

Children and young people's focus group session plan

Introduction

Thank you so much for your interest in running a focus group for the UK Commission on Bereavement. This is a key opportunity for bereaved children and young people to feed in their ideas to the Commission about how bereavement support can be improved.

The Commission is running [online surveys](#) for individual bereaved children and young people. However, we know that sometimes groups are an easier way of sharing ideas and discussing solutions together.

This pack provides a session plan for bereavement services and other settings to use **with an established support group of bereaved children and young people**. If you are able to run the session, please upload your results by 31 January 2022 (further details below).



The UK Commission on Bereavement

The UK Commission on Bereavement is an independent commission set up to review the experiences of people affected by the death of someone important in their life, and to make recommendations to improve the support offered to bereaved people. These recommendations will be taken to key decision-makers, including the UK Government, and each of the devolved administrations. The Commission is independent of government and supported by a steering group of charity partners. The Childhood Bereavement Network is one of the partners, and we have been closely involved in ensuring that children and young people's voices are included in this Commission.

The Commission is running public consultations for individuals and services. These cover the themes of

- public attitudes, cultural perspectives and community engagement
- practical bereavement support
- infrastructure and intervention from bereavement services
- the impact of the pandemic.

We know that children and young people will have unique experiences of bereavement, so our suggested activities below are framed around the typical spaces, places and people that support bereaved children and young people:

- family and friends
- schools and other community groups
- childhood bereavement services

Aims of the consultation

- Engage bereaved children and young people in the work of the Commission in a relaxed and supportive way
- Gather bereaved children and young people’s views about how support from family, friends, schools and services could be strengthened

Who can participate?

These consultation activities should be adaptable for groups aged 6-18, with up to 30 participants if you split them into smaller groups. We recommend that the consultation is run with **established support groups of bereaved children and young people** – that doesn’t mean that everyone needs to know everybody else, but we are expecting that the group has met before and has a reasonable level of comfortableness with each other, and that there are adults on hand to support children and young people before, during and after taking part.

What the session involves

The planned session lasts 50 minutes including icebreaker and ending activity. You can extend any of the sections if you want to run a longer session. Here’s the outline – further details of the options for activities and a full session plan are below.

Time	Activity
5 mins	Icebreaker
5 mins	Introduction to the Commission
15 mins	Activity 1
15 mins	Activity 2
5 mins	Evaluation
5 mins	Fun/relaxation activity

The activities

As you will see, there are slots for two activities. We have prepared three different activities for these slots so that you can either

- choose two of the three to do with your group – you can get the group to vote on which two they would like to do
- split into smaller groups, each of which will do two of the three activities.

If you want to run a longer session, you can add in a third 15-minute slot. As noted above, these activities are framed around the three key places and people that support bereaved children and young people. The activities are summarised here – full details are in the session plan, along with tips on how to keep the sessions safe and manageable for participants.

- **Option A: Top Tips for Family and Friends.** This flipchart exercise focuses on what advice bereaved children and young people would give to those who are supporting others. We recommend trying to keep the discussion generic rather than specific to individuals.

- **Option B: Schools priorities – diamond ranking.**
This flipchart exercise focuses on how schools can support bereaved children. The children and young people will be offered the chance to add in their own ideas and then rank these ideas in order of importance.
- **Option C: Mural – what makes a good child bereavement service.** This is a flipchart exercise focusing on improving the support offered by child bereavement services. If you are running the consultation in a school or setting that is not a child bereavement service, you will need to explain what a typical service is like first.

Safeguarding and risk assessment

As you are running the session as part of your usual activities, you will already have your risk assessments, insurance and a safeguarding policy and process in place. You will use these local processes while you are running this session. All staff and volunteers helping to facilitate the session must be appropriately trained and familiar with your safeguarding processes, and know what to do if a child or young person shares any information that they or anyone else may be at risk of harm.

What you will need

Ahead of the session

- Information sheets for children and young people and their parent or carer (see template at back of pack)
- Consent forms for parents and for children and young people (see template at back of pack)

For the session itself

- Session plan (see below)
- Icebreaker and ending activities if you prefer to use your own – or you can use ours which are included in the session plan
- Flip charts – see appendix A for templates
 - 1 x with a 'Free Parking' sign
 - 1 x target/dartboard with 'How much did you feel listened to today?'
 - One of each of the following if you are working as a big group, one per group if you are splitting into smaller groups:
 - Option A: 'Top tips for Family and Friends' – one if you are working as a big group, one per group if you are splitting into smaller groups
 - Option B: 'School priorities' with diamond ranking drawn on – one if you are working as a big group, one per group if you are splitting into smaller groups
 - Option C: 'Mural - What makes a good child bereavement service?'
- Blu Tack or another way of attaching flip charts to the wall
- Blank post it notes

