

**Debate Pack**

12 September 2023

Number CDP-0183

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# Backbench business: Debate on a Motion on support for bereaved children

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**Summary**

A Commons chamber debate has been scheduled for Tuesday 14 September 2023 on a motion to develop a protocol to ensure bereaved children are made aware of, and have access to, bereavement support from public sector and third sector services. The debate was scheduled by the Backbench Business Committee.

This debate pack provides information on Government policy in relation to mental health and wellbeing support for children in community and educational settings.

# 1 Background

There are no official statistics on the number of bereaved children in the UK.

The Childhood Bereavement Network estimates that [26,900 parents die each year in the UK](#), leaving approximately 46,300 dependent children aged 0-17.<sup>1</sup> These figures are based on sources such as the census and mortality statistics, in the absence of other data, so they only provide a rough estimate.

## 1.1 Calls for a registry of bereaved children

There have been calls for a mechanism for collecting data on the number of children who are bereaved and identifying children who may need support.<sup>2</sup> In March 2023, a [Westminster Hall debate on the merits of establishing a registry of bereaved children](#) highlighted concerns that children unknown to statutory services may not receive the support available to them.<sup>3</sup>

Responding on behalf of the Government, then-Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Education, Claire Coutinho MP, said responsibility for a registry of bereaved children lies with the Home Office, which has confirmed it has no plans to establish such a register.<sup>4</sup>

## 1.2 Calls for a bereavement policy

There have been calls for schools to have bereavement policies in place and for the Department for Education to produce a national bereavement policy.<sup>5</sup>

The UK Bereavement Commission has also called for all education settings to provide age-appropriate learning opportunities about “coping with death and bereavement as a part of life”.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Childhood Bereavement Network, [Key statistics](#). (Accessed 23 March 2023)

<sup>2</sup> Christine Jardine, “[Bereaved children need help and, right now, many are not getting it](#)”, The Scotsman, 13 March 2023; Winston’s Wish press release, [Q. How many bereaved young people are there in the UK right now? A. Nobody knows!](#), 7 March 2023

<sup>3</sup> [WH Deb 28 March 2023, c253WH](#)

<sup>4</sup> As above, c263WH

<sup>5</sup> British Educational Research Association, “[Childhood bereavement: A call for national policy that considers young people’s views](#)”, 23 September 2021; [HL Deb 6 February 2023](#)

<sup>6</sup> UK Bereavement Commission, [2022 summary report](#), 2022

## 2 Policy in England

### 2.1 Mental health policy

#### Consultation on children and young people's mental health (2017)

In December 2017 the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the Department for Education (DfE) published a . It set out proposals to improve mental health support in England, with schools and colleges at the centre.<sup>7</sup>

The [Government's response to the consultation](#), published in July 2018, committed to taking forward all the proposals.

The Government committed to:

- Encouraging every school to identify and train a Designated Senior Lead for mental health. The Lead's role includes oversight of the whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing, supporting identification of children with signs of mental ill health, and linking in with local services such as specialist NHS provision where appropriate.
- Fund Mental Health Support Teams, supervised by NHS children and young people's mental health staff. Mental Health Support Teams support clusters of schools and colleges and are intended to provide extra capacity for early intervention. They provide interventions to children with mild to moderate needs and act as a link to NHS children and young people's mental health services. The paper says Support Teams "will also support young people who have experienced trauma (such as bereavement) or traumatic incidents".<sup>8</sup>
- Trial a four-week waiting time for access to specialist NHS children and young people's mental health services.

The paper said the proposals would be rolled out to at least a fifth to a quarter of the country by the end of 2022/23.

