

RIDING WAVES TROEDIO TONNAU

Young Adult Grief Support in North Gwynedd

Findings from the "Be Gymri Di?" Event

Report on the Grief Support for Young Adults (18–35) Pilot Project

JAC DO, CAERNARFON

26 MARCH 2026

**A creative, community-based approach to grief support
through the Welsh language.**

Growing with grief through creativity, connection and community.

Produced in partnership with Llais Cymru, BLAS (Pontio), and Mantell Gwynedd.

TROEDIO TONNAU RIDING WAVES TR

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OVERVIEW

The evening 'Be Gymri Di?', Troedio Tonnau, was held on Thursday, the 26th of March, in Jac Do, Caernarfon, under the sponsorship of Llais and in collaboration with Mantell Gwynedd and BLAS, Pontio. As part of the evening, there were live sets from comedians Caryl Burke and Hywel Pitts, as well as food from a local pizza company, Tân. The intention of the evening was to create a safe and creative space for young people, aged 18-35, who live with grief, using comedy and free food as a way of creating a relaxed atmosphere, and encouraging people to attend the event. The intention was also to collect information from the attendees regarding the support available to them in the community, their willingness to discuss their grief and any obstacles that were preventing them from doing so, as well as their opinion on the support available to them through the medium of Welsh.

CONCLUSIONS AND OUTCOMES

The main findings of this report are that the support currently available is mainly through personal networks, such as family and friends, and that there is no dedicated support available in the community for young people aged 18-35 living with grief. There is a demand for more specific groups for young people, in relaxed, creative spaces, to make them accessible and to ensure that they appeal to a range of young people. It is felt that it is the Government's responsibility to ensure that the appropriate support is available in our communities and through the medium of Welsh, with support from health boards, town councils and charities.

BACKGROUND

The Troedio Tonnau project has been running since 2024, and the project started in Blaenau Ffestiniog following 4 pilot sessions for young people aged 12-18. The project's intention from the outset was to create creative, safe and Welsh language spaces where grief was common, and to offer various artistic activities in order to address emotions and experiences associated with grief. Following the four initial pilot sessions, which showed that the structure of the sessions were beneficial for the young people, the pilot project was developed into a larger one. In 2025, we started engaging with schools across Gwynedd and Anglesey by offering free sessions in the schools. Since June 2025, we have been attending Friars school in Bangor monthly, with a group of 5 young people attending each time. We have also set up sessions in the community in Llangefni, and although the numbers of attendees are quite low, we can clearly see that the individuals benefit from attending regularly. In March 2026, community sessions began in Caernarfon. We have also attended Ysgol Brynrefail regularly since January 2026 where 4 young people attend.

We have focused so far on a very specific group of people – aged 12-18 and who have experienced the death of a parent, carer, sibling. We decided from the outset to keep the specifications quite specific for these sessions, as research and statistics show that it is easier for an individual to relate on a more personal level, reducing a sense of loneliness and isolation, and to validate their feelings in groups where the experience is more specific and relatable. The sessions have been positive, with the young people who have attended our sessions consistently asking for more sessions, and their ability to discuss complex emotions strengthened. We have also been told by various teachers that the school attendance of those that attend our sessions has improved generally. We believe that creating spaces where young people have time to slow down, speak and be heard within schools and in the community is essential, and this importance is intensified when considering young people who live with grief following the death of a close family member. It is crucial that they have spaces where they feel safe to talk about their feelings and experiences, and to process them with support, and at the moment there are no options available beyond the

traditional routes, such as counselling or therapy, options that do not work for all individuals for various reasons.

As Troedio Tonnau grows, it has become clear that there is a gap in the support available to those living with grief, face-to-face and online, specifically through the medium of Welsh, and across a wide range of ages in north Wales. We have received several emails and comments on our social media asking if we run similar sessions for various ages and noting that there aren't any other groups for young people in their areas. Additionally, in areas such as Gwynedd and Môn, where Welsh is the first language of many, it is essential that the correct support is available through that language. We were therefore keen to expand our support to children aged 8-11 years old, and to explore the need and want for more support for those aged 18-35.

SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

On 12 April 2026, we held a family afternoon in Llangefni, with dedicated sessions for children aged 8 to 11, young people in Years 7 to 9, and a third session for those in Years 10 to 13. There was also a space for adults, and the opportunity to talk over a cup of tea proved just as important as the sessions for the young people.

During conversations with parents and carers, it became clear that many families are struggling to access bereavement support in their local areas. One mother shared:

“She [her daughter] just wants to meet other children who have lost a brother or sister.”

Families also highlighted concerns about support services that are available while receiving care across the border in England, particularly through hospitals and hospices, but which end when they return home to Wales. For many,

learning that they were no longer eligible for these services simply because they lived in Wales was both upsetting and frustrating.

Parents were particularly worried about the impact of not being able to talk openly about grief with peers who have had similar experiences. They felt this lack of support could affect their children's emotional wellbeing and mental health, especially during the transition to secondary school, where bereavement support is often less readily available than in primary schools.

SUPPORT FOR THOSE AGED 18-35 YEARS OLD

The final age group currently under consideration, and the primary focus of this report, is young adults aged 18-35.

Following a request from Mantell Gwynedd to collaborate with them, and with funding secured through a grant from Llais, we developed and delivered an event called '**Be Gymri Di?**' ("What'll You Have?") in Caernarfon.

Caernarfon was selected as the venue due to its accessibility for residents across Gwynedd. Compared with many other areas of the county, it benefits from relatively strong public transport links and is already a well-established destination for community events. We chose **Jac Do** as the host venue because of its relaxed atmosphere, strong commitment to the Welsh language, and welcoming environment that encourages conversation and connection.

A key consideration in planning the event was deciding what kind of experience we wanted to create. We recognise that grief can be a difficult and often uncomfortable subject to talk about. Many people are unsure where to find support or may feel that there are few opportunities to discuss their experiences openly.

Our work is aimed at young people seeking **Tier 1 support**: early, community-based support focused on prevention and wellbeing, rather than intensive one-to-one intervention. We provide opportunities for people to connect with others who have experienced similar losses, helping to reduce isolation and create a sense of shared understanding. While our groups are not therapy sessions, they

can be highly therapeutic. Our aim is to support the health and wellbeing of young people across North Wales through the arts, providing early intervention and reducing the barriers that often prevent people from talking openly about grief.

With this in mind, we chose to build the evening around **comedy**. Humour is often used as a coping mechanism by people living with grief, and we hoped that a comedy-focused event would make conversations about loss feel less intimidating. By creating a welcoming and informal environment, we wanted to demonstrate that grief can be discussed openly, honestly, and without judgement.

We were also committed to providing free food and refreshments. Through our previous work, we have learned that sharing food and a panad is often one of the most effective ways to start conversations and help people feel comfortable. Making the event entirely free was equally important, ensuring that financial circumstances would not prevent anyone from attending. This approach supports our commitment to reaching communities that experience poorer health outcomes and face greater barriers to accessing support.

On the night, the atmosphere was warm and relaxed. Comfortable seating encouraged people to settle in, conversation prompts on the tables helped break the ice, and a quiet remembrance corner provided space for reflection for anyone who needed a few moments away from the crowd.

The evening featured live comedy performances from **Caryl Burke** and **Hywel Pitts**, two local comedians with lived experience of grief, alongside food provided by **Tân** and refreshments from **Jac Do**.

Caryl's set combined humour with honesty and sensitivity. By speaking openly about the death of her mother, she demonstrated how comedy can help people process grief in a hopeful and positive way. Her willingness to be vulnerable created a sense of safety within the room and encouraged others to share their own experiences. The impact was evident as the audience moved naturally between laughter and tears, highlighting the unique power of comedy to facilitate meaningful conversations about loss.

Following Caryl's performance, powerful and open discussions took place across the room. Many attendees spoke about loved ones they had lost, sharing stories, memories, and emotions. Both these conversations and the feedback collected through questionnaires highlighted a clear theme: many of the young

people present were grieving the loss of a parent or close friend and felt there were very few spaces where they could talk openly about their grief.

Those who attended to support others also reflected on their own experiences, demonstrating that opportunities for honest conversations about grief benefit a much wider audience than those who are recently bereaved. The event enabled people to explore difficult emotions in a supportive environment, free from pressure or urgency, and surrounded by empathy and understanding.