- Six post it notes for Option B: School priorities – write each of these suggestions on a post it:
 - A teacher or someone checking in regularly to make sure you are coping and offer support
 - PSHE lessons so we learn what grief is like and how to support each other
 - Information being shared carefully so you don't have to keep explaining what happened (e.g. to next year's teacher) – and being asked how you would like people to be told
 - Extra support to stay on track with work
 - No tolerance of bullying about bereavement
 - Somewhere to go if your feelings are overwhelming during the day
- Pens
- Stickers for marking the target/dartboard (or they can make a pen mark)
- Monitoring form (See appendix B)
- Camera phone to take photos of completed flip charts and upload them

Preparation

There are sample information sheets and consent forms (for children and young people under 16 and their parents/carers and for young people 16+) at the back of this pack. Please adapt as appropriate for your service or setting, send these out and ask for them to be returned ahead of time or brought to the session itself. Please retain these consent forms at your organisation – do not send them in to the Commission.

Session outline

Time	Activity
5 mins	<p>Icebreaker</p> <p>Feel free to use your own icebreaker OR</p> <p>Ask the group to line up across the room in three ways – time them for each one and see which is quickest! Write down how long each line-up took (you may need these timings at the end of the session)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alphabetical by first name • Youngest to oldest • Length of hair OR number of letters in first name OR something else!
5 mins	<p>Introduction to the UK Commission on Bereavement</p> <p>Thank them for coming to the session. Explain that you will be</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working together today on ideas to send in to the new UK Commission on Bereavement • The Commission is made up of 12 people who are thinking of ways to make sure that people are supported better when someone important in their life dies

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They want to hear from organisations, adults, and children and young people. There are online surveys for children and young people to complete, but they want to hear from groups too. • Today is a chance to think about how support could be made better • They'll be working on some activities on flip charts, and at the end you'll take photos of their work and send it to the Commission • You will explain the activities but if they have any bright ideas along the way that aren't covered in the activities – or about how other people can help (like funeral directors, mosques, hospitals, churches), they can 'park' them by writing them on the 'Free Parking' flip chart at any point during the session or telling their idea to someone who can write it for them. Put this up somewhere in the room – explain that ideas can be added to this at this at any time. • Some housekeeping and ground rules – remind them of any existing rules in your group and include eg <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Give everyone a chance to speak/take part ○ But you don't have to speak if you don't want to! And you can share ideas without having to share your own story ○ Be respectful of other people's ideas ○ Don't share people's actual stories outside the room ○ If the activity feels too much for them, they can stop at any time • Remind them that you are there to support them if they get upset during the session or afterwards – and explain what to do if they get upset or want to stop doing the activity <p>Getting ready</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are working as one group, get the group to vote for which two of the three activities they would like to focus on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Family and friends ○ Schools ○ Bereavement services • If you are splitting into smaller groups, do this now and allocate each group their first activity
15 mins	<p>Activity 1 Explain the chosen activity to (each) group and facilitate the discussion if needed</p> <p>Give a 2-minute warning before the end of the session</p> <p>Option A: Top Tips for Family and Friends Give the group a flip chart titled 'Top tips for family and friends supporting someone who's bereaved'. Ask them what advice they would give to family or friends, and write these on the flip chart.</p>

To get the discussion going, you could ask some questions with things that might be useful (or not), e.g.

- Is it helpful to talk about the person who died?
- Is it best for friends to pretend nothing has happened?
- Can hugging help?

Some suggestions

- Keep an eye on the mood of the room and support the children and young people appropriately
- Keep the discussion general rather than specific
- Keep the conversation open to all by introducing 'a chance to speak' item then allowing anyone to respond
- There is no expectation that the children or young people need to participate – listening well is also completely fine.
- By sharing their advice about how support should be offered, children and young people may remember things that their family or friends did that were unhelpful for them. Be aware of children and young people finding this activity upsetting and try and keep the discussion generic rather than specific to individuals.

Option B: Schools priorities – diamond ranking

Give the group a flip chart with nine diamond shapes drawn on it. Give them nine post it notes – six with a suggestion written on them about how schools can support bereaved children and young people, and three titled 'Our idea:'. The six suggestions are

- A teacher or someone checking in regularly to make sure you are coping and offer support
- PSHE lessons so we learn what grief is like and how to support each other
- Information being shared carefully so you don't have to keep explaining what happened (e.g. to next year's teacher) – and being asked how you would like people to be told
- Extra support to stay on track with work
- No tolerance of bullying about bereavement
- Somewhere to go if your feelings are overwhelming during the day

Ask the group to discuss the suggestions written on the post it notes

- Is there anything missing? If so, they can write their ideas on the blank post it notes
- Are there any they disagree with?
- Can they rank them? With the most important at the top of the diamond shape on the flip chart, and so on further down

Option C: Mural – what makes a good child bereavement service?