#### Progress on the proposals

In May 2022, the Government announced a further £7 million for schools and colleges to train a Senior Mental Health Lead. This announcement said up to

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<sup>7</sup> DHSC and DfE, [Transforming children and young people's mental health provision: a green paper](#), December 2017

<sup>8</sup> As above, para 78

8,000 more schools and colleges would be able to apply for a training grant by the end of the 2023/24 financial year.<sup>9</sup>

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) has evaluated the development of Mental Health Support Teams in 25 ‘trailblazer’ areas. Its final report was published in January 2023. Key findings included:

- Substantial progress had been made in challenging circumstances.
- There were challenges retaining key staff (education mental health practitioners).
- Education settings welcomed additional mental health support.
- There were concerns about students who had problems more significant than ‘mild to moderate’, but who couldn’t access more specialised help.
- One aim of the Mental Health Support Teams is to work on whole-school and whole-college approaches, but in general, trailblazer sites reported “spending more time supporting children with mental health problems” and some had a strong clinical focus.<sup>10</sup>

Figures published by the DfE on 16 May 2023 gave a snapshot of progress on the rollout of Mental Health Support Teams, and training for school and college leads:

- 3.4 million students in schools and colleges, or around 35% of all school and college students, were covered by a Mental Health Support Team in 2022/23.
- 28% of schools and colleges were covered by a Mental Health Support Team.
- Each team in operation by March 2023 covered 8,500 learners and 17 schools and colleges, on average.
- Coverage varied by region. Taking into account teams operational by March 2023, 22% of schools and colleges in the East of England and the Midlands were covered, compared to 34% in the North West and South West.
- 58% of eligible settings had applied for the £1,200 grant to train a senior mental health lead.

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<sup>9</sup> Department for Education, Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and Department of Health and Social Care Press Release, [Increased mental health support for children and young people](#), 12 May 2022

<sup>10</sup> Ellins J, and others, [Early evaluation of the Children and Young People’s Mental Health Trailblazer programme: a rapid mixed-methods study](#). Southampton: NIHR Health and Social Care Delivery Research Topic Report, January 2023, p4

- Take-up of this grant funding varied by school phase, with 73% of secondary schools applying, compared to 59% of primary schools, and 66% of special schools.<sup>11</sup>

A PQ response in 2022 said the Government does not hold data on the number of Mental Health First Aiders in educational settings. It said anyone supporting children and young people can access online Psychological First Aid training.<sup>12</sup>

## NHS Long term plan (2019)

The NHS Long term plan echoed the commitment to fund and roll out Mental Health Support Teams. It also said a new ringfenced local investment fund worth at least £2.3 billion a year by 2023/24 would be created.<sup>13</sup>

The Long term plan made the following commitments on children and young people's mental health:

- Funding for children and young people's mental health services will grow faster than both overall NHS funding and total mental health spending.
- By 2023/24, at least an additional 345,000 children and young people aged 0-25 will be able to access support via NHS services and Mental Health Support Teams.
- All children and young people will be able to access crisis care 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Introducing new national waiting time standards for all children and young people who need specialist mental health services.
- The age-range of current service models will be expanded to 0-25-year-olds.<sup>14</sup>

## Review of mental health waiting time standards

In 2018, then-Prime Minister, Theresa May, requested a review of NHS access standards. The [Mental health clinically-led review of standards: Models of care and measurement](#) was published for consultation in 2021.

The proposed new standards relating to children and young people were:

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<sup>11</sup> Department for Education, [Transparency data, Transforming children and young people's mental health provision](#), data release, 16 May 2023, pp 7,8,11 and 19

<sup>12</sup> PQ 84883 [on [Education: Mental health](#)], 16 November 2022

<sup>13</sup> NHS England, [The NHS Long Term Plan](#), January 2019, p8

<sup>14</sup> As above, pp50-51

- For a ‘very urgent’ presentation to a community-based mental health crisis service, a patient should be seen within 4 hours from referral, across all ages.
- For an ‘urgent’ presentation to a community-based mental health crisis service, a patient should be seen within 24 hours from referral, across all ages.
- For a referral from an emergency department, patients should have a face-to-face assessment by mental health liaison, or children and young people equivalent service commence within 1 hour.
- Children, young people and their families/carers presenting to community-based mental health services, should start to receive help within four weeks from request for service (referral). This may involve immediate advice, support or a brief intervention, help to access another more appropriate service, the start of a longer-term intervention or agreement about a patient care plan, or the start of a specialist assessment that may take longer.<sup>15</sup>

The [consultation response](#) was published in February 2022 and showed strong support for the introduction of new access and waiting time measures for mental health.<sup>16</sup>

The Government has said it is working with NHS England and NHS Improvement on the next steps for the proposed measures and NHS England has recently shared guidance with local system partners to consistently report waiting times to develop a baseline position.<sup>17</sup>

More information is available in the Commons Library briefing paper on [Support for children and young people’s mental health \(England\)](#).

