**Press Release**  
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**UK Commission on Bereavement unveils the true scale and impact of grief among adults and children**

* Around 750,000 excess bereavements occurred during the pandemic
* Over 40% of adult respondents who wanted formal bereavement support did not get any
* Half of bereaved children responding said they did not get the support they needed from their schools and colleges
* Funding from governments vital to transform peoples experience of grief across the UK, says Commission, as one of the largest ever consultations on UK bereavement concludes

Organised support for bereaved children and adults needs transforming says the UK Commission on Bereavement (UKCB).

The scale of loss across the UK since the pandemic has been laid bare in a report, [*Bereavement is everyone’s business*](https://bereavementcommission.org.uk/), from the UKCB today, which says there were 6.8 million bereavements during the pandemic - with around 750,000 excess bereavements [1] during this period compared to the previous five-year average.

The findings follow one of the largest ever consultations on bereavement support undertaken in the UK, which included over 1,000 adult and 100 child respondents to the UKCB’s surveys and evidence submitted from over 130 organisations [2].

The UKCB found huge gaps in support for bereaved people. Over 40% of adult respondents who wanted formal bereavement support didn’t get any [3], and of the bereaved children who contributed to the UKCB’s report, half said they did not get the support they needed from their schools and colleges [4].

This has led to the UKCB calling for more funding from all governments in the UK, and it is sending a clear message that robust strategies to deal with bereavement now and in the future are desperately needed. In addition, the UKCB says schools and employers should be required to have a bereavement policy.

**Tiffany Jones, 42, from Winchester believes there needs to be bereavement support teams available to grieving families. Her father died just before Christmas in 2020 and her family didn’t know where to turn for help:**

“There was no support. No guidance. Nothing was clear and there was no step by step guide of what to do. Even searching online was murky and minimal. There are aspects now that we struggle with. The bereavement was bad enough but not knowing what to do and where to go for support just added to our distress.  
  
“There needs to be a government bereavement support officer role who you can go to in the event of a death - a person who will say, ‘ok, let's go through this step by step’ and help you with the forms, the emotional needs and assist you with things like claiming benefits you may be entitled to. For child birth, marriage and any other time of need in your life, there's support from midwives to health workers and pre marriage counselling. But for that unexpected loss of a father, or husband it's restricted. The worst, most vulnerable time of your life and there is no help or guidance unless you can afford to pay for it. It was atrocious for us.”

**Hannah Moloney, 17, from Birmingham says when her father died she was grateful for the support of her teachers but felt it was insufficient to fully meet her needs:**

“My dad passed away whilst I was in Year Seven and the thought of even going to school and having to put on this fake persona made me feel nervous. I am extremely grateful for all the support I was given but I needed more.

“Schools should all implement a bereavement policy to support children. No child should ever suffer alone. It’s important for students and teachers to be more educated on what it’s like to lose someone. Counselling should be offered for students who are struggling with grief and teachers should be trained to help those who need it. As important as education is, your mental health and well-being is far more important.”

Today’s UKCB report also identified that there is a particular need to focus on better supporting Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, and others who are currently poorly served. Additionally, it says that many people facing bereavement are amongst the very hardest hit by the cost of living crisis and that bereavement related benefits must be extended to key groups who currently miss out and increased at least in line with costs of living.

**Dame Sarah Mullally DBE, The Bishop of London and Chair of the Commission says:**

“Today’s report demonstrates the urgent need to improve people’s experiences of bereavement, and the report sets out our positive vision for how we can better support everyone who is bereaved across the UK. To make this vision a reality we must work together, recognising that grief really is everyone’s business.

“The sad death of Her Late Majesty The Queen last month prompted an outpouring of emotion as the nation mourned our head of state. However, the Royal Family were also grieving the death of a mother, a grandmother, a great-grandmother. Witnessing their personal loss will have reminded many of us of our own experiences and those other occasions when we were floored by grief.

“We will never cure grief. Grief naturally follows the love we have for the people we lose. It is clear that more must be done to get extra care to those who need it. We believe that governments could transform people’s experiences of bereavement by investing just 79p per person in statutory funding. I pray that this report will go some way to illuminating a path forward and offering new hope for the future.”

