



Service Evaluation: How effective are structured bereavement information events in compassionate communities?

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2nd April 2026


Introduction





There is strong research on supporting people with terminal illness, but far less evidence on how community-based bereavement information events support people who are grieving.

In my role as a Bereavement Care Co-ordinator at St Vincent's University Hospital, I often face challenges contacting bereaved families due to data protection requirements at the time of loss.

Many people, however, later seek out information and support through community bereavement events.



This research explores whether attending these events helps individuals understand and normalise their grief.





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Elm Park



HSE Mental Health Services



Bethany
Bereavement Support

National Bereavement Support for Adults

Background literature



Strategic Drivers:

- Ireland's aging population and rising death rates signal growing bereavement needs
- Each death affects 4–10 people (IHF), highlighting the demand for community-based support
- National Adult Palliative Care Policy (2024) promotes “Right Care” through compassionate communities and equitable access

Service Gaps & Inequalities:

- 64.1% of bereaved individuals did not access professional support (National End of Life Survey, 2023)
- Existing services often offer generic responses, lacking tailored care (Aoun, 2020)

Bereavement Psychoeducation:

Grief manifests in diverse ways—psychological, physical, spiritual, financial

COVID-19 exposed major gaps in bereavement support; led to HSE's Bereavement Awareness Campaign (2021)

Psychoeducation must be culturally sensitive and accessible; storytelling and group formats show promise (Philips et al., 2025)

Compassionate Communities:

A grassroots movement promoting equity, social connection, and community empowerment

Aims to transform experiences of life, death, and grief through collective care Embed grief support and psychoeducation within community networks

Enhance palliative care through social connectedness and shared responsibility

Event

A free, structured community event for those bereaved or supporting someone in grief

Open to all adults, regardless of relationship to the deceased or time since loss

Funded by the Local Bereavement Network Grant and by Fanagans Funeral Homes

Registration via Eventbrite

Hybrid format: 75 attended in person, 110 joined online


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Living with Grief

A bereavement information evening for the public

Hybrid

When: Tuesday, April 29th | 7:00 - 9:00 pm
Where: Hilton Dublin Kilmainham

This is a FREE event hosted by the Dublin South Bereavement Network. For those unable to attend in person, this event will be live streamed via Zoom.

Who will find this event helpful?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anyone who is bereaved, whether the loss was due to illness or a sudden passing, or whether the loss was recent or occurred many years ago.• Anyone supporting a bereaved family member or friend.• Professionals and community members who may have a role in supporting those who are grieving.
What will happen at the event?	<p>7:00 pm: Tea/coffee on arrival</p> <p>7:30 pm: An information talk</p> <p>8:00 pm: Q&A session with a panel of people with lived experience of bereavement</p> <p>There will be representatives from a range of local bereavement support services at the event.</p>
How do I book my place?	<p>Scan the QR code to book your place on Eventbrite or call (01) 963 1131.</p> <p>For more information, visit hospicefoundation.ie.</p> <p>Note: You must book a place whether you are attending in person or joining live through Zoom.</p> 

The Dublin South Bereavement Network is part of Irish Hospice Foundation's national Local Bereavement Network programme.



This event is kindly supported by:



Methods

Data Collection:

12-question questionnaire

Data Analysis:

Quantitative data analyzed using SurveyMonkey and Excel

Qualitative data analysed using thematic analysis

Braun & Clarke's six-phase model

Ethical Considerations:

Informed consent and voluntary participation

Anonymous data collection

Ethical approval granted by the Dublin South Bereavement

Research Design:

Mixed-methods service evaluation

Combination of quantitative and qualitative data

Sample & Recruitment:

Non-random, self-selective sample

Adults who had experienced bereavement

Recruited from attendees of a Dublin South Bereavement Network information event

Sample Size:

185 registered attendees

108 completed questionnaires

Key Findings

Chart C, Q2 - When was your most recent bereavement?