## 2.2 Education policy

### Relationships and sex education

Since September 2020, health education has been a statutory part of the curriculum in primary and secondary schools in England. See the Library briefing on [Relationships and Sex Education in Schools \(England\)](#) for more information about these changes.

The Government has published statutory guidance on [Relationships and sex education \(RSE\) and health education](#) (2019). The guidance sets out what pupils should know about mental wellbeing by the end of primary school and

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<sup>15</sup> NHS England and NHS Improvement, [Mental health clinically-led review of standards: Models of care and measurement](#), July 2021, pp4-5

<sup>16</sup> NHS England and NHS Improvement, [Mental health clinically-led review of standards consultation response](#), February 2022

<sup>17</sup> PQ HL6123 [on [Mental health service: children and young people](#)], 3 March 2023

the end of secondary school. This includes discussing mental health conditions, recognising early signs of mental wellbeing concerns and knowing where to seek help.<sup>18</sup>

The guidance also states:

Teachers should be aware of common ‘adverse childhood experiences’ (such as family breakdown, bereavement and exposure to domestic violence) and when and how these may be affecting any of their pupils and so may be influencing how they experience these subjects.<sup>19</sup>

The Government is in the process of reviewing this statutory guidance. It is expected to be completed by the end of 2023.

## Guidance for schools

In 2015 the DfE published Counselling in schools: a blueprint for the future. The guidance said there is a “strong expectation” that all schools should make counselling services available, but it is not a mandatory requirement.<sup>20</sup>

In response to a PQ about funding for counselling in schools in July 2023, Claire Coutinho MP said:

School-based counsellors can play an important role in supporting pupil mental wellbeing, alongside wider pastoral support.

Schools are best placed to decide what pastoral support to offer to meet pupil need and they have the flexibility to use a number of funding streams to provide this support, which can include counselling. Funding streams include core schools funding, which is set to increase to the highest ever level in real terms per pupil in the 2024/25 financial year, following the additional investment of £2 billion in each of the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years, as announced in the Autumn Statement 2022.

Schools can also use pupil premium and recovery premium funding to support pupil wellbeing, including through employing counsellors, in line with an evidence-based menu of approaches. Pupil premium rates have increased by 5% for 2023/24, to a total of £2.9 billion, and recovery premium will provide a further £1 billion of funding across the 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years, following over £300 million delivered in 2022/23.<sup>21</sup>

The DfE has published guidance on Mental health and behaviour in schools (updated November 2018), which includes information on adverse childhood experiences such as “loss or separation – resulting from death”.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> DfE, Relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education, 25 June 2019, pp32-38

<sup>19</sup> As above, p36

<sup>20</sup> DfE, Counselling in schools: a blueprint for the future 25 March 2015, para 3.2

<sup>21</sup> PQ 191546 [on Children: Counselling], 7 July 2023

<sup>22</sup> DfE, Mental health and behaviour in schools, updated November 2018

Public Health England and the DfE have published guidance, [Promoting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing](#) (updated September 2021). It sets out eight principles of a whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing and includes resources on bereavement.<sup>23</sup>

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Public Health England (now the UK Health Security Agency) launched [Psychological First Aid training](#) for people who care for or work with children and young people aged up to 25.

More information on the resources available to schools and colleges can be found on the GOV.UK webpage on [promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges](#).

## 2.3

### Children's social care policy

In February 2023, the Department for Education, which has responsibility for children's social care, published [Children's social care: stable homes, built on love](#) for consultation. The document sets out the Government's vision for reforming children's social care, including how the needs of families will be met. Further information is available in the Library briefing: [Government proposals for children's social care reform](#).

