



DECEMBER 2023

*Cruse*  
Bereavement  
Support

STAGE TWO

# REPORT FINDINGS

NEW YOUTH BEREAVEMENT ASSETS

Young people's insights into specialist bereavement support

facilitated by Participation People

# Who are Participation People?



Simply, we empower and enable young people to improve services they use.

At Participation People, we believe services improve when you work creatively with those who use them!

We care about IMPACT and the difference made to people's lives.

We want to help everyone:

- Improve **service performance**.
- Be **agile and responsive** to the changing needs of young people.
- Increase or repurpose resources to effectively **meet the needs of young people**.
- Improve **service reputation**.
- **Improve satisfaction** of services with children, young people, and families.

We are playful in practice and serious about solutions.

Our values are central to how we do our work:

- Have fun!
- Empower young people to develop a strong voice.
- Work with services to develop actionable plans.
- Challenge the views and perceptions of all those engaged.
- Build projects that are self-sustaining through building capacity, training and funding.

# Methodology

## Overview

Cruse Bereavement Support (CBS) recognised that they and the wider sector could improve the support available for bereaved young people. CBS therefore commissioned Participation People to help gain a better understanding of young people's needs, with a particular focus on the 14-25 age group.

## Stage 1

Participation People held focus groups and 1-2-1 sessions with young people over the course of 2 months to listen to their previous experiences of bereavement services and shared support needs. Participation was incentivised with a £20 Amazon voucher.

The 10 research questions were designed and agreed with Participation People's Young Consultants to ensure they were relevant to the commissioned task and appropriate for the consultation groups.

## Stage 2

Cruse Bereavement Support then commissioned Participation People to work with young people and co-create a printed resource for 14-25s dealing with grief and bereavement.

Participation People assembled a core focus group and planned a three-stage approach to facilitate creation of an appropriate product. Again, participation was incentivised with £20 Amazon vouchers and care packages.

The young people reviewed existing materials, identified strengths and gaps, produced an assessment framework, and collaborated on a new resource suitable for young people with a wide range of life experiences. This report details the development of those assets.

“

It's good for people to know there's someone out there in the world that they can relate to.

”

“

When you're grieving, all your feelings seem so *LOUD*.

”

# STEP 1: IDENTIFYING 'GOOD'

## OBJECTIVES:

- To identify priorities for young people coping with bereavement and loss
- To reflect on existing resources
- To agree key elements of an accessible, relevant, and appealing leaflet

## PRIORITIES

In the first focus group, the young people workshopped what a “good” leaflet meant for them. They considered both key content and design features.

“ *How someone dies is really important - especially if it's not the death you usually see in the leaflets.* ”

### They agreed that a good resource should:

- Be concise and focused
- Have no jargon or medicalisation
- Avoid patronising generalisations
- Contains personal suggestions and practical tips
- Include direct testimonies
- Offer specific examples of additional support
- Signpost to a variety of other resources and organisations
- Have a clear focus to make referrals easy for healthcare providers and supporting adults
- Be in aesthetic, attractive colours
- Use authentic photos
- Have relevant graphics

### They also identified language and features to avoid:

- Don't tell me how I should feel
- I don't want to end up feeling like I'm grieving 'wrong'
- Don't tell me things I already know
- Avoid big chunks of text with no images
- I don't like cliché phrases like “you're not alone”
- No random pictures of people
- Don't make promises you can't keep
- Theories are to be reserved for counselling sessions
- 52 pages is too long for what I need as a young person.

# STEP 2: SUCCESS INDICATORS

## ASSESSMENT OF SUCCESS

Based on the ideas collected in the focus groups and 1-2-1s, the group agreed seven key areas they would use to assess the final product:

Youth-proofed and accessible

Useful for providers

Relatable


Visual perception

Motivational

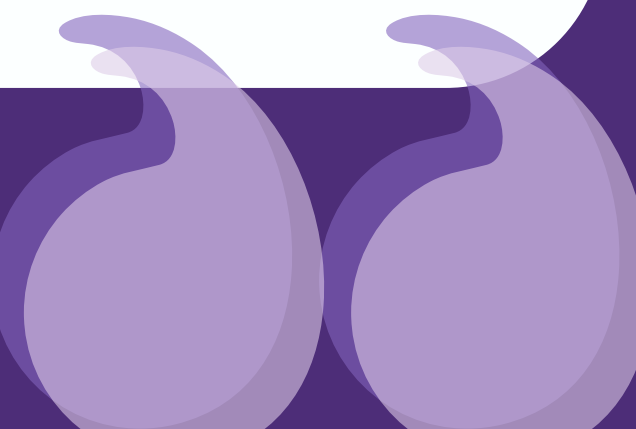
Authentic engagement

Signposting and support

“ “  
I know how I feel, I just need you to help me feel better!  
” ”



When someone is grieving,  
they pour their heart out,  
and I want to feel in this  
leaflet that you're really  
going to listen to me.



