under the age of 18 dies every 22 minutes in the UK- this equates to approximately 23,600 newly bereaved children each year.

Child Bereavement UK 2024

Exclusion from
school

Attempted /
completed
suicide

Poor
educational
attainment

Exposure to
financial
hardship

Involvement with
the criminal
justice system

Unemployment

Early mortality
and physical ill-
health

Diagnosed
mental health
disorder

Source: Child Bereavement UK:

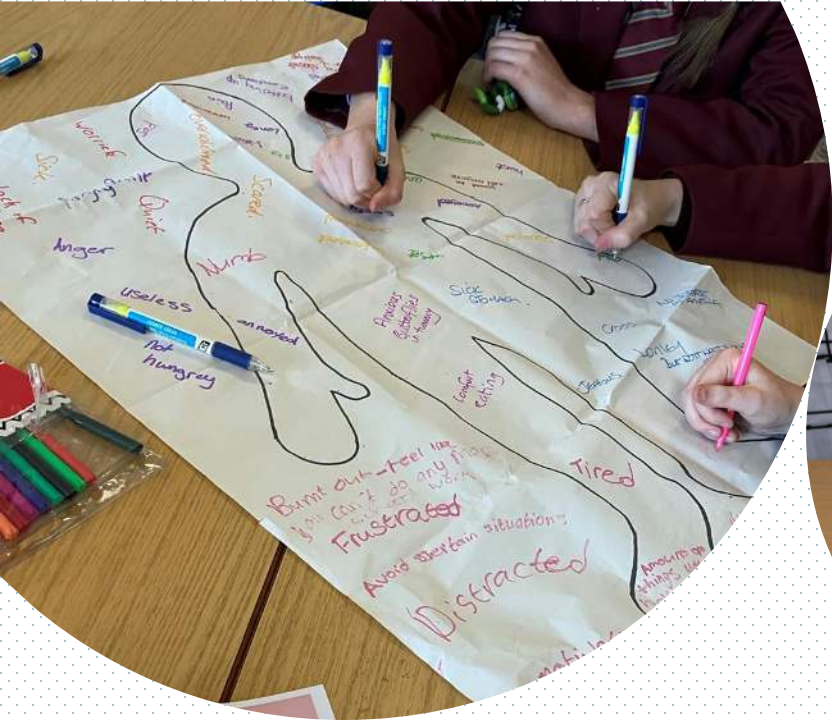
Office for National Statistics, National Records of Scotland; Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency; Winston's Wish UK

AIM



- Children attending the 'Seasons of Life' workshops will report: an increased awareness of their resilience skills, increased awareness of normal and prolonged grief disorder, and increased knowledge of supports available both inside and outside of school.

Early intervention support is essential as there are numerous risk and protective issues which we can influence. These include preparing children for loss, the family environment, the young person's view about themselves and the world, support services and coping strategies.



'Seasons of Life' is a workshop for children and young people who have experienced a bereavement or a significant loss.

The 'Seasons of Life' project which is unique to the Southern Health and Social Care Trust (NI). Staff from healthcare, education and the voluntary/community sector, worked collaboratively, keeping the young people at the heart of their work.



The workshops are delivered by a multidisciplinary team in the school setting. The team consists of specialist School Nurses, Paediatric Psychologists, the trust Bereavement Coordinator and Cruse bereavement support facilitators.

children's grief
awareness week
16-22 November 2023



Steering group members



Pre-workshop Questionnaire



Pre:



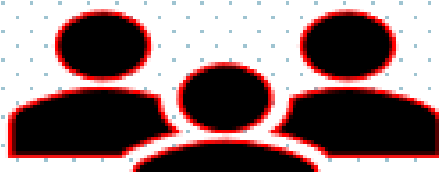
Post-workshop Questionnaire



Post



Focus Group



Semi-structured Interviews



Feedback on paper tablecloths
throughout the workshops



Focus group utilising the '1-2-4-All Liberating Structure Technique'.

- This is a useful brainstorming method which engages everyone.
- The young people were encouraged to think, first on an individual basis and then in increasingly bigger groups.
- Questions were printed on card for them to answer anonymously for each topic. They then discussed the topic in pairs, then as a group of 4 and back to the wider group.
- Each group's table was covered with a paper tablecloth for everyone to write ideas/draw on as not all young people wish to engage in conversations.
- 11 young people participated in the focus group and 3 members of the project team facilitated the session.
- The young people received Amazon gift vouchers to show we appreciated their time and participation.



