

An overview of evidence-based interventions

For children and young people experiencing bereavement, loss and grief



Summary



Introduction - the COVID-19 pandemic, and associated lockdown, have meant a variety of changes for children in lockdown. One of those changes is the experience of bereavement, loss, and grief, which may have been intensified during the lockdown period due to not being able to see friends and family, not being able to be with a person when they pass away, or not being able to attend a loved ones' funeral.

Understanding how to support children and young people to cope with bereavement, loss, and grief during these times is particularly important as children and young people begin to return to school and they experience changes to their lives once more. This overview aims to summarise the literature on evidence-based interventions for children and young people experiencing bereavement, loss, and grief.

Approach - as the bereavement literature is large, we decided to conduct a 'review of reviews' of interventions for children and young people (0-18), published from 2010 onwards. To do so, we searched the Web of Science and PsychInfo databases, and the webpages of several bereavement charities.

We structure our findings according to the evidence of effectiveness of primary, secondary, and tertiary interventions. We also note any core principles underpinning support for bereavement, loss and grief.

Findings - evidence based examples of primary, secondary and tertiary interventions

Primary – whilst there is little evidence that refers specifically to the effectiveness of primary intervention models, several studies do refer to the value in supporting the protective factors for children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing, e.g. supporting positive parenting. Several studies also point to the importance of including bereavement, loss and grief in school emotional health and wellbeing curriculum, as well as adopting whole-school approaches and policies to deal with bereavement.

Secondary – evidence of the effectiveness of secondary intervention models points to programmes that support grieving as a family process e.g. The Family Bereavement programme, and interventions that facilitate peer-support to help children and young people to communicate and validate their experiences, e.g. the Seasons for Growth programme. Activity-based intervention models were also highlighted as effective mechanisms for dealing with bereavement.

Tertiary – evidence of the effectiveness of tertiary interventions points to the use of trauma or grief-focussed brief psychotherapy. Common settings for such interventions are within schools and at camps and can include other activities e.g. meditation, arts, exercise, and group work.



Findings - common principles – across interventions, we identified some core principles underpinning support.

These include accounting for the individual circumstances of the child/ young person; supporting grieving as a family process; embedding peer support; and emphasising the role of schools in supporting those experiencing bereavement.

Implications –there is a role for policy and practice to embrace multi-disciplinary systems of support for children and young people experiencing bereavement in terms of valuing the role of schools, peer support, and consideration of family context, as well as involvement of family, within the support provided to children and young people. The aim of systems of support should be that children and young people get the right support, at the right time, and by the right people.





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Acknowledgements: This work has been commissioned as part of Barnardo's Mental Health and Wellbeing Core Priority Programme. We would like to thank the team for their input, feedback on, and support for this work. The team would also like to thank Sally Paul (University of Strathclyde) for her input and comments on the overview.

