

Backyard Project: How Effective Are Structured Bereavement Information Events in Compassionate Communities?

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Introduction

This project evaluates the effectiveness of structured, community-based bereavement information events within compassionate communities. The service evaluation was conducted as part of a postgraduate diploma at Queen's University Belfast. I am employed as a Specialist Palliative Care Social Worker at St. Vincent's University Hospital in Dublin. In my role, I represent the hospital by participating in the Dublin South Bereavement Network. This network comprises organisations that provide support and services to bereaved individuals and embrace a compassionate communities approach to bereavement.

Event Overview

Living with Grief: A Bereavement Information Evening, was a free, two-hour, structured community-based event delivered using a compassionate communities approach. Organised by the Dublin South Bereavement Network, the event took place on Tuesday 29th April 2025 and was offered in a hybrid format, with both in-person and online (Zoom) attendance. The event aimed to provide bereavement psychoeducation, emotional support, and information on community-based bereavement services for bereaved adults and those supporting someone who is grieving. Attendance was self-selective, with 183 people registered and 108 attendees completing a post-event evaluation questionnaire.

Methodology

Research Design: Mixed methods service evaluation (quantitative & qualitative)
Non-random, self-selective adults who had experienced bereavement. Structured 12-question questionnaire. Combination of closed questions, Likert scales, and open-ended questions. Distributed post-event. Participants 183 registered; 108 completed questionnaires. Data Analysis: Quantitative data analysed using SurveyMonkey and Excel Qualitative data analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke). Ethics: Informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality. Ethical approval granted by Dublin South Bereavement Network.

Results

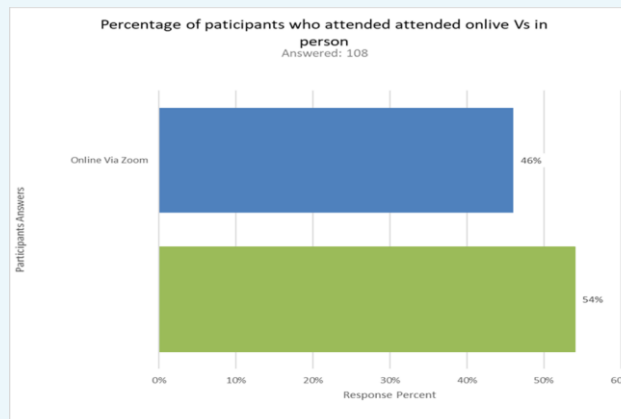


Chart A illustrates strong engagement across delivery formats, with 54% of participants attending the event in person and 46% attending online, indicating that the hybrid model increased accessibility.

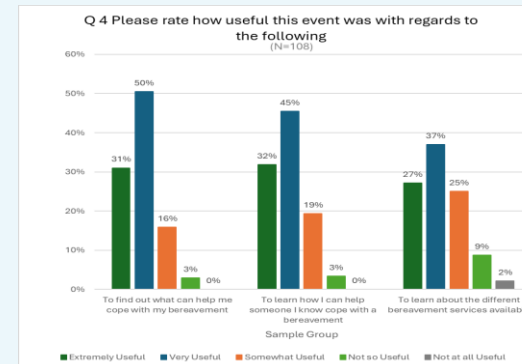


Chart E demonstrates high perceived usefulness of the event, with the majority of respondents rating it as **very** or **extremely useful** in supporting coping with bereavement, helping others who are grieving, and increasing awareness of available services. Overall, quantitative findings showed high satisfaction and likelihood of recommendation, while qualitative analysis highlighted themes of emotional connection, normalisation of grief, and reduced feelings of isolation.

Discussion

Findings indicate that attendance at a structured community-based bereavement information event was beneficial for participants, particularly in terms of emotional connection, social inclusion, and gaining a greater understanding of the grieving process. The results align with existing literature highlighting the importance of informal and community-based support in bereavement care. Participants valued the normalisation of grief experiences and the opportunity to connect with others, reinforcing the role of compassionate communities in addressing gaps between formal healthcare services and bereavement support. The study supports the integration of structured bereavement psychoeducation within community settings to promote emotional well-being and reduce social isolation.

Conclusion

Findings show participants' varied responses and highlight the value of collaboration between healthcare and compassionate communities.