Bereavement Support Bubbles

The situation

A Sue Ryder-commissioned poll\(^1\) of people who experienced a bereavement since the start of lockdown has demonstrated the need for better support for bereaved people during the coronavirus pandemic. Their experiences highlight how more can be done by the government to support bereaved people in any local lockdowns or potential future national lockdowns.

Our research shows that 62\% of people who had lost someone close to them felt isolated and alone when they were grieving during lockdown. This was felt most acutely by people aged 16-24. And 55\% of people who experienced a bereavement during lockdown felt their loved one’s death had become ‘just a statistic’.

The level of emotional distress at not being able to be with a loved one at the end of life may be damaging for the person left behind, compounded by the grieving process being interrupted and harder to work through due to lockdown restrictions. What’s more, not being able to hug or hold a loved one who is sharing their grief can feel particularly cruel and difficult people to bear. Indeed, 82\% of the people surveyed feel grief can last longer if you have lost someone suddenly or you haven’t been able to say goodbye.

The nature of the coronavirus pandemic has led 59\% of bereaved people to feel as though their grief has been forgotten. However, action can be taken to help people in any future lockdowns: 66\% of people who were bereaved believe being able to form a bereavement support bubble with another household would be a vital source of support, and 61\% would find it useful to have bereavement support services more readily available.

What should change

Therefore, in the event of local lockdowns and any future national lockdowns in which the same lockdown restrictions apply as previously, we believe that recently bereaved people should be able to form a ‘bereavement support bubble’ with one other household.

Current guidelines for areas in lockdown are that only people in single adult households can form a support bubble. They can join one other household of any size, and meet one another indoors. We would like to have this extended to people who have been recently bereaved. This would help to support those who have been bereaved who live with housemates, or have a child over the age of 18 living at home, by allowing them to join up with another household.

The rules would follow those for the current support bubbles – members of the bubble must not mix with anyone from a household outside their support bubble, and if a member of the support bubble shows symptoms of coronavirus, the entire support bubble must self-isolate and be tested.

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\(^1\) Survey conducted by Censuswide on 21-27 August 2020 with 503 UK respondents (aged 16+) who experienced a close death or bereavement since the end of March.
How you can help

1. Support our call for bereavement support bubbles and for bereavement support services to be made more readily available by:
   - Becoming a signatory to a cross-party letter to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to ask for these changes to be made for future lockdowns;
   - Tabling parliamentary questions on bereavement support bubbles and upscaling bereavement support services during lockdowns;
   - Raising these proposals during parliamentary debates and question times.

2. Show your support on social media and share our dedicated advice page www.sueryder.org/griefandlockdown to support people who are grieving at this time.

3. Signpost your constituents to www.sueryder.org/support for our free Online Bereavement Support. We make it easy for people to connect with the support that's right for them, even during lockdown, with professional counsellors, a community of others who understand, and reliable information and resources.

About Sue Ryder

Sue Ryder supports people through the most difficult times of their lives. Whether that’s a terminal illness, the loss of a loved one or a neurological condition – we’re there when it matters. For over 65 years, our doctors, nurses and carers have given people the compassion and expert care they need to help them live the best life they possibly can.

Contact

To add your name to the cross-party letter to government and for suggested PQs, please contact:

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