# STEP 3: REVIEW MATERIALS

The group reviewed a range of resources in detail, including:

- A leaflet from **Cruse Bereavement Support**
- A leaflet from **Child Bereavement UK**
- An 8-page booklet from **Child Bereavement UK**
- A 52-page guide from **SeeSaw**
- Two 7-page documents from **Cruse Scotland**
- The 'Little Book of Loss' from **Cruse Scotland**

**Cruse Bereavement Support**

**Understanding grief**

Children's grief  
Children's understanding of grief and their reactions will depend on their age.

- A very young child might not understand that death is permanent.
- An older child or teenager may use denial to help them cope.
- Children may seem to dip in and out of grief – this doesn't mean they don't care.

**Supporting a child or young person**

- Tell them what has happened using clear language. Check their understanding, and let them talk and ask questions.
- Reassure them that they are still loved.
- It's OK to let them see that you're sad too.
- Let them join in with funerals and memorials, but be led by them.
- Talk to their school and make sure other adults involved in their care know what has happened.

Children experience grief differently.

We help people through one of the most painful times in life – with bereavement support, information and campaigning.

Visit our website at [www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)  
Email us at [help@cruse.org.uk](mailto:help@cruse.org.uk)  
Telephone our national telephone helpline 0800 808 1677  
Can you help someone through the most painful time of their life? Donate at [cruse.org.uk/donate](http://cruse.org.uk/donate)

For more information on children and grief [www.cruse.org.uk/children](http://www.cruse.org.uk/children)  
Or see our website for young people [www.hopeagain.org.uk](http://www.hopeagain.org.uk)

**You're not alone**

Royal Patent: Her Majesty The Queen  
Registered charity no. 290879  
Cruse Bereavement Support  
Registered office: Unit 51, Clon Victoria Villas, Richmond, Surrey TW9 2DQ

[cruse.org.uk](http://cruse.org.uk)

**Cruse Bereavement Support**

**A teenage guide to coping when someone dies**

**Introduction**  
It's not what you think. It might be hard to believe, but you can't feel anything about death. It's not about the person who died. It's about the person who is still here.

**At first**  
It's not what you think. It might be hard to believe, but you can't feel anything about death. It's not about the person who died. It's about the person who is still here.

**Anger, guilt & blame**  
It's not what you think. It might be hard to believe, but you can't feel anything about death. It's not about the person who died. It's about the person who is still here.

**Physical effects**  
It's not what you think. It might be hard to believe, but you can't feel anything about death. It's not about the person who died. It's about the person who is still here.

**The funeral**  
It's not what you think. It might be hard to believe, but you can't feel anything about death. It's not about the person who died. It's about the person who is still here.

**Friends & family**  
It's not what you think. It might be hard to believe, but you can't feel anything about death. It's not about the person who died. It's about the person who is still here.

**Memories**  
It's not what you think. It might be hard to believe, but you can't feel anything about death. It's not about the person who died. It's about the person who is still here.

**Help from others**  
It's not what you think. It might be hard to believe, but you can't feel anything about death. It's not about the person who died. It's about the person who is still here.

**School**  
It's not what you think. It might be hard to believe, but you can't feel anything about death. It's not about the person who died. It's about the person who is still here.

**Good & bad days**  
It's not what you think. It might be hard to believe, but you can't feel anything about death. It's not about the person who died. It's about the person who is still here.

**Have support**  
It's not what you think. It might be hard to believe, but you can't feel anything about death. It's not about the person who died. It's about the person who is still here.

**Coping & getting on**  
It's not what you think. It might be hard to believe, but you can't feel anything about death. It's not about the person who died. It's about the person who is still here.

