

PE1820/C

Young Scot submission of 4 November 2020

Last year, Young Scot published 'Death Ting' – an overview of the Co-design sessions we ran on behalf of the Scottish Government on the experiences of death and bereavement that have a lasting impact on young people's lives and decision making.

Ting is an ancient Norse term for a gathering where people from different backgrounds came together to make important decisions. Today, the Scottish Government uses *tings* to bring people together to ensure a broad range of perspectives are represented.

Our Young Scot Co-design team delivered several *tings*. These allowed us to gather insights and test attitudes towards the support that young people received around death and bereavement. It also allowed us to develop ideas on how they'd like to be supported.

We partnered with Clackmannanshire High School, Her Majesty's Young Offenders Institution (HMYOI) Polmont, Glasgow's LGBT Group and Glasgow Disability Alliance (GDA). This allowed us to work with young people from a variety of backgrounds – many of whose voices are seldom heard. Together, we ran five *tings* with 40 young people aged 15-25 years old. Each of them had different experiences of death and bereavement.

Key insights:

- Most young people said they'd go to their parents and family for support. They also said that family, even when they might also be going through difficult experiences, provided positive role models. Young people from the GDA group spoke openly about conversations they'd been encouraged to have with their families on their own wishes in relation to death and funeral plans.
- Friends are a positive support but can also be a negative influence. The young people from HMYOI Polmont said they could see the ways in which friends had encouraged them to make decisions that had a long-term negative impact. Also, some young people said they would not want to talk to their friends when they may not have known the person who has passed away. Some feared that news of someone's death might be shared online when the family would prefer it remained private.
- Several young people said that they would find it easier to talk to staff from professional support services as they offer space to explore their emotions. A few young people suggested that speaking to family members who might also be going through the bereavement meant they did not feel they could openly discuss how they were feeling as they didn't want to upset their family member further. In these instances, young people preferred to speak to a neutral third party as the best way to avoid upsetting their family further.
- All groups said that schools were best at supporting groups of young people. They also said there is not enough pre-emptive support around death and

dying. The young people also agreed that there should be more general conversations happening on death and bereavement at a younger age. Talking about death and bereavement can have a positive long-term impact, although it was acknowledged that this can be incredibly difficult in different ways for each young person.

- Each group said there was a lack of information, awareness and understanding around death and bereavement. This ranged from practicalities such as the cost of a funeral to awareness of the support services available.
- Whilst each young person requires support and information when dealing with death and bereavement, the support should be specific to their needs, circumstances and attitudes.

The next steps

The insights gained during the *tings* suggest that to support young people who are experiencing death and bereavement, there must be more information on the subject, appropriate support, and more conversations on the topic in schools.

The full report can be accessed here <https://youngscot.net/news-database/death-ting?rq=death%20ting>.