Areas discussed during the focus group



What did the young people like about the workshop & what would they change

Understanding of the activities

Was the information about available supports useful

Next steps...



Enhanced task: Paint the tree instead of drawing it. Calm music in the background, soft lighting. The activity explored strengths, skills and important people/things.

More fun: Go outside for a walk, more icebreakers and games. Enjoyed having permission to laugh without feeling guilty.

More workshops: longer, more frequent

Connection: Felt less lonely, made new friends, enjoyed group discussions with bereaved peers with similar feelings.

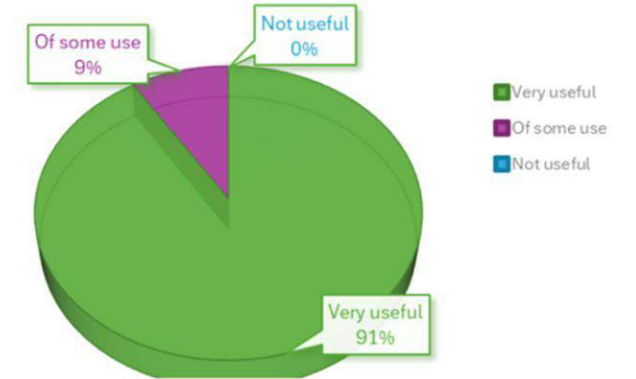
Learning: normalizing grief, feelings, reactions, grief is a journey, grief education, supports available.

Data Collection

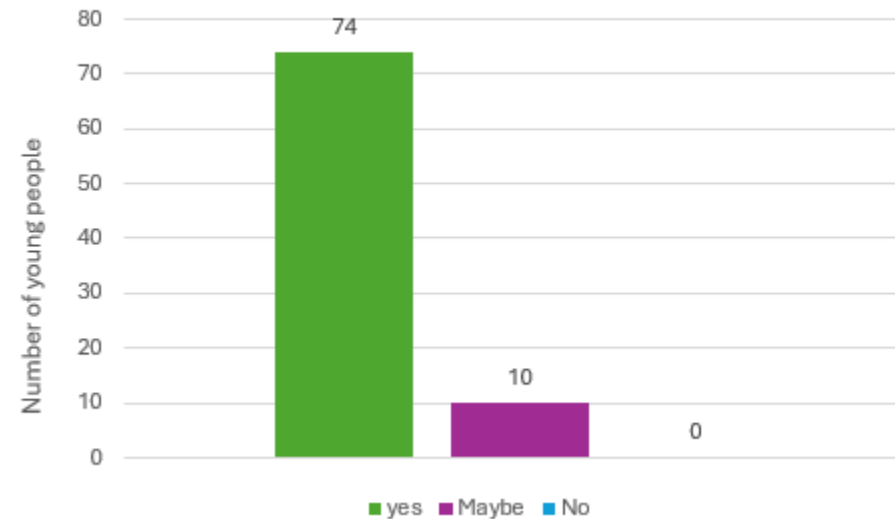
WORKSHOP FEEDBACK-
PRE-WORKSHOP V POST-WORKSHOP
YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERSPECTIVE



WORKSHOP FEEDBACK-
YOUNG PEOPLE'S RATING FOR USEFULNESS OF
WORKSHOP



I would attend this workshop again



Feedback

The workshop made me feel less lonely in my grief. I have made new connections with friends from different year groups, and we stay connected.

The delivery was engaging, professional, and deeply empathetic qualities that were especially important given the vulnerability of the pupils involved, several of whom had previously disengaged from school life.

The sensitivity with which the team supported deeply traumatised children was evident throughout, and the feedback from both pupils and staff has been overwhelmingly positive.

I am so thankful the workshop was provided to my grandchildren. It has really helped them and our wider family on our grief journey.

Our project was selected by the Public Health Agency to learn more about how we incorporated Service User Involvement into ‘Seasons of Life’.

