



The Irish Childhood Bereavement Network

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TUSLA
An Ghairneálachas na n-
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Child and Family Agency



The Irish Hospice Foundation


**Changing the face of bereavement care
A standards framework for supporting bereaved children and young people**

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The Irish Childhood Bereavement Network (ICBN) works with its members to promote the voice of bereaved children and young people, recognising that theirs has traditionally been the silent voice of grieving


ICBN is hosted by the Irish Hospice Foundation (IHF) and overseen by an Advisory Panel with representatives from bereavement services nationally. The panel bring an abundance of knowledge and expertise to guide our work.

The work of ICBN is supported through funding from the IHF and TUSLA.




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Standards for supporting Bereaved Children & Young People

A FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPMENT

DEVELOPED BY THE IRISH CHILDHOOD BEREAVEMENT NETWORK (ICBN)



Family


Local Community

Child & Young Person

National


Service Providers

DEVELOPED BY



The Irish Childhood Bereavement Network

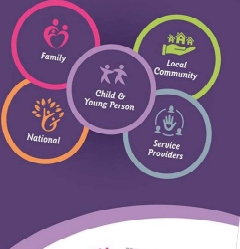
A National Initiative to guide bereavement care for children & young people through the delivery of Bereavement Standards



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- ## Method
- Literature review
 - Policy review
 - National and international standards review
 - Five domains for standards agreed
 - Format agreed – Standard statement; Standard rationale; Criteria for meeting standard; Evidence of achievement

- ## Consultation process
- A draft version of the Standards was presented for structured consultation to the ICBN national conference at the end of 2016
 - Draft circulated to a wide-ranging consultation in 2017. Over 60 written feedback forms from organisations and individuals, all welcoming the work and providing vital insights and comments
 - By October 2017 the final edits incorporated the views and comments into this publication
 - Launched by the Ombudsman for Children, Dr Niall Muldoon in **November 2017**
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- ## The Standards
- Standard 1** **Child & Young Person:** Children's experience of bereavement will be recognised, acknowledged and supported in accordance with their needs over time.
 - Standard 2** **Family:** The family is generally the main source of care for the bereaved child and will require access to reassurance, information, guidance and support to provide this care.
 - Standard 3** **Local Community:** All bereaved children should have access to bereavement information, guidance and support services in their local community as required.
 - Standard 4** **Service Providers:** All service providers will ensure that governance, procedures and protocols are in place to ensure ethical, safe and appropriate bereavement service delivery to the children in their care.
 - Standard 5** **National:** National policy and local infrastructure includes appropriate responses to, and integrates the needs of, bereaved children.

Chapter 3

**STANDARD 2
FAMILY**



The family is generally the main source of care for the bereaved child and will require access to reassurance, information, guidance and support to provide this care.

Rationale

Any bereaved child should be seen in the context of their family. The family's strength and challenges are taken into account when assisting a family to ensure that the most appropriate type of support is accessed for their child.

It is well established that most children can manage and incorporate the grief they experience into their lives with the appropriate support from their family and key adults in their lives. However, this is based on the premise that the adults surrounding the child have accurate and up-to-date information on the impact of childhood bereavement. Additionally, families may not be in a position to provide this support if the bereavement has impacted them in a way that does not allow them to have sufficient resources to provide that support. In particular, when a death occurs that is sudden and unexpected, or is complicated by factors that are hard for the adults and children in this situation, extra support will be needed.

The Context of Family Support

Most children and young people will develop the coping strategies to manage their grief with the support of their families and communities. With this support, they will learn to integrate the loss into their life experience.

When a family member dies, a double loss can be experienced in that the child or young person loses not only a family member, but can also lose parental support (at least temporarily), as parents are coping with their own grief. As a result, children and young people can become the "forgotten" mourners in a family. For some families, bereavement comes on top of pre-existing stresses including poverty, financial struggles, mental health or addiction issues that are already challenging for the family. These pre-existing circumstances can place a large burden on families who are additionally dealing with the death of a loved one.

Criteria to demonstrate the Standard has been met

2.1	Families and caregivers have access to information, literature and guidance on what death means and the impact it may have on children, and the best ways of supporting children within their family.
2.2	Families have information and access to select external bereavement support services for their children.
2.3	Families play a key role in deciding the most appropriate support for them.
2.4	Counselling or other support provided directly to a child is designed to be complementary to any support provided to the child by the family.
2.5	Families are supported in a prompt and professional manner to ensure that their children's bereavement needs are assessed and an appropriate programme of therapeutic support is provided.


What does this mean for bereaved children?

- Children will have their unique experience of grief recognised within the family context.
- Children are living in family units or other care arrangements where there is appropriate information about childhood bereavement and access to supports as needed.
- Children feel included in the family's bereavement.
- The child experiences a secure and problem-solving environment for dealing with the bereavement with the support of outside services, if needed.
- The child knows that their family or carers will do their best to support them in their bereavement.
- If a family is not in a position to provide that level of support, then external support is secured.
- Agencies providing support to children who are bereaved should be mindful to ensure that their input does not undermine the natural support to be provided to families, rather that it supports and enhances same.

How these standards can be used

Planning


- To promote a national "vision"
- To direct the ways to promote resilience & provide support for bereaved children
- To shape investment in bereavement care
- To inform statutory commissioning of bereavement



How these standards can be used

Provision


- To develop confidence in the information, supports & services
- To ensure support are based on the latest international findings
- To help to define the scope of care
- To ensure that the family are seen as central
- To highlight the voice of bereaved children in national policies



How these standards can be used


Quality review/ outcomes

- To help service providers to review their current practices
- To allow service providers incrementally develop their services in light of identified evolving needs of bereaved children




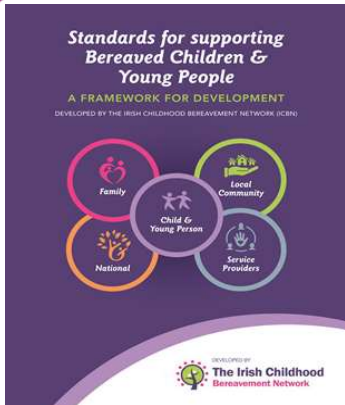
ICBN Policy Vision

- The impact of bereavement on children is integrated into a range of national policies
- The economic and social consequences of bereavement are acknowledged and priority given to reducing their negative impact on a bereaved child and their family
- National research on childhood bereavement is promoted through an agreed research agenda – including population level research
- National approaches are built upon a principle of collaboration, and local collaborative structures are resourced and promoted accordingly
- National education and training programmes for professionals include education on bereavement and childhood bereavement
- A national framework for the provision of support for bereaved children is developed and adopted to underpin decisions about resources and developments from statutory bodies



We accept that the coming years will present challenges to implement these standards & consider that as individuals, families, communities and as a country we are at the beginning of a process

‘Creating a future where bereaved children and young people know that they are supported’

Our ultimate aim is to have National recognition of the changed circumstances for children and young people following loss