Attendees were then invited to complete a questionnaire about their experiences of grief, the findings of which are discussed later in this report.

The evening concluded with a second performance from Hywel Pitts.

Before the event came to a close, participants were invited to take part in one final activity. Each person received a piece of seed paper and was encouraged to write the name of someone they had lost, or a memory, feeling, or message that reminded them of that person.



"Thank you for this evening. I would have come even if I wasn't performing. The marketing and the atmosphere have been perfect." Hywel Pitts

They could then take the paper home and plant it, allowing wildflowers to grow over time. The activity served as a gentle reminder that while grief remains with us, growth alongside grief is possible.

The overall feeling in the room was not one of sadness, but of warmth, safety, connection, and reflection. There was a strong sense of gratitude among those present for having shared such a meaningful experience together. Many people remained for several hours after the official end of the event, continuing conversations and connecting with one another. Their willingness to stay long after the programme had finished was a powerful indication of how comfortable, welcoming, and much-needed the space had been.

Questionnaire and findings

Here are the questions that were asked:

- Age (options)
- I live in... (open)

- I'm grieving.... (options)
- I'm living with grief since... (options)
- I feel confident to express my grief (scale of 1-5)
- I feel supported (scale of 1-5)
- There is enough support available through the medium of Welsh (scale of 1-5)
- Grief effect my life from day to day (scale of 1-5)
- Being creative helps one process grief (scale of 1-5)
- Having a space to meet others living with grief is important (scale of 1-5)
- I felt nervous coming to tonight's event (scale of 1-5)
- I'm glad I came to tonight's event (scale of 1-5)
- I am supported by... (options)
- What grief support would help you, in your opinion? (options)
- Whose responsibility is it to offer grief support in the community? (options)
- Anything else you would like to share. (open)
- If you would like to know more, leave your email.

Participants had experienced a range of bereavements, most commonly the loss of a parent (41.67%) or grandparent (33.33%). Others were grieving the loss of a friend (16.67%) or an aunt (16.67%), while some attended to support someone else (16.67%). This highlights that demand for support is driven primarily by the death of close family members and significant people within young people's social circles.

Although the event took place in Caernarfon, attendees travelled from across North Wales, including Bangor, Pen Llŷn, Conwy and Ynys Môn. The largest proportion came from the Bangor area (41.67%), demonstrating that young people are willing to travel considerable distances to access grief support, particularly where local provision is limited.

Most participants were aged between 25 and 35, with the largest group aged 25 to 29 (41.67%). Significantly, the majority (83.33%) had been living with their grief for between three and ten years. Only a small number had experienced a bereavement within the previous two years. This suggests that grief remains a significant issue long after the immediate period following a loss and highlights the need for ongoing support rather than short-term interventions alone.

Experiences of Support

When asked whether they felt supported in their grief, 70% said they did. However, support was overwhelmingly provided through personal networks, with 83.33% relying on partners, family members or friends. One third (33.33%) accessed support online, while only 25% reported receiving support through community services, counselling or other face-to-face provision. Just 8.33% had accessed support through their GP or a dedicated bereavement group, and one participant reported receiving no support at all.



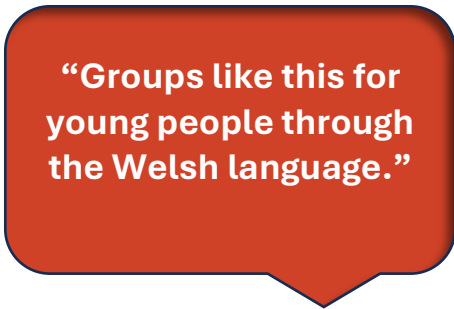
“Content such as quotes and videos online that people can relate to is great. We need more in Welsh.”

These findings suggest that young people largely depend on informal support networks because they perceive a lack of accessible alternatives. This can leave those without strong family or friendship networks particularly vulnerable to isolation.

What Support Do Young People Want?

Participants expressed a clear desire for greater community-based grief support. Three quarters (75%) felt there was a need for more age-specific bereavement groups and greater local provision, while two thirds (66.67%) believed grief education should be expanded within schools. One third (33.33%) felt that additional online support was needed.