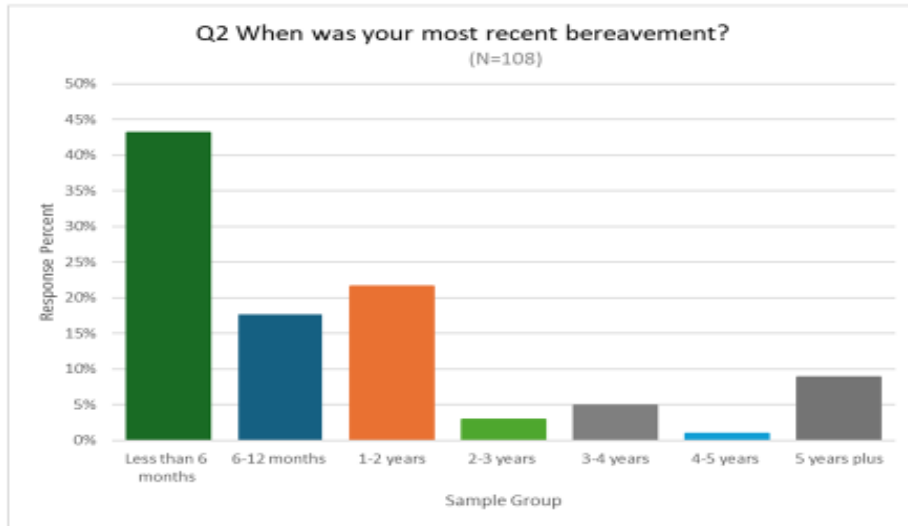


Chart C demonstrates that of the sample group (n=108) 43% of attendees had a bereavement of less than six months, and the category with the lowest data shows 1% of the sample group had a bereavement 4-5 years ago.

Chart D Q3 - Why did you attend this event?

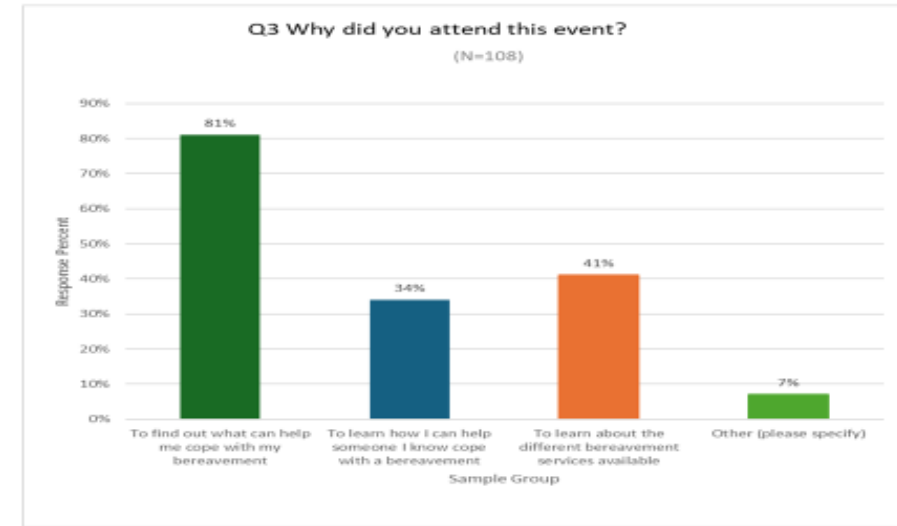
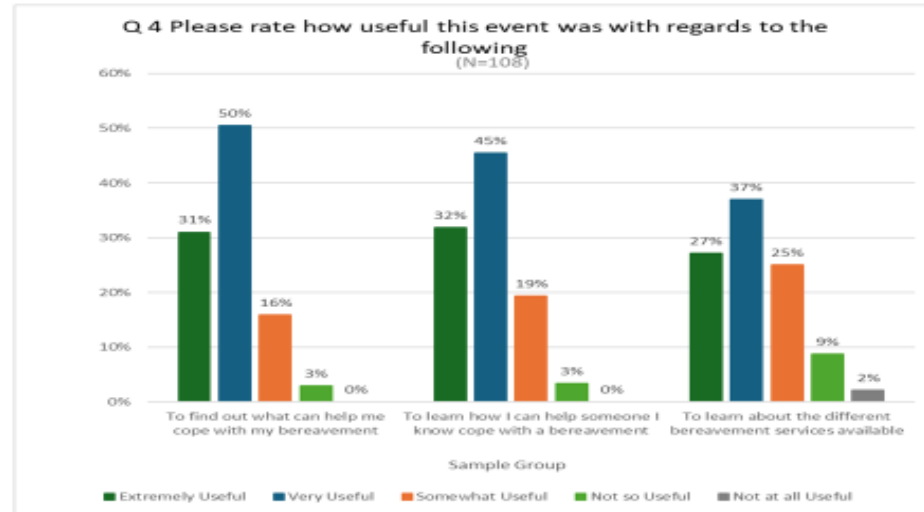


Chart D demonstrates that 81% of the sample group (n=108) were looking for support to help cope with their bereavement. 40.75% wanted to learn about the different community-based bereavement services available, 34.26% attended the event to help someone they knew with a bereavement. The data shows 7% were recorded in the 'Other' category, an example of a data extract of the category is, 'My work brings me into contact with many who have had family members who have died' (1).

