



Seasons of Life Q-exchange Project

Nurturing Resilience in Grieving Children through Co-Design, Compassion, and Collaboration

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Southern Health
and Social Care Trust

TOGETHER, IMPROVING CARE, TRANSFORMING LIVES

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

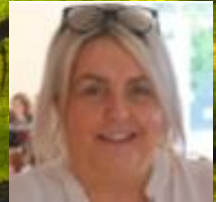
Exposure to financial hardship

Involvement with the criminal justice system

Unemployment

Early mortality and physical ill-health

Diagnosed mental health disorder

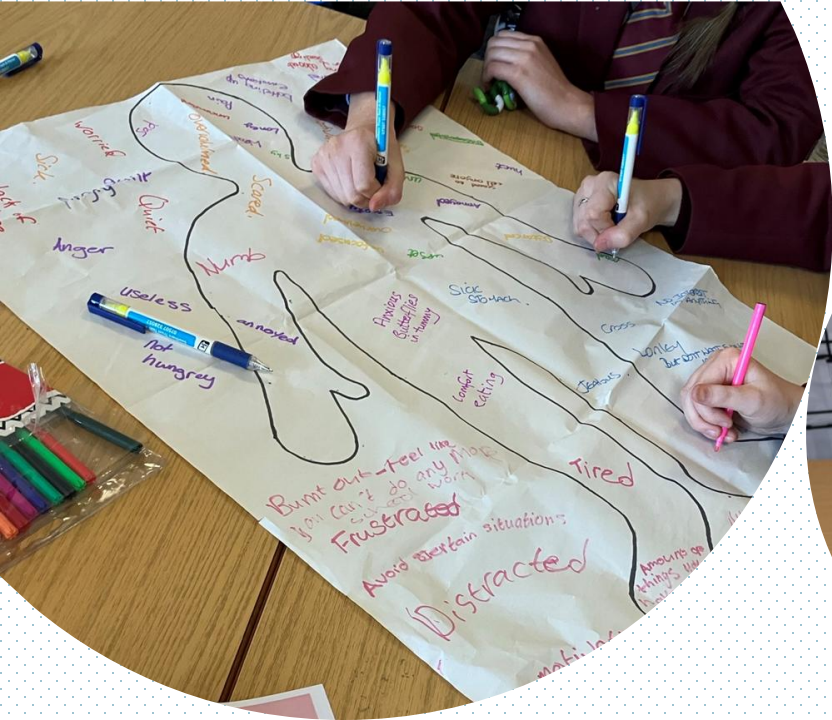


Seasons of Life Team

AIM



- Apply QI methodology and co-production principles to design, test, and refine a psychologically informed intervention to:
 - Enhance coping and build resilience
 - Increase young people's understanding and confidence in managing loss
 - Empower young people to have an active role in managing their own well-being.
 - Improve awareness of internal and external supports.
 - Bring bereavement support staff to young people in the school environment (warm introduction)



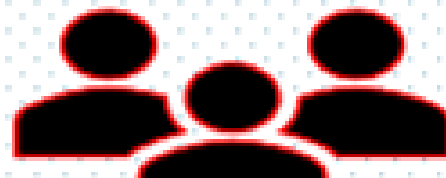
The Seasons of Life workshop was co-designed with young people who have experienced a bereavement.

- The multidisciplinary/multiagency workshops were delivered within schools.
- Adapted the Tree of Life intervention (Dulwich Centre, Australia)
- Single-session framework
- Grief education and information on accessing further supports.
- Provide a safe, peer-based environment for normalising grief experiences and fostering connections.
- Extended access to experiences of loss
- Capacity building through staff training and support
- PDSA cycles implemented to test and refine intervention.
- Memorial artwork piece created in one school which was co-designed by young people, an Arts care N.I artist and the 'Seasons of Life' Project Coordinator

Continuous Service User and Staff Feedback: Evolving project development

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Focus Group



Semi-structured Interviews



Feedback on paper tablecloths throughout the workshops



Post-workshop Questionnaire



Post



Staff reflections and steering group feedback

Outcomes - Quantitative



Workshops delivered to 96 young people



60% reported improved confidence and coping post-intervention



Capacity building

Staff confidence in providing bereavement support increased from 21% to 79% post staff training.



43 additional requests for one-to-one single session support – targeted support. Onward referrals sent to Cruse/Trust Services based on young people's direct request for bereavement support



Qualitative feedback

Learning and normalising:

Understanding of grief as a journey

Connection:

Reduced sense of isolation and improved peer connections.
Enjoyed having permission to laugh without feeling guilty.