**Child Bereavement UK**  
REBUILDING LIVES TOGETHER

0800 02 888 40  
[www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)

**Cruse Scotland**  
Bereavement Support

**Living through grief**

A photograph of a young man sitting on a ledge, looking out over a city at sunset.

**Cruse Scotland**  
Bereavement Support

**After someone dies**  
Understanding Grief for Young People

A photograph of a young woman sitting on a ledge, looking out over a city at sunset.

**Child Bereavement UK**  
REBUILDING LIVES TOGETHER

For young people

**When someone special dies**

A photograph of three children sitting on a bench, looking thoughtful.

A leaflet prepared with the help of young people who have been bereaved

**SeeSaw**

**Living after loss**

A grief guide for young people

Grief support for children and young people in Oxfordshire

**Little Book of Loss**

Keep something special to help you remember

You could try writing your worries on a piece of paper then ripping it up

It's OK to have fun

It's Little Book of Loss



# STEP 4: ANALYSIS

## FEEDBACK

After reviewing the assets to identify positives and areas which could be improved, the young people made recommendations for future resources.

### Positives

### Criticisms

#### CONTENT

- Concise and focused
- Provided many different options for a variety of situations and preferences
- Has specific contact details
- Included authentic stories and relatable examples
- Appropriate language and tone, avoiding cliché and jargon
- Reaffirming that you aren't crazy to be emotional or not even know how you feel
- Progression in a logical order

- Too many words - overwhelming and too long to read
- Feels instructional rather than sympathetic
- Conflating the challenges of young children and young adults
- Providing too few options for further support, and them being too prescriptive (e.g. talking to the police felt wrong for this leaflet)
- Too much signposting without providing enough support in the leaflet itself

#### DESIGN

- Subheadings and sections helped break down information usefully
- Eye-catching with good use of colours and images
- Use of soft shapes and animations
- Appropriate fonts and clear formatting

- Overwhelming and cluttered
- Dull colours or monotone and unappealing images
- Boring font
- Too 'health looking' and intimidating

# KEY QUOTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

More inclusive language with less of a family-centric focus. Not everyone loses family and friends.

Offer specific support for bereavement through suicide

Accept that young people might just want to hide away

More personal quotes, fewer general statements or cliches like “you're not alone”

Having a map is a nice visual element and helps convey the grief journey, which isn't a straight line

Children can't always access services without a guardian – address that!

Acknowledge the specific life obligations of this life stage

Use language carefully when it comes to offering support – grief is sometimes seen as a mental health issue

One page of signposting is so much better than paragraphs on what you might be feeling

Use smaller paragraphs with clear headlines

Leave more space when moving between topics – it's a lot to process and you don't want emotional whiplash

Don't be afraid to use bold colours so that your resources stand out.



I carried on working for  
two months before I even  
knew you could take  
bereavement leave...



# STEP 5: CO-CREATION

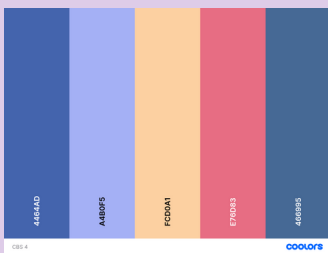
## OBJECTIVES:

- *To agree on the final colour scheme and design principles*
- *To evaluate the draft created from last session's feedback*

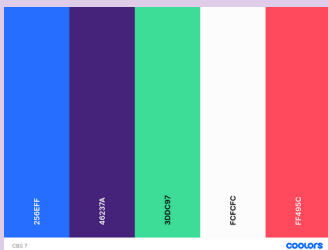
## DESIGN

Based on feedback from the focus groups and 1-2-1s, Participation People created several colour palettes for the young people to vote on.

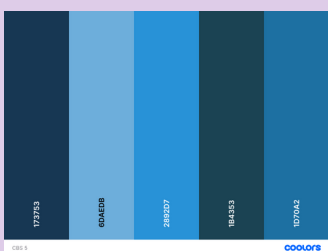
The group had two clear favourites:



This option with a range of pastels and brighter shades was the group's first-choice. It felt warm, soothing, and appropriate.



The young people also liked the clean and bright tones of the second colour palette, noting that bereavement literature is often cast in drab and unappealing shades.



The group unanimously disliked this colour palette, stating that it reminded them of hospital curtains and linens. Several members mentioned that this in turn reminded them directly and uncomfortably of their bereavement experience.