The [Supporting Families Programme](#) helps families in England facing multiple and overlapping vulnerabilities through a "whole family approach". In April 2022, the Government published [Supporting Families Programme guidance 2022 to 2025](#).

In March 2023, the scheme marked 10 years since its launch. The Government said it has spent £1.9 billion on the scheme since 2013 and 100,000 more families are set to receive support from new funding allocations.<sup>24</sup>

The Department for Education has published statutory guidance on [Working together to safeguard children](#) (2018).

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<sup>23</sup> PHE and DfE, [Promoting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing](#), updated September 2021

<sup>24</sup> HM Government press release, [Over 100,000 more vulnerable and disadvantaged families to receive support as flagship government scheme marks 10 years](#), 8 March 2023



## 3

# Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

## Scotland

The Scottish Government's [Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027](#) (March 2017) includes the following actions to:

- Review Personal and Social Education (PSE), the role of pastoral guidance in local authority schools, and counselling services for children and young people.
- Improve mental health training for staff in educational settings.
- Increase support for the mental health needs of young offenders, including for trauma and bereavement.

The [Programme for Government 2018-19](#) included a commitment to ensure that every secondary school in Scotland has access to counselling services and to improve counselling provision in primary and special schools.<sup>25</sup>

A [Review of Personal and Social Education: preparing Scotland's children and young people for learning, work and life](#) was published in January 2019. It said the Scottish Government and Education Scotland will work with COSLA, Scotland's local employer body, and local authority partners to co-produce a new health and wellbeing/ personal and social education toolkit.<sup>26</sup>

The review also noted children and young people needed access to a spectrum of mental health support services in schools and said the Government would provide guidance on the services available.<sup>27</sup>

In March 2020 the Scottish Government published [Access to counselling in secondary schools: guidance](#).

In November 2022, the Scottish Government said “access to counselling support through secondary schools is now in place across Scotland. The Scottish Government continues to support our local authority partners with £16 million in funding to ensure that every secondary school has access to counselling services.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Scottish Government, [Delivering for today, investing for tomorrow: the Government's programme for Scotland 2018-2019](#), 4 September 2018

<sup>26</sup> Scottish Government, [Review of Personal and Social Education: preparing Scotland's children and young people for learning, work and life](#), 23 January 2019

<sup>27</sup> As above

<sup>28</sup> Scottish Government, [Access to counsellors in secondary schools and children and young people's community mental health services – summary reports](#), 3 November 2022

## Wales

The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act (2013) made it a statutory requirement for local authorities to provide counselling service for children in the last year of primary school and pupils at secondary schools in their areas.<sup>29</sup> More information on these services can be found in a 2022 [Review of school and community based counselling services](#).<sup>30</sup>

The Welsh Government published [Together for mental health: our mental health strategy](#) in 2012. The [Together for mental health: delivery plan 2019 to 2022](#) set out actions for improving access to support for children and young people's emotional and mental wellbeing, including:

- Improving access to mental health support in schools by:
  - developing and implementing a multiagency whole school approach to mental health and emotional well-being.
  - Supporting schools to deliver a new curriculum including learning on health and well-being to support resilience in young people.
  - Introducing professional learning for school staff on mental health and emotional well-being.
  - Implementing key learning from the CAMHS in-reach pilots nationally.
- Improving access to support in the community by:
  - Developing local approaches to improve access to lower tier, non-clinical community-based services.
  - Embedding early intervention and preventative approaches to improving mental health and well-being through youth work approaches.
  - Exploring online support for children and young people.<sup>31</sup>

The Welsh Government has published [guidance on health and well-being in the Curriculum for Wales](#) (updated January 2020).