Ask the group what makes a good child bereavement service. The introduction to this section will vary depending on where you are running this focus group

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are running it in an existing service, make sure you give the children and young people freedom to share their views without limiting them to what you can offer • If you are running it in a school or other setting that <u>isn't</u> a child bereavement support service, first explain what services are like (eg charities that support children and young people with groups, activities, 1:1 counselling or support etc to help them manage their feelings after someone important to them has died) <p>Ask them to draw or write their ideas on the flip chart to make a mural of a good service, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who listen – could be represented by ears • A chance to meet other people who've been bereaved – could be represented by a group of stick figures • Nice food! A slice of pizza • Open to everyone – an open door <p>With 5 minutes to go, please ask How can we make sure everyone who would find a service helpful gets to use one? Conversation prompts include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we make sure that services are welcoming to everyone? • How can we make sure everyone knows about services? <p>Please capture this discussion at the bottom of the flip chart.</p> <p>Tip: don't get too worried by the quality of the drawings – we just want to know their ideas. Please make sure the drawings are labelled so that Commissioners can interpret them correctly!</p>
15 mins	<p>Activity 2</p> <p>Introduce the second activity using the outlines above</p> <p>Give a 2 minute warning before the end of the session</p>
5 mins	<p>Evaluation</p> <p>Stick the dartboard flip chart up and give each child or young person a sticker or pen. Ask them to come and place their sticker/mark on the dartboard to show how much they've felt listened to today</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the middle – right on target! I've felt really listened to • Towards the outside – I didn't feel listened to <p>Wrap up</p> <p>Thank them for taking part and remind them that their suggestions will be feeding in to the UK Commission on Bereavement. The Commissioners will be adding together everything that people – children and adults – have said, and using that to make suggestions to government and other people about how bereavement support can be improved in the future. We are so glad they've got involved, as they are the experts.</p>

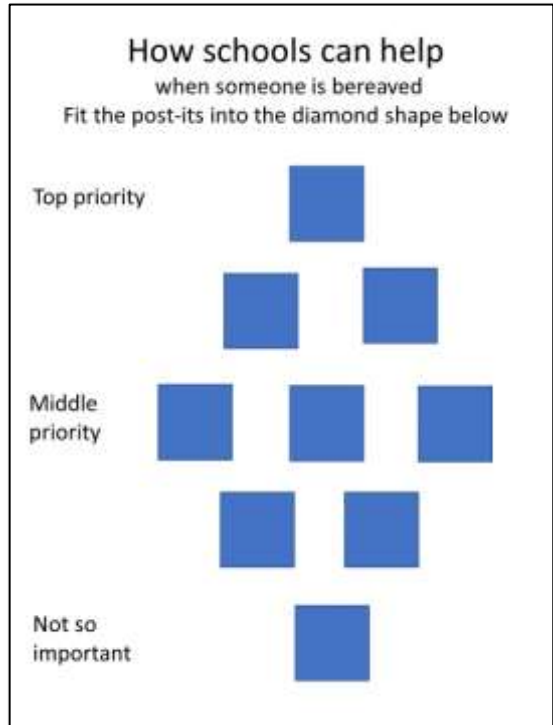
	Remind them of how they can get support from you and elsewhere if the session has brought up difficult feelings for them.
5 mins	<p>Fun/relaxing activity</p> <p>Lead the group in a fun or relaxing activity to close off the session and bring them out of the activity.</p> <p>You can use your own activity or do a repeat of the icebreaker at the beginning and see if they can beat their scores from the first time around.</p>
	<p>After the session</p> <p>Complete the monitoring form and take photos of the flip charts and monitoring form</p> <p>Go to https://bereavementcommission.org.uk/taking-part/professionals-organisations/</p> <p>Complete the consent questions and questions 1-3</p> <p>Scroll down to the bottom of the page to 'Other information and reflections'. Hold down the control button to select all of your pictures of the flip charts and monitoring form, then upload them. Check that the box refer to the correct number of files. Email ukcb@mariecurie.org.uk if you have any difficulties in uploading.</p>