# CO-PRODUCTION IN ACTION

## They felt positively about the:

- Font and shapes
- Use of subheadings and sections
- Personal quotes
- Relatable story
- Diagrams, especially the path

## Areas for refinement included:

- Better photos
- More detailed signposting
- “Young people”, not “young adults”
- Advice for social situations
- Avoid “you’re not alone”



Draft 1

By the third draft, the young people were content that the structure, aesthetics, and content addressed their needs whilst maintaining an appropriate tone.

Draft 3

Only one of the participants knew about bereavement leave before the sessions, which was considered a valuable learning point for the other group members.



As a result of this project, CBS may be the first in the sector to provide clear information on bereavement leave for young people.

**I didn't expect to see everything we talked about last meeting in an actual leaflet! It's turned out so good and accurate from what we've spoken about - it's just the little things!**

# ALTERNATIVE ASSETS

## OBJECTIVE:

- To provide a point of contrast to facilitate more effective evaluation of the leaflet, and in doing so validate the assessment framework created by the young people.

## FLYER

A/B testing with a brightly-coloured draft flyer reaffirmed key points that the group had identified, such as the need for personal quotes, detailed signposting, and relevant graphics.

Unexpectedly, the group was equally enthusiastic about a resource which was brightly-coloured, easy to skim-read, and could be used as part of a wall display to attract the attention of young people.

**"I THOUGHT I SHOULDN'T TALK ABOUT IT. BUT IT WAS THE BEST THING I DID."**

## DEALING WITH GRIEF AS A YOUNG PERSON

**WHERE TO START WHEN THE WORLD FEELS UPSIDE DOWN**

**WHEN WERE YOU LAST OUTSIDE?**

**HAVE YOU EATEN TODAY?**

**HAVE YOU WASHED TODAY?**

**WHEN WERE YOU LAST OUTSIDE?**

**DO YOU NEED TO TALK TO SOMEONE?**

**HAVE THAT CRY OR THAT LAUGH YOU'VE NEEDED**

**THERE'S NO 'RIGHT WAY' TO GRIEVE. IT'S OK TO BE:**

- SAD
- ANGRY
- NUMB
- CONFUSED
- ANXIOUS

**ADDITIONAL SUPPORT**

WEBSITE | PHONE NUMBER  
WEBSITE | PHONE NUMBER  
WEBSITE | PHONE NUMBER

**HOWEVER YOU FEEL RIGHT NOW: YOU WON'T FEEL THIS WAY FOREVER.**

SPEAK TO AN EXPERT AT [WWW.CRUSE.ORG.UK](http://WWW.CRUSE.ORG.UK)



*In an ideal world, I would love to have the choice of both a flyer and a leaflet*



## Dealing with grief as a young person

Where to start when the world feels upside down.

**Check in with yourself**

- Have you eaten today?
- Have you washed today?
- When were you last outside?
- Do you need to talk to someone?
- Have that cry or that laugh you've needed.

**There's no 'right way' to grieve. It's ok to be:**

- Sad
- Angry
- Numb
- Confused
- Anxious

**Additional support**

Grief information: [www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)  
Grief resources: [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)  
Text support: [www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)  
If you are struggling with your feelings: [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)  
Chat to a counsellor: [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