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<sup>29</sup> [School Standards and Organisation \(Wales\) Act 2013 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#), s92

<sup>30</sup> Welsh Government, [Review of school and community based counselling services](#), 17 March 2022

<sup>31</sup> Welsh Government, [Mental health delivery plan 2019 to 2022](#), 24 January 2020

## Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland's [Mental Health Strategy 2021-2031](#) (June 2021) includes the following commitments on children and young people's mental health and wellbeing:

- Further promote positive social and emotional development throughout the period of infancy and childhood, including in pre-school and school settings, and provide new evidence-informed interventions and support for families and support to ensure that children and young people get the best start in life.
- Provide enhanced and accessible mental health services for those who need specialist mental health services, including children and young people with disabilities. The services must be able to cater for those with disabilities, including physical and sensory disabilities, ASD and intellectual disabilities. This must include help and support for parents and families.
- Create dedicated resource for student mental health across tertiary education through the existing delivery of mental health services.

[...]

- Increase the funding for CAMHS to 10% of adult mental health funding and improve the delivery of the stepped care model to ensure it meets the needs of young people, their families and their support networks.
- Ensure that the needs of infants are met in mental health services, and meet the needs of vulnerable children and young people when developing and improving CAMHS, putting in place a 'no wrong door' approach.
- Create clear and regionally consistent urgent, emergency and crisis services for children and young people that will work together with crisis services for adult mental health.
- Develop proposals for transitions between CAMHS and adult mental health services, engaging widely with all relevant stakeholders.<sup>32</sup>

The Department of Education NI has funded an [Independent Counselling Service for Schools \(ICSS\)](#), available to post-primary aged pupils, in grant-aided schools since 2007. According to the Department's website, 98% of post-primary schools and 100% of special schools are signed up to the service.<sup>33</sup>

In February 2021 the Department of Education launched the [Children & young people's emotional health and wellbeing in education framework](#). The aim of the Framework is to support educational settings to "promote emotional health and wellbeing at a universal level" and provide "enhanced support

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<sup>32</sup> Department of Health NI, [Mental Health Strategy 2021-2031](#), June 2021, pVIII

<sup>33</sup> Department of Education NI, [Counselling service in schools](#), (Accessed 27 March 2023)

children and young people who may be at risk or showing signs of needing further help.”<sup>34</sup>

In an update to their 2022 report, the UK Commission on Bereavement said there has been “significant activity in delivering grassroots training to teachers across schools, with broad buy in from the Education and Health sector” in Northern Ireland.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Department of Education NI, [Children & Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education Framework \(final version\)](#), February 2021, para 7.2

<sup>35</sup> UK Bereavement Commission, [Principle two - UK Commission on Bereavement](#) (Accessed 12 September 2023)

## 4 Parliamentary material

### 4.1 Debates

#### [Bereaved Children: Registry](#)

**28 March 2023 | House of Commons | 730 cc252-264WH**

Motion, That this House has considered the potential merits of a registry of bereaved children. Agreed to on question.

#### [Children: Bereavement Support in Schools](#)

**6 February 2023 | House of Lords | 827 cc956-9**

#### [Children who lose Parents to Suicide](#)

**4 July 2022 | House of Commons | 717 c571**

### 4.2 Parliamentary questions

#### [Children: Bereavement Counselling](#)

**06 Jun 2023 | HL8022**

#### **Asked by: The Lord Bishop of Southwell and Nottingham**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to identify bereaved children in official statistics for the purposes of meeting their needs.

#### **Answering member: Baroness Neville-Rolfe | Department: Cabinet Office |**

#### **Asked to reply: UK Statistics Authority**

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority.

Please see the letter attached from the National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority.

The Rt Rev. the Lord Bishop of Southwell and Nottingham

House of Lords

London

SW1A 0PW

01 June 2023

Dear Lord Bishop,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking what plans there are to

identify bereaved children in official statistics for the purposes of meeting their needs (HL8022).

Deaths are registered in England and Wales as part of civil registration, a legal requirement. A death registration does not include details of the deceased's family relationships and as such cannot be used to identify bereaved children.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has no current plans to identify bereaved children in official statistics. However, as part of the forthcoming consultation on population statistics we will consider it as part of our future plans across population statistics. This consultation will officially launch at the end of the month and more details will be available on our website.

