

Re: A Treatment Outcome Study of Bereaved Children, Measuring the effects of School Based Support Services: in relation to Pupil's Emotional and Behavioural Development.

Summary of Conclusions.

The research explored the effects of childhood bereavement in a mixed gender group of young adolescents. The main aim of the research was to evaluate the benefits of providing a school based group support for bereaved children, using the Seasons for Growth Programme as the chosen intervention. Changes in children's emotional and behavioural difficulties were measured pre and post intervention, from three different perspectives including the child themselves, the parents and teachers. Differences in perceptions were also measured between the children and the adults who cared for them.

The research revealed large numbers of children had suffered bereavement, many of which their school was unaware. Whilst the school could identify children who had experienced loss through death, this seemed to be restricted to recent losses which adults thought to be significant. Parents also demonstrated a high degree of reluctance to acknowledge their child's experience and/or need for support in relation to bereavement, this being evident in the poor response from parents in the initial stages of the research.

This study also uncovered a very different picture is likely to emerge if children are asked about their loss directly. Both teachers and parents presented with very different perceptions of children's experiences than that reported by children themselves.

Correlation's between adults and children's perceptions showed signs of significant improvement at the post-intervention stage, suggesting objectives of raising awareness had to some extent been met. Adult's perceptions of grief and their beliefs regarding childhood bereavement are fundamental to the process of supporting children in a way that is helpful. What this research has appeared to highlight, is that when awareness and perceptions of childhood grief is enhanced, then an appreciation

of preventative interventions is more likely to emerge; supporting the development of support systems for bereaved children., within normal community/school settings.

Further work, which is at present on going, is facilitating the rolling out of this programme, into other schools within the two counties involved. This process will hopefully go some way to filling the gap in services already identified, whereby children who do not necessarily present as high risk, can access preventative supportive services to help them adjust to a normal, but very uncomfortable life experience.

Fiona Holden

Principal Psychological Therapist

CAMHS Early Intervention and Prevention Team/Conwy and Denbighshire: North
Wales