Appendix A – Flip Chart Templates

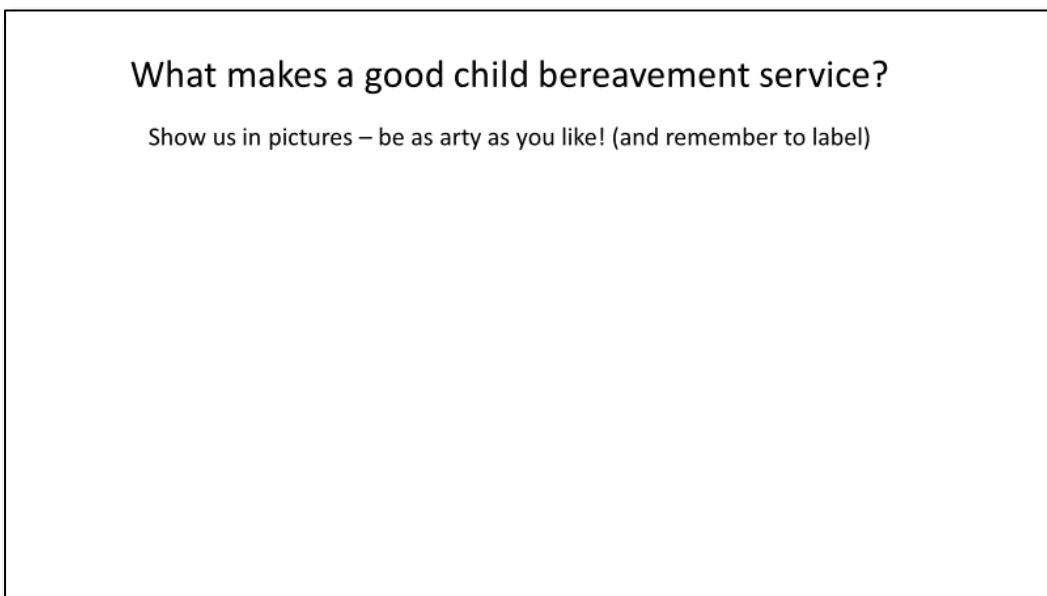
Flip chart for activity A



Flip chart for activity B



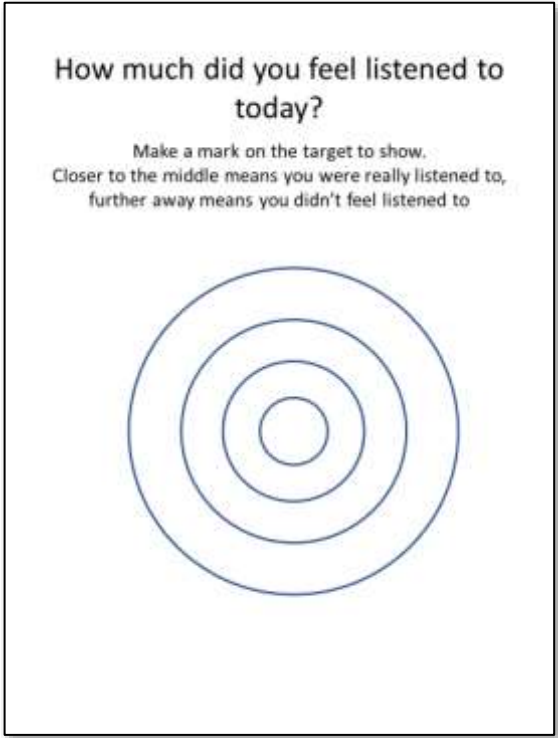
Flip chart for activity C:



Flip chart for 'Free Parking':



Flip chart for evaluation activity:



Appendix B – Monitoring Form

Please tally up the total number of children and young people who took part in your session

Group **Number**

Total number who took part	
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Boys	
Girls	
Other identity	

Aged 5-12	
Aged 13-15	
Aged 16-17	

Which part of the UK is your group in? (please give region if in England)	
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Number of children with a disability	
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Number of young carers	
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Person who died

Mum	
Dad	
Brother	
Sister	
Grandparent	
Aunt or uncle	
Cousin	
Other family member	
Friend	
Teacher	
Someone else	
Not known	

Ethnicity

White:

English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	
Irish	
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	
Any other White background	

Mixed/multiple ethnic groups:

White and Black Caribbean	
White and Black African	
White and Asian	
Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background	

Asian / Asian British:

Indian	
Asian / Asian British: Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
Any other Asian background	

Black / African / Caribbean / Black British:

African	
Caribbean	
Any other Black / African / Caribbean background	

Other ethnic group

Arab	
Other	

Prefer not to say	
Not known	

Thank you

Information sheet for children and young people and parents/carers

UK Commission on Bereavement Focus Group activity

Our group here at [insert name of service or setting] is taking part in an important project for the UK Commission on Bereavement. The Commission is gathering ideas about how to make support better for children, young people and adults when someone important in their life has died.