You may be interested in our previous published estimates that used the ONS Longitudinal Study (LS) to estimate the proportion of children born between the years 1971-2000, and followed up to the end of 2016, who experienced the death of their mother. Around 1% of children are likely to experience the death of their mother before they reach the age of 16. This equated to around 7,000 children every year in England and Wales who could experience maternal bereavement by the age of 16.

An estimate for those experiencing the death of their father or other relationships was not possible to create using the same methodology.

The data are an estimate within a range and are limited to children born in England and Wales. Stepchildren and adopted children are not captured using this method.

The estimate is described in more detail in 'How many children experience the death of their mother?' [1] and the data can be found in our 'Children aged under 16 years who have experienced the death of their mother' release [2].

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

[1] <https://blog.ons.gov.uk/2019/02/22/how-many-children-experience-the-death-of-their-mother/>

[2] <https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/childrenwhoareunder16wholoseamother>

**[Bereavement Counselling](#)**

**03 Feb 2023 | UIN 136626**

**Asked by: Patricia Gibson**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the UK Commission on Bereavement's report entitled bereavement is everybody's business published in 2022, what steps the Government is taking to improve its support for bereaved people.

**Answered by: Helen Whately | Department: Department of Health and Social Care**

The Government has established a cross-Government bereavement working group and is committed to working with the voluntary sector, including the UK Commission on Bereavement, to assess how further support can be provided to those who have been bereaved. We are also working with the National Institute of Health and Care Research on research into the barriers that prevent minority ethnicity groups from accessing bereavement services. We expect the findings of this research in 2024.

In addition, NHS England have developed statutory guidance to support integrated care boards in their duty to commission palliative care services within integrated care systems which states that commissioners should ensure there is sufficient access to bereavement services.

**Death: Education**

**09 Mar 2022 | UIN 129074**

**Asked by: Philip Dunne**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what resources are available nationally to support teachers when discussing death, dying and bereavement in (a) primary schools Key Stages 1 and 2 and (b) secondary schools Key Stages 3 and 4.

**Answered by: Will Quince | Department: Department for Education**

The department wants to support all young people to be happy, healthy, safe, to equip them for their adult life and to make a positive contribution to society.

Schools and colleges have an important role to play in supporting the resilience and mental health of children and young people. We have made relationships education compulsory for all primary school pupils, relationships, and sex education compulsory for all secondary school pupils, and health education compulsory for all pupils in state-funded schools from September 2020.

Under the topic of physical health and mental wellbeing, the statutory relationship, sex, and health education (RSHE) guidance sets out that teachers should be aware of common adverse childhood experiences. For example, family breakdown, bereavement, exposure to domestic violence, and when and how these may be affecting any of their pupils. This will help teachers to tailor their lessons, accordingly, taking decisions on appropriate resources and support to enable them to teach the curriculum effectively. Teachers are free to draw on the support and expertise of subject associations and other providers of curriculum support. The RSHE guidance can be accessed

here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education->

[relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education\(opens in a new tab\)](#).

In response to the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on mental health and wellbeing, the department accelerated the RSHE teacher training module relating to mental health to be available in July 2020. The department subsequently provided £15 million for the Wellbeing for Education Return and Wellbeing for Education Recovery schemes. These schemes provided training and support for education staff in schools and colleges in how to respond to COVID-19 outbreak issues. They also included a focus on supporting children and young people with bereavement. Local areas continue to share examples of practice and lesson plans covering themes such as bereavement and loss, understanding anxiety and low mood, and actions for building resilience and recovery, with us and each other.

The department has made no assessment of the changes in the level of awareness of death, dying, and bereavement among school-age children because of the COVID-19 outbreak. However, the department has published its report, which provides an in-depth picture of the experiences of children and young people aged 5 to 24 during the 2020/21 academic year. The report can be accessed here : [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-the-nation-2021-children-and-young-peoples-wellbeing\(opens in a new tab\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-the-nation-2021-children-and-young-peoples-wellbeing(opens in a new tab)).

### **Schools: Bereavement Counselling**

**12 Nov 2020 | UIN 111541**

#### **Asked by: Colleen Fletcher**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made a recent assessment of the adequacy of the services available in schools for children who experience a bereavement.