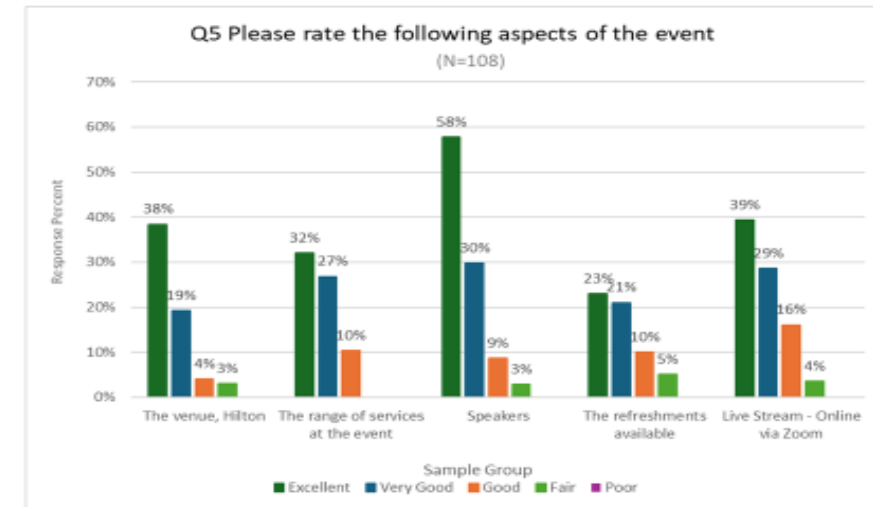
Key Findings

Chart E: Q4 - Please rate how useful this event was as regards the following



This question comprises of three bereavement psychoeducational sub-questions within one question. 50% of the sample group found the event very useful to help cope with their bereavement, 3% found it not so useful. 45% of the sample group thought attending was very useful to help someone cope with a bereavement, 3% found it not so useful. 37% of the sample group found attending the event to learn about bereavement services very useful, 2% found it not at all useful.

Chart F: Q5 - Please rate the following aspects of the event



There were five sub-questions under Question 5, this is practical data which is informative for future bereavement events.

Key Findings

Q9: What is the primary reason for your score?

The data in response to this question highlighted a theme of **emotional support**, this data extra is an example of this,

'I felt like I was not alone'
(39).



The data also highlighted a theme of a **better understanding of grieving process**, as this data extract demonstrates,

'Comprehensive information of the grieving process and they spoke about it being individual to me' (23).



Q10: If you found this information evening helpful, could you please comment below?

The theme of **emotional connection** was highlighted in response to this question, as this data extract shows,

'There's other people in the same boat and they are able to speak about it'
(26).