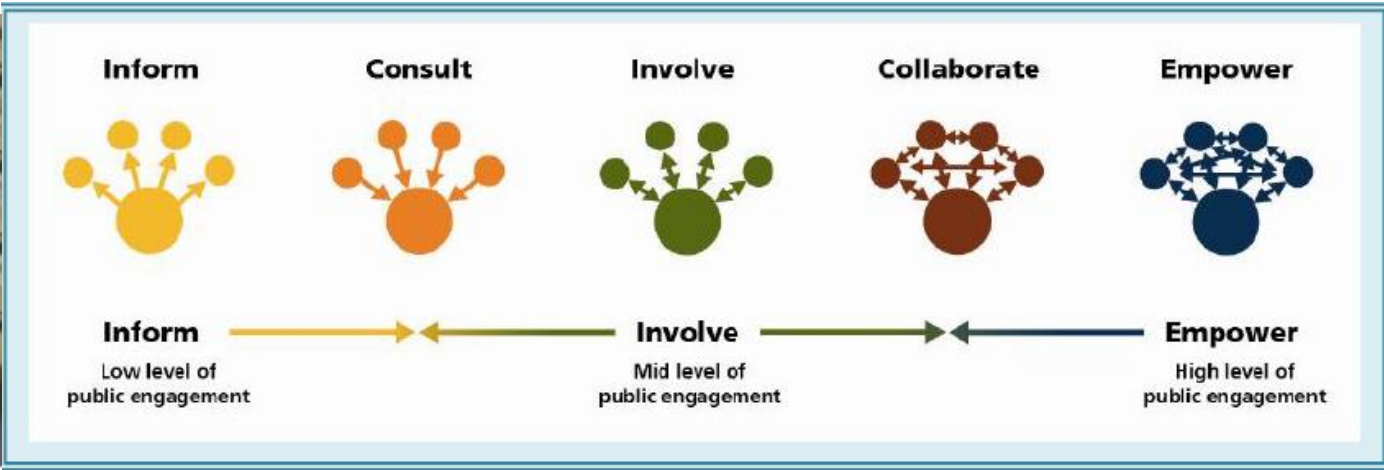
The Involvement Human Library

A safe space for Service Users, Carers and Staff to share their lived experience of their involvement journey, how they found it, the challenges, benefits and the impact it made.

Personal and Public Involvement (PPI)



Involving you, improving care



Outcomes from 'Seasons of Life' workshops



Participants report increased emotional literacy and resilience



Participants report decreased feelings of isolation and loneliness



Production of compassionate, inclusive, easily replicable and co-designed bereavement and loss support workshops



7 Seasons of Life workshops have been delivered to 84 young people within the SHSCT



High demand throughout the trust for bereavement support and it is the highest unmet need at the Family Support Hubs



Waiting list for schools wishing to have workshops



There were 142 additional requests for bereavement support received



Targeted support has been provided to families and numerous referrals have been submitted to other services e.g. CAMHS and Cruse



Numerous staff have received bereavement training, and they report increased knowledge and confidence in providing bereavement support



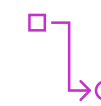
Creation of peer bereavement support groups in post-primary schools



Development of a school bereavement policy



Memorial artwork piece created in school which is co-designed by young people, Arts care N.I artist and 'Seasons of Life' project coordinator



Ripple effect of support from workshops reported by family members and school staff.



Attendance at workshops by children who had previously disengaged with school

Learning to Date

The value of Service User Involvement from the very beginning and throughout the project

Extensive need for school-based bereavement support

Value of engaging across organisational boundaries and collaboration

Standardising workshop content to ensure equitable workshops delivered each time

Invaluable support available from the Q Community and Action Learning sets

Importance of networking and promotion of our Q-Exchange project

Importance of PDSA cycles

Importance of sharing both quantitative and qualitative data to highlight impact of workshops

Upskilling of staff reflects increase in confidence levels to deliver workshops

Next Steps



**Present project to
Southern Health and
Social Care Trust
Board –Autumn 2025**



**Replicate workshop
into other areas e.g.
nursing homes,
learning disability
settings**



**Adapt Workshop
content for delivery in
Primary Schools**



**Explore further
funding opportunities**



**Continue to raise
awareness about
children's grief and
the supports available**



**Share and spread
learning from project**