#### **Answering member: Vicky Ford | Department: Department for Education**

It is for schools to decide what support to offer to their pupils, including for bereavement, and we do not collect detailed information on what schools provide. However, the government remains committed to promoting and supporting the mental health of children and young people. Access to mental health support, including bereavement support is more important than ever during the COVID-19 outbreak and the department has taken action to ensure schools and colleges are equipped to support children and young people.

As children and young people return to school, staff need to be equipped to understand that some of them may have experienced bereavement. Our guidance signposts further support and resources, including MindEd, which has specific material on bereavement and dealing with death and loss. Further information can be found here: <https://www.minded.org.uk/>. Our remote learning guidance also signposted online support from the Childhood Bereavement Network and their website, which can be found here: <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/>. This was supported by



webinars over the summer, which reached thousands of school and college staff.

Additionally, we are investing £8 million in the Wellbeing for Education Return programme, which will provide schools and colleges all over England with the knowledge and practical skills they need to support teachers, students and parents, to help improve how they respond to the emotional impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. The programme is funding expert advisers in every area of England to train and support schools and colleges during the autumn and spring terms. The training includes specific examples of supporting bereaved children.

Of course, schools and colleges are not mental health professionals, and it is important that more specialist support is available for children and their families. All NHS mental health trusts have ensured that there are 24/7 open access telephone lines to support people of all ages. Public Health England and Health Education England have also developed advice and guidance for parents and professionals on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. This includes a specific section on dealing with bereavement and grief. Advice and guidance for this is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing>.

We have also provided £9.2 million of additional funding for mental health charities, including charities like Young Minds, to support adults and children struggling with their mental wellbeing during this time.

In the long term, we remain committed to our joint green paper delivery programme with the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England, including introducing new mental health support teams linked to schools and colleges, providing training for senior mental health leads in schools and colleges, and testing approaches to faster access to NHS specialist support.

## 4.3

### Early Day Motions

#### WINSTON'S WISH

EDM 956 (session 2022-23)

13 March 2023

Christine Jardine

That this House notes the work of the childhood bereavement charity, Winston's Wish; congratulates the charity on reaching its 30th anniversary in 2022; notes that they supported over 30,000 children in 2022; further notes with concern the lack of automatic support available for bereaved children upon the death of a parent; also notes with concern that there is no official data available for the number of children in need of support; applauds the

wide range of services they provide for bereaved children including support groups, hotlines, online chats and email support; wishes Winston's Wish every success for 2023; and urges the Government to introduce a new register of bereaved children to ensure no child is alone when they lose a parent or guardian.

## 5

### News articles

[Bereavement boxes for primary school children in Birmingham funded](#)

12 July 2023

BBC News

[Bereaved children need help and, right now, many are not getting it](#)

13 March 2023

The Scotsman

[How to help your child understand bereavement and support them in their grief](#)

8 October 2022

BBC

[Bereaved children: Calls for mandatory training for teachers to support pupils who have lost loved ones](#)

6 September 2021

Sky News

[Best Practice: Supporting Bereaved Children - Making sense of loss](#)

3 August 2021

Nursery World

['It's OK for teachers to cry': how to handle bereavement in school](#)

12 May 2020

Guardian

[Schools 'need support of government to help grieving children'](#)

18 June 2019

Guardian

## 6 Further information

### 6.1 Child bereavement support information

[Bereavement support for children and young people](#)  
Myscot.gov

[Supporting children & young people who are grieving](#)  
Cruse Scotland bereavement support

[Children who are Bereaved](#)  
NHS Scotland

[Children and bereavement](#)  
NHS

### 6.2 Child bereavement charities

[Child Bereavement UK](#)

[Grief Encounter](#)

[Childhood Bereavement Network](#)

[Richmonds Hope](#)

[Hope Again](#)

[Sibling Support](#)

### 6.3 Miscellaneous

[National framework for the delivery of bereavement care](#)  
Gov.Wales

[Helping children deal with bereavement](#)  
Gov.Wales

[UK Commission on Bereavement](#)



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