The Commission is running surveys for adults and children here <https://bereavementcommission.org.uk/taking-part/>

It also wants to hear from groups of bereaved children and young people about their ideas, which is why we are getting involved.

What will we be doing?

We will be running a focus group as part of our usual bereavement group on [insert date]. We have some activities we'll use to help group members share their ideas on

- top tips for how families and friends can support someone who's bereaved
- what things schools can do to help
- what a good child bereavement support service or charity would look like.

How will our ideas be used?

We will send our group's ideas in to the Commission. They will put all the ideas together from everyone who takes part, and use them to write a report about how help and support could be. We won't send group members' names in to the Commission, and they won't use people's names in their report. We hope that government and other people will read the report and help improve support for children and young people in the future.

How will the session run?

Our usual staff and volunteers will be on hand to run the session and to support the group before and after they take part. We will make the session as relaxed as we can - no-one will have to talk or share ideas if they don't want to.

What if I want to know more?

You can talk to us here or you can contact the UK Commission on Bereavement at UKCB@mariecurie.org.uk

Consent form for children and young people under 16 and parent/carer UK Commission on Bereavement Focus Group activity

[Insert name of your setting or service] needs to make sure we protect the personal information about the children, young people and young adults we work with.

We need to tell you how and why we are collecting and storing information about you.

The UK law says that parents must give permission for us to keep information about their children if you are under 13 years old. This is called consent. Because we have to protect the information of children and young people with different needs, we have set our age limit at 16 years old.

This means if you are under 16 years old, and would like to work with us, we must have your and your Parent/Guardian's consent to collect and store your information.

For this activity, we will need to collect the following information about you:

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Any special requirements: _____

How we collect information about you:

- This Consent Form will only be stored electronically.
- If you sign a paper copy of this form, we will make an electronic copy and safely get rid of the paper copy within [INSERT X days/weeks].
- Only the [insert name of your service/setting] team will be able to see your information.
- All of your information will be kept safe with passwords, which only the [insert name of your service/setting] team will know.
- We will not share any of your information with anyone else.

How will we keep information about you:

- We will keep your information and this Consent Form for no longer than 1 year.
- After 1 year we will safely get rid of it.

You and your Parent/Guardian can change your mind about us storing your information at any time. This is called withdrawing consent. If you would like to do this please contact: [insert your service/setting's email]

By completing and signing this form, you and your Parent/Guardian are agreeing for you to take part in this activity, and letting [insert name of your service/setting] collect and store the

information you have given.

Young Person name: _____

Signature: _____

Email: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian name: _____

Relationship: _____

Email: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please read our 'Privacy Statement' for more information about how we protect the rights of individuals working with us. [\[Insert link to your privacy statement\]](#)

For the purpose of the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR) the Data Controller is [\[insert name of your service/setting and your registration number with the Information Commissioner's Office\]](#).

Consent form for young people aged 16 and over

UK Commission on Bereavement Focus Group activity

[Insert name of your setting or service] needs to make sure we protect the personal information about the children, young people and young adults we work with. We need to tell you how and why we are collecting and storing information about you.

The UK law says we must ask for permission from anyone who is working with us to collect and store information about them. This is called 'data consent'.

If you are aged 16 and over would like to take part in this activity, we must have your consent to collect and store your information.

For this activity, we will need to collect the following information about you:

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Any special requirements: _____

How we collect information about you:

- This Consent Form will only be stored electronically.
- If you sign a paper copy of this form, we will make an electronic copy and safely get rid of the paper copy within [INSERT X days/weeks].
- Only the [insert name of your service/setting] team will be able to see your information.
- All of your information will be kept safe with passwords, which only the [insert name of your service/setting] team will know.
- We will not share any of your information with anyone else.

How will we keep information about you:

- We will keep your information and this Consent Form for no longer than 1 year.
- After 1 year we will safely get rid of it.

You can change your mind about us storing your information at any time. This is called withdrawing consent. If you would like to do this please contact: [insert your service/setting's email]

By completing and signing this form, you are agreeing to take part in this activity, and letting [insert name of your service/setting] collect and store the information you have given.

Young Person name: _____

Signature:

Email:

Date:

Please read our 'Privacy Statement' for more information about how we protect the rights of individuals working with us. [\[Insert link to your privacy statement\]](#)

For the purpose of the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR) the Data Controller is [\[insert name of your service/setting and your registration number with the Information Commissioner's Office\]](#).