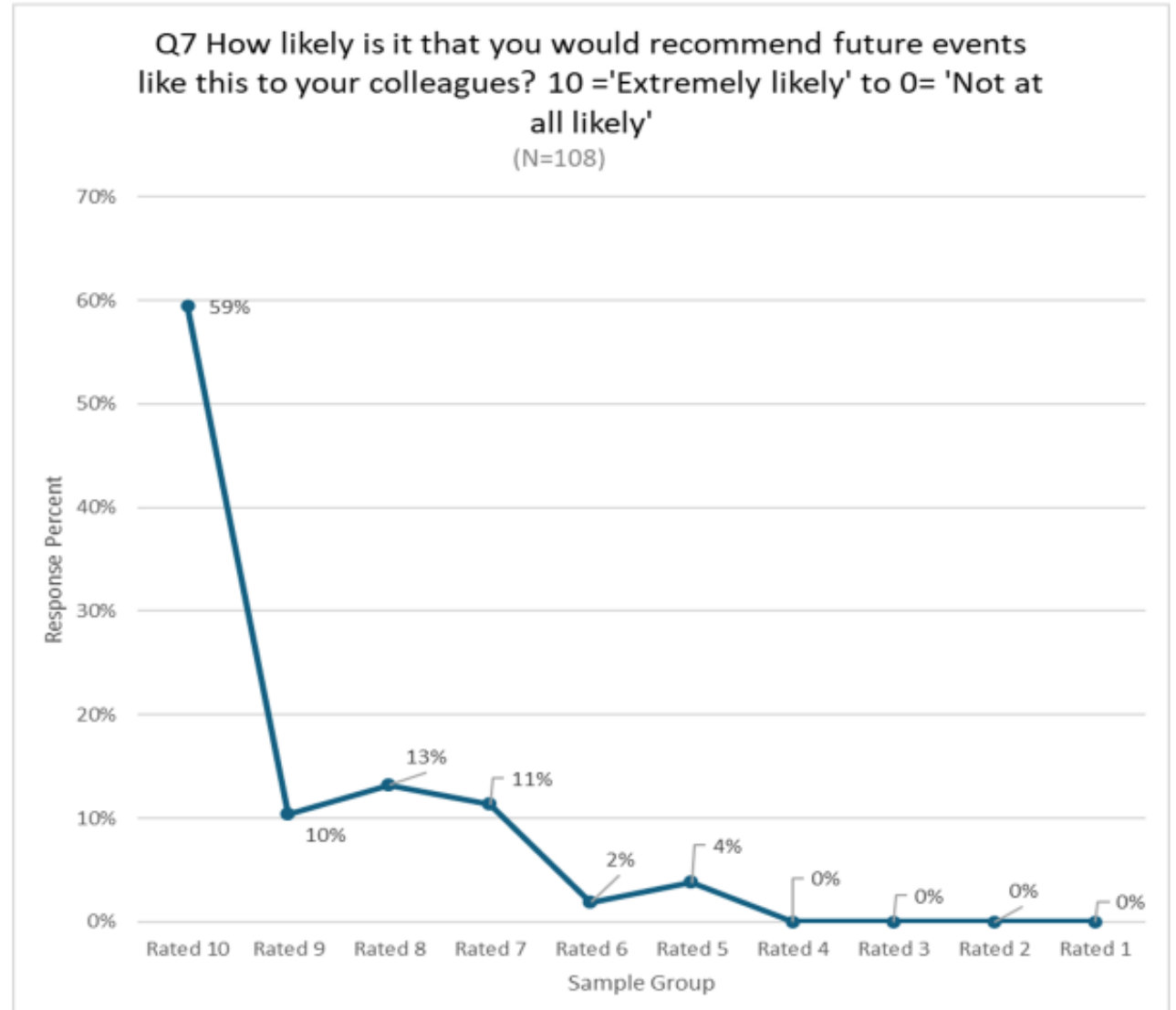
The theme of greater **understanding of the grieving process** was evident, as this data extract shows,

'Grief was well explained'(13).



Chart G: Q7 – How likely is it that you would recommend future events like this one to your colleagues?

Results from Likert Scale show 59% of the sample group are extremely likely to recommend future bereavement events to colleagues, and the data shows that nobody said that they would not recommend it to colleagues.



Key Findings

Structured bereavement information events are effective in supporting people through the grieving process.

Events promote social and emotional connectedness within compassionate communities.

Need for emotional connection and peer support

Increased awareness of community-based bereavement services

Improved ability to support someone who has experienced bereavement

Highlights gaps between healthcare services and community-based bereavement supports

Provides evidence that structured events strengthen a compassionate community approach

Limitations

Cannot be applied universally as it was restricted to the service users of the Dublin South Bereavement Network.

A focus group post the event did not take place; the event was self-selective therefore there could have been bias.

Participants had to have the use of a computer to register to attend the event.

This research study was completed in a short period of time and would merit further investigation in the form of a longitudinal study.

To conclude...

The findings of this research study contribute to the ongoing discussion about whether participating in structured community bereavement information events improves the quality of life for individuals during their grieving process.

The study provided the chance to gather data by assessing whether the sample group had positive, negative, or neutral reactions to attending such community-based bereavement events.

Analysis of the data indicates that the study has enhanced the understanding of the importance of collaboration between the healthcare system and compassionate communities, working together towards common goals and outcomes.

Special thanks to



Thanks to all participants.
Dublin South Bereavement Network.
The Irish Hospice Foundation.
Fanagans Funeral Homes.
My manager, Louise Morgan, at St. Vincent's University Hospital.
My tutor, Irene Murphy, along with all the lecturers at Queen's University.

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