

## **Media Release**

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### **BEREAVED CHILDREN MORE LIKELY TO HAVE FACED OTHER DIFFICULT EVENTS IN CHILDHOOD**

New research from NCB, conducted on behalf of the Childhood Bereavement Network (CBN), has found that children bereaved of a parent, sibling or close friend are more likely than other children to have experienced a range of difficult events in their lives. These include having had a stay in hospital (around 60% more likely than non-bereaved children), having a diagnosable mental health disorder (around 55% more likely), having a parent with a serious mental illness (around 80% more likely) or major financial crisis (around 40% more likely). They are also over 60% more likely to have been excluded from school.

The research, which re-examined data from a Office of National Statistics study, also revealed that children who have been bereaved of a parent or sibling are six times more likely than their peers to have been in care at some point in their lives.

The research explored the backgrounds and life experiences of more than 7,500 children aged 5-16 year olds, comparing those whose parent or sibling had died, those who had faced the death of a close friend and those children who weren't reported as being bereaved in these ways. Around 1 in 29 school age children had been bereaved of a parent or sibling, and around 1 in 16 had been bereaved of a close friend.

Children whose parent or sibling had died, were reported to have more difficulty keeping friends than their non bereaved peers, and were over 60% more likely to have an anxiety disorder and drink alcohol regularly. Those whose friend had died were more likely to have a conduct disorder and engage in poor health behaviour, such as smoking and using cannabis.

Alison Penny, Coordinator of the Childhood Bereavement Network, said 'After a death, many children say they feel lonely and different, and can be really worried about something bad happening to someone else. They often report problems with concentrating and being in school, and we know some are even bullied.'

'When someone dies, children and families need extra support to handle the changes and challenges in their lives. Specialist childhood bereavement services can help young people find positive, healthy ways of managing their feelings. And schools need good plans for flexible support to make it as easy as possible for bereaved children to continue their education.'

CBN is also calling for more research into how bereavement affects children's life chances, and for specialist services to be easily accessible in every local area to prevent children facing further disadvantage.

**-END-**

## Notes to editors

1. This research explored the background and experiences of 7,754 5-16 year olds in Great Britain.
2. The research was based on the *Mental Health of Children and Young People in Great Britain, 2004*, produced by the Office for National Statistics and the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London, sponsored by the Department of Health and the Scottish Executive, and supplied by the UK Data Archive. The data are Crown copyright.
3. The Childhood Bereavement Network (CBN), hosted by NCB, is the national, multi-professional network of organisations and individuals working in the field of childhood bereavement. CBN promotes the interests of bereaved children, young people and their families and encourages the development of quality support for them. For more information, visit [www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk](http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk)
4. NCB's mission is to advance the well-being of all children and young people across every aspect of their lives. As a membership and infrastructure support agency for the children's sector in England and Northern Ireland, NCB provides essential information on policy, research and best practice for our members and the members of our wide range of partnership bodies, which operate under our charitable status and are based in our London headquarters. For further information visit [www.ncb.org.uk](http://www.ncb.org.uk)

**For further information, please contact the NCB Media Office:  
Clare Quarrell/Aoife Allen/Carmen Dafner on 0207 843 6044/6047/6311  
Media Office Mobile - 07721 097033 or e-mail: [media@ncb.org.uk](mailto:media@ncb.org.uk)**