

## Bereavement support for people aged 50+

Ageing Better is a test and learn programme funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

We collect information and insights from across 14 partnerships and use this learning to support service deliverers, funders and policy makers working to reduce social isolation in people aged over 50.

This learning snapshot details key findings and recommendations surrounding bereavement and its role as a risk factor for loneliness and social isolation in people 50+.

You can use it as a summary of the full [learning report](#), to share practical tools with colleagues and in teams, or include in your own presentations and briefings.

<p><b>1. Why focus on bereavement?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bereavement is a major life event which causes a significant change in social connections and support networks.</li> <li>• 14% of Ageing Better Middlesbrough participants identified ‘bereavement’ as the reason they felt lonely.</li> <li>• The prevalence of this risk factor across society warrants targeted bereavement interventions from service providers and community groups nationally.</li> <li>• Bereavement is intrinsically linked to other risk factors including: loss of self-confidence, poor mental and physical health, poverty and financial worries.</li> </ul>	<p><b>2. What are the challenges?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no ‘one way’ to grieve and it is unlikely to be a linear process.</li> <li>• Grief and bereavement are life events without any specific closure or end point.</li> <li>• Unresolved grief presents additional challenges. Ageing Better research found this to be particularly acute in BAME communities unable to share grief (be connected) with loved ones overseas.</li> <li>• Men are particularly impacted by loss of social networks due to bereavement. This is because the evidence suggests that men are more likely to rely on a partner to maintain those crucial connections.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. So what can we do with this learning?</b> There are a number of specific interventions tried and tested through Ageing Better known to support people with bereavement.</p> <p><b>Test and learn from services in your area</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Time limited projects:</b> services delivered over a fixed time period to support people working through their bereavement. The onward aim is to connect people with wider, more informal social networks.</li> <li>• <b>Social projects:</b> provision of accessible social opportunities for those keen to restart fun activities following a loss.</li> <li>• <b>Reducing stigma projects:</b> creation of safe spaces for people who’ve lost a loved one, where bereavement can be discussed openly and useful resources accessed.</li> </ul>	<p><b>3. How can we improve support?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grief and bereavement are life events and trauma which for some people may require the support of a specific intervention such as counselling, mentoring or mental health support.</li> <li>• Not everyone who is bereaved experiences social isolation and loneliness immediately. It can be a risk factor at any time. Ongoing provision of space to talk and be listened to as well as making new social connections with peers, remains a valuable support for many years.</li> <li>• It is important to take a holistic, person-centred approach to bereavement; to understand a participants’ specific challenges and tailor services accordingly.</li> </ul>