**Alongside its key recommendations the UKCB has set out a vision for bereaved people in future:**

* I am supported by my family, my friends and the communities around me
* I am sensitively supported by my school, college or workplace during my bereavement
* I am well supported before and during the death, and feel confident that the person who died received appropriate and compassionate care
* The things I must do after a death are simple and straightforward
* I am compassionately and helpfully supported by those whose job brings them into contact with me through my bereavement
* I have access to an affordable and meaningful funeral
* I feel secure in my home and have the right financial support
* I can easily find and access the right emotional bereavement support for my circumstances

The UKCB concluded that to achieve this vision, governments must establish and deliver a cross-departmental strategy for bereavement that recognises support following bereavement as a human right.

The UKCB is an independent commission, and is chaired by The Right Reverend and Right Honourable Dame Sarah Mullally DBE, the Bishop of London. She is joined by [15 commissioners](https://bereavementcommission.org.uk/commissioners-ucb/) reflecting diverse professional and cultural backgrounds from across the four UK nations. The UKCB asked for evidence of bereavement experiences from the last five years, although it is apparent that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated challenges around bereavement for many people.

The UKCB has been supported by a steering group made up of third sector organisations and charities: Marie Curie, Independent Age, Cruse Bereavement Support, the National Bereavement Alliance, the Childhood Bereavement Network and the Centre for Mental Health, working in partnership with academic researchers: Dr Emily Harrop at Cardiff University and Dr Lucy Selman at the University of Bristol.

***To read the full report and recommendations from the UKCB please visit*** [***https://bereavementcommission.org.uk/***](https://bereavementcommission.org.uk/)

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**Notes to Editor**

*For more information and interview requests for case studies and the* [*UKCB commissioners*](mailto:UKCB%20commissioners)*, please contact PR and Media Officer Emma Ballard on* [*emma.ballard@mariecurie.org.uk*](mailto:emma.ballard@mariecurie.org.uk) *or 07771850926 or contact the Marie Curie press team on* [*media@mariecurie.org.uk*](mailto:media@mariecurie.org.uk) *or 0844 893 2101*

**Quotes from evidence submitted to the UKCB:**

The UKCB identified deep seated inequalities in how bereaved people are supported across society. A woman in her 30s whose father died from Covid-19 explained how there are “*huge cultural differences which are not acknowledged or supported”.* She says: *“All support is aimed at white people. As an Asian Muslim I was constantly told by 'support' that I must be finding it hard to think about Christmas without my dad, but they totally bypassed Ramadan and Eid.”*

One woman in her 50s whose husband died of Covid-19 said: *“18 months later, I still haven't sorted out financial affairs - life insurance, Teachers Pension Scheme... there are forms to fill in that I just can't get my head around. It's like a foreign language to me. And I'm trying to navigate it on my own. [I’m] Very stressed about it.”*

A woman in her 40s whose son died in an accident describes the difficulties she faced saying: *“It was sudden and unexpected. None of us had any savings at all for the funeral or to buy funeral clothes.”*

**References**

[1]750,000 excess bereavements, Excess death data from each of the four nations; [England (table 1b),](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/datasets/excessdeathsinenglandandwales) [Wales (table 1c)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/datasets/excessdeathsinenglandandwales) , [Scotland (Page 6, link for “Local Authority.” ‘Table 3 2020’ and ‘Table 3 2021’)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/covid19/covid-deaths-21-report-week-52.pdf)  and [Northern Ireland (For 2020/2021 breakdown, Table T1 for nation).](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/excess-mortality-covid-19-related-deaths-december-2021)

Excess deaths are multiplied by five to show excess bereavement figures, as per this academic research: [Tracking the reach of COVID-19 kin loss with a bereavement multiplier applied to the United States | PNAS](https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2007476117).

[2] Data from 1,000 adult and 100 child respondents to the UKCB’s surveys and evidence submitted from over 130 organisations, page 6 of UKCB summary report

[3] Over 40% of adult respondents who wanted formal bereavement support didn’t get any, page 4 of UKCB summary report

[4] Of the bereaved children who contributed to the UKCB’s report, half said they did not get the support they needed from their schools and colleges, page 15 of UKCB summary report

**UK Commission on Bereavement**

The Commission's purpose is to review the experiences of, and support available for, people affected by bereavement through and beyond the Covid-19 pandemic, and to make recommendations to key decision-makers, including the UK Government. The Commission is independent of government and is made up of a group of 15 commissioners who were appointed by a steering group made up of third sector organisations and charities including Marie Curie, Independent Age, Cruse Bereavement, the National Bereavement Alliance and Childhood Bereavement Network, Care and the Centre for Mental Health.

For more information visit : <https://bereavementcommission.org.uk/>

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