

HOW CAN WE BEST EVALUATE THE IMPACT OF CHILDREN'S BEREAVEMENT ON THE CLASSROOM?

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The role of the research ethics committee varies between countries and is currently being reviewed in the UK following much debate. This paper explores ethical issues raised from an evaluation of a British child bereavement service which aims to provide advice and support to local bereaved children aged 5-17, their parents and teachers. One part of this evaluation involved sending each child's teacher a questionnaire at the child's referral to the service and a second when the child had completed counselling sessions. The questionnaire aimed to provide the research team with information on changes in the student's family and social background, behaviour and academic achievement, and whether the bereavement service had effectively dealt with the impact of bereavement on the classroom. This research design was discussed at the service's internal research committee before starting the evaluation and subsequently with a multi-centre research ethics committee that deemed the project to be outside its jurisdiction of health research. However, the research team stopped the evaluation after confidentiality, ethical, and data protection issues arose from using teachers as the respondents for social and family questions. These issues are discussed in relation to the wider context of gaining research ethics approval in the UK and other countries and how boards deal with social research to ensure that social interventions are properly and ethically evaluated.