

Supporting people bereaved during COVID-19: a mixed methods study of bereaved people's experiences and the bereavement services supporting them

Scientific summary

COVID-19 is impacting the grief experiences of people bereaved during the pandemic, whilst also affecting the bereavement services that support them. This study aims to investigate the grief experiences, support needs and use of bereavement support by people bereaved during the pandemic, and the adaptations, challenges and innovation involved in delivering equitable bereavement support.

We will use qualitative and quantitative methods in three work packages:

(WP1) A UK survey at three time points: baseline, 7 and 13 months post-death. Recruitment will be via social media, organisations representing minority ethnic groups, and bereavement organisations. Questions will investigate the impact of end-of-life and post-death experiences during COVID-19 and subsequent access to, needs for and experiences of bereavement support. Validated measures will assess grief and coping response, social support, prolonged grief disorder (PGD) and quality of life (QoL).

(WP2) Semi-structured telephone interviews with a sample of respondents after each survey round will explore experiences of grief and bereavement during COVID-19, including bereavement support and unmet needs. Minority ethnic groups, which are disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and experience barriers to accessing bereavement services, will be over-sampled.

(WP3) An online survey of bereavement service providers will identify service adaptations, key challenges and approaches to delivering accessible bereavement care during the pandemic. Survey findings will inform targeted case studies, developed via telephone interviews, to describe innovative practice.

This study, developed with public contributors, will identify 'real-time' implications for the delivery of end-of-life care and bereavement support during and beyond the pandemic, and ensure prompt translation into practice.