Wellbeing literacy while processing loss:

Enjoyment of exploring strengths, skills and remembering the person who had died

Request for more workshops:

longer, more frequent

Staff Wellbeing:

Introduced staff debriefing and reflective practice sessions

Enhancing workshop content:

Paint the tree instead of drawing it. Calm music in the background, soft lighting, go outside for a walk, more icebreakers and games.

System impact:

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

Outcomes - Qualitative

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.

The Involvement Human Library

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

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.

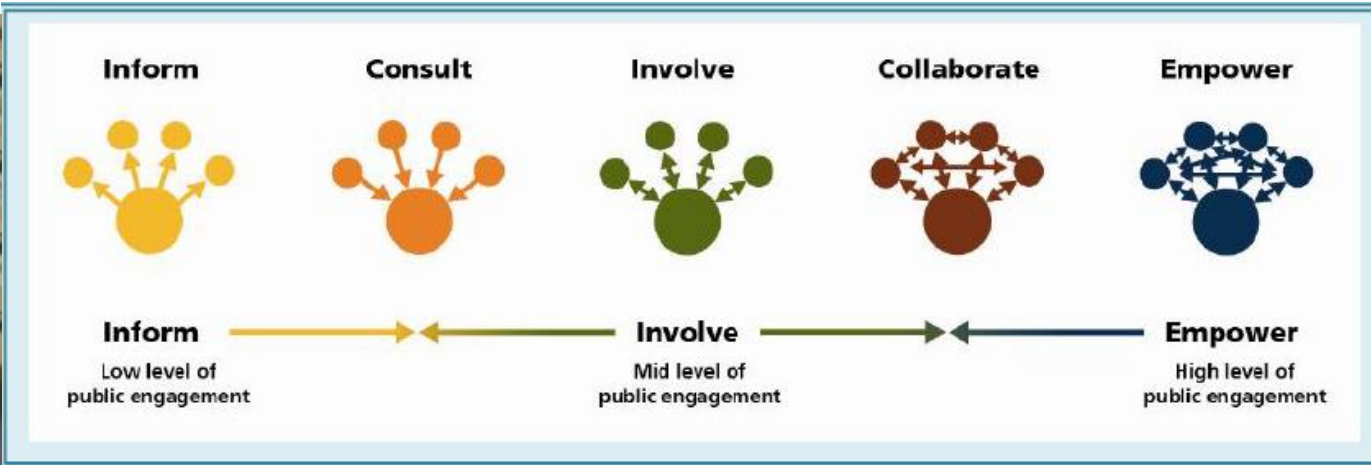
Personal and Public Involvement (PPI)



Involving you, improving care



Public Health Agency



Learning to Date

The value of service user involvement from the very beginning and throughout the project

Hidden needs
High demand for bereavement and loss support

Partnership working
Value of collaborating across system boundaries

Production of a compassionate, inclusive, workshop
Easily replicable beyond children's services

Invaluable support available from Trust leadership, Education leadership; the QI Team and Q Community

Networking and promotion of our Q-Exchange project



Category Winner: Partnership working to improve the experience



Overall Winner: 2025 Picker Experience Network Awards

First trust in Northern Ireland



The 'Seasons of Life' model demonstrates how compassionate, co-produced and data-informed approaches can achieve sustainable, person-centred improvement across systems.



Next Steps

Memorial artwork
unveiling in
St.Patrick's High
School

Poster
Presentation
IHI Conference
(March 2026)
Southern Trust QI
Event (April 2026)

Showcase
element of the
workshop in a
practical
workshop at the
QI event (April
2026)

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

Share and spread
learning from
project – interest
shown by Looked
After Services

Establish a
planning group to
explore funding
opportunities

Connecting Systems to Support Children's Grief Journey

Thanks to all the people involved in helping to make this project a success, especially to all the service users and staff.

This was a cross-Directorate initiative with support from the CYP&W Directorate (Colm McCafferty, Donna Murphy, Isobel McNamee-Nesbitt; Julie McConville, Mairead Donnelly, Margaret Bunting) and MHD Directorate (Jan McGall, Ivor Crothers).





Service User Feedback

Kelly Morrissey (Senior
Teacher, St. Patrick's
High School)

Niamh McElvanna,
Alisha McLaughlin,
(Students, St. Patrick's
High School)

Paula Conroy
(steering group
member)