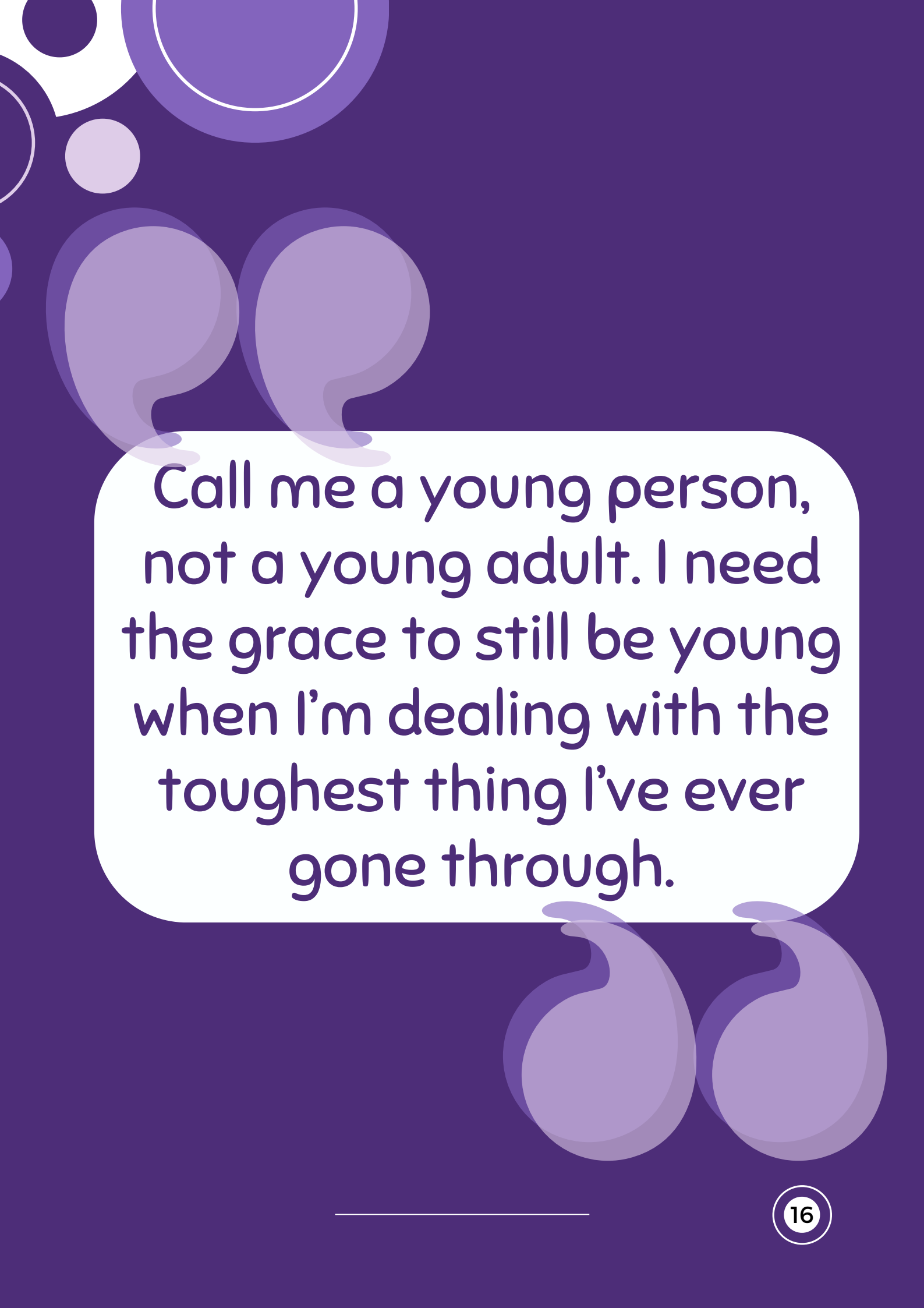
**"I thought I shouldn't talk about it. But it was the best thing I did."**

**Thinking about self-harm or suicide?**

Tell someone. You'll get through this. Call 999 or the Samaritans free on 116 123.

**Cruse Bereavement Support** Find out more at [www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)

Participation People shared this feedback with Cruse Bereavement Support to ensure that the project requirements were met and that young people's voices were heard beyond the designated scope.



Call me a young person,  
not a young adult. I need  
the grace to still be young  
when I'm dealing with the  
toughest thing I've ever  
gone through.



# SUMMARY

## PROJECT STATISTICS

The seven young people in the focus group:

- Examined six different resource types
- Reviewed five colour palettes
- Provided four and a half hours each of their time and insight
- Commented on three drafts of target content
- Contributed to two final products
- Co-created one assessment framework to evaluate their success

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following features were identified as essential to a good resource:

- Bright and bold colours are welcome to cut through a wealth of muted literature. Colours associated with hospitals and palliative care should be avoided.
- Keep text concise and language simple.
- Direct questions and quotations are extremely impactful.
- Provide detailed and specific signposting: bereaved young people feel at their most vulnerable and have limited capacity for independently seeking out whether help exists.

## OUTCOMES

The young people deeply valued the opportunity to help other young people in future at an intensely difficult time in their lives.

The group was very proud of the final leaflet and flyer, feeling that the designs were useful, attractive, and accurately reflected their advice.

The young people were pleased with how Cruse had been willing to collaborate with them on these resources and were particularly proud to create a resource advising on bereavement leave, as this was identified as a key unmet need.