
Bereavement Cafe Review

May 2022 - September 2023



**Surviving
Bereavement**
Life after Loss

What have we done?

During August 2020, the Covid19 Support Kenilworth Group collected data from isolated residents about what they would like to see in Kenilworth once restrictions eased. Among other types of activity, such as digital support, social connections, special interest groups, there was an identified need for **bereavement** support.

As **Compassionate Kenilworth** grew and mapped activity and support in the local community, we quickly identified a gap in organised bereavement support that was face to face which was reinforced in our contact with Social Prescribers, residents of Kenilworth who were attending our groups and contact with Warwick District and County Councillors.

While there is plenty of support available online, Age UK state that **'25% of people aged 65 and over in the UK don't use the internet'** so the requirement for free to access face to face bereavement support was in demand.

During our covid support work we came across people who had lost family members and friends in traumatic circumstances and were unable to seek support and solace from others due to the government restrictions at that time. This had a devastating impact on their mental health which needed to be addressed by introducing local face to face support.

We made contact with Tracey McAtamney who runs **Surviving Bereavement** and is a certified **Grief Recovery Specialist**. Surviving Bereavement run a series of local bereavement support groups developed in order to provide a free, relaxed, safe space to talk to others going through similar circumstances.

Cafe's commenced in May 2022 and we have hosted one every month since, coming up to our 17th cafe this month (September 2023)

Initially funded by Kenilworth Lions in order as a pilot to determine need, we delivered a series of monthly cafes. Once we established the success and need for these cafes, we successfully applied for funding from Warwickshire County Council. We are currently funded until the end of 2023. Funding pays for room hire and refreshments, marketing, resource and facilitator costs.

May - December - 64 attendees over 8 cafes

January - August - 106 attendees over 8 cafes

The gender split on average is 40/60 Male/Female

Age range - 55+

Participants hear about our cafes through the following methods:

- word of mouth
- posters and flyers
- social media
- referrals from social prescribers, faith groups, local organisations and health groups

We see attendees making friendships, networks of support and developing their practical and emotional strategies for coping after loss. Multiple social activities, holidays, meals together and supporting each other with social, emotional and practical support.

Feedback from Tracey McAtamney - Surviving Bereavement

In Kenilworth, most of the attendees have lost a husband, wife or long-term partner. Some are in shock from sudden death situations but for others, left feeling traumatized having watched their loved one suffer a terminal illness, their grieving beginning at the time of diagnosis. Nobody is ever prepared for those harrowing final weeks and days. Nobody is prepared for the loss of a future together.

The one thing in common that our attendees have is that they feel isolated and alone, even if they have family and friends around them. Although every bereavement is different, the cafes provide that safe space to open up to each other, share memories and tears but also laughter. It is the beginning of a new future.

It is wonderful to see the friendships made at the bereavement cafes. Many of the attendees share telephone numbers and arrange to meet up for meals, theatre trips and even Latin dancing!

Feedback from attendees

“...I found it helpful to talk to others in a similar situation of losing a loved one...so going along felt like quite a big step.”

“I lost my husband 5 years ago and have been really isolated since. The cafe has welcomed me so warmly today.”

“Thank you for the effort you put into running the group which has really helped me during my grieving process.”

The response to the Bereavement Cafe has been overwhelmingly positive from participants, volunteers and the wider community. Signposting from Social Prescribers, GP's and more recently local businesses such as funeral homes and estate agents who are dealing with the bereaved has increased participant numbers and is cementing the need for this type of face to face support.

Post pandemic, we are seeing increasing numbers of people who were bereaved before or during the pandemic who experienced changes in the way they were able to grieve. Lack of contact with the loved one before they died, lack of contact with family and friends during the grieving process and unable to commemorate with others during a funeral or wake due to restrictions.

Now, talking about mental health, grief and loss is more acceptable than it once was and more are willing to talk and be open about their difficulties and we are seeing greater numbers benefit from talking openly about their experiences and how they have managed their grief.

Grief and loss will affect all of us at some point in our lives and we need to continue to provide safe spaces to talk, support and care for each other.

This type of support is so valuable and allows the bereaved to find hope through a shared experience of loss, for people at different stages of grief. They are a reminder that you are not alone. Grieving can be terribly lonely and isolating, especially when everyone around you seems to be "getting on with their lives."

When your grief is overwhelming, the group says, "We've been there. We understand you." This is a powerful statement at a critical time. No two grieving journeys are the same, accessing others ideas and suggestions can offer a different perspective to help with grief.

At Compassionate Kenilworth we are planning the next 12 months of Bereavement Cafe. We have seen the benefit to our attendees, volunteers and the wider community and want to make this a sustainable program of support, to widen our reach and ensure that those who need this help can access it without cost. To find out more information, donate or volunteer at these events, please email info@compassionatekenilworth.co.uk

We will continue to work with Surviving Bereavement and seek funding to ensure that this program of support can continue in 2024 and beyond.

For more information about Surviving Bereavement please see their website:
www.survivingbereavement.com

We are looking for sponsorship, donations and grants to enable us to continue to deliver this program of bereavement support on a monthly basis to the Kenilworth community from January 2023 given the demand.

Bereavement Cafe

**Are you feeling sad or isolated following
a loss of a loved one?**

**Join us for our monthly Pop Up Bereavement
Café and bring a little happiness to your day.**

**We offer a relaxed, safe environment to talk with
others who are going through similar
circumstances.**

Kenilworth 10.30am – 12.00pm

The Kenilworth Centre on:

June 26th

July 31st

August 28th

September 25th

October 30th

November 27th

December Social date tbc

No need to book, just drop in!

For more information contact Tracey at: tracey@survivingbereavement.com



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**Warwickshire
County Council**