The need for Welsh-language provision emerged consistently throughout the findings. While almost all participants (96.6%) were pleased they had attended the event, and 91% felt it was important to have opportunities to meet others living with grief, only 25% believed that sufficient Welsh-language support currently exists.



“Groups like this for young people through the Welsh language.”

Participants also recognised the value of creative approaches to grief support, with 81.6% agreeing that creative activities help people process grief and loss.

Responsibility for Providing Support

Interestingly, although most participants relied on family and friends for support, relatively few (33.33%) felt that responsibility for grief support should rest primarily with personal networks. Instead, most participants believed that public bodies have a significant role to play. The majority (83.33%) felt that responsibility lies with government, while 66.67% identified health boards and 50% identified local authorities. Smaller numbers highlighted the role of charities, communities (25%), and society as a whole (16.67%).

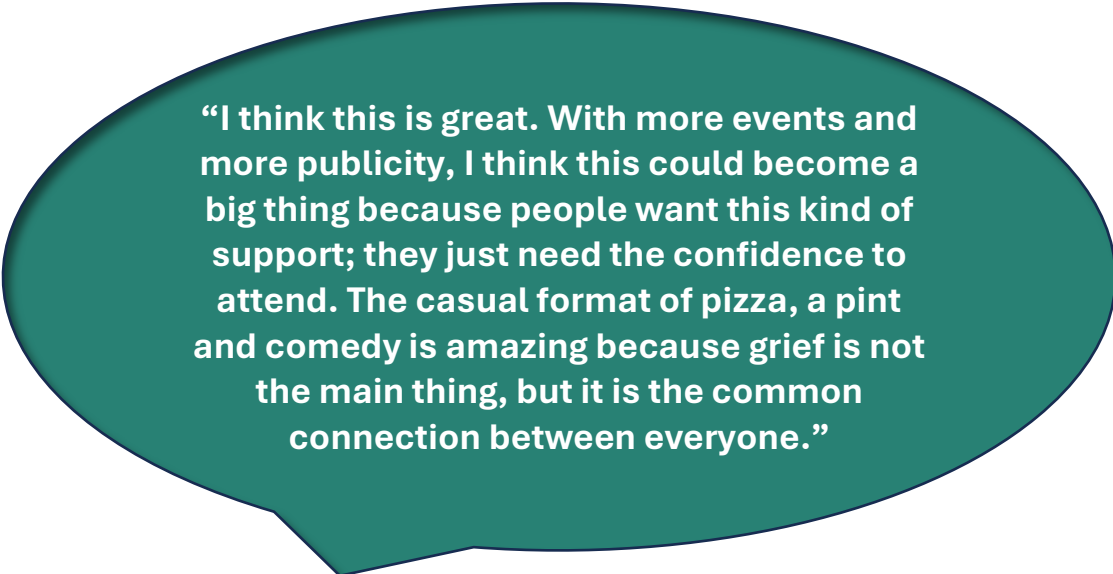
This demonstrates a clear expectation that grief support should be viewed as a public and community responsibility rather than being left solely to families and friendship groups.

Case Studies

The quantitative findings are reinforced by the experiences shared by participants on the night.

Individual A, who had experienced the death of a parent, highlighted a need for age-specific support, grief education in schools and Welsh-language groups for young people. They rated both *“I am supported”* and *“There is plenty of support available through the medium of Welsh”* at just two out of five stars, while rating *“Grief affects my life day by day”* and *“Having a space to meet others who are grieving is important”* at five stars.

Reflecting on the event, they commented:



“I think this is great. With more events and more publicity, I think this could become a big thing because people want this kind of support; they just need the confidence to attend. The casual format of pizza, a pint and comedy is amazing because grief is not the main thing, but it is the common connection between everyone.”

Individual B described a particularly challenging experience of grief following the deaths of both her father and stepfather. She spoke openly about how unresolved grief following her father's death contributed to a breakdown several years later and explained how the recent loss of her stepfather had impacted her ability to work and cope day-to-day.

She rated *“There is enough support available in Welsh”* at one out of five stars and *“Grief affects my life day to day”* at five stars. When asked who supported her, she selected "other" and wrote:

“No one.”

She described feeling isolated and explained that, despite contacting a number of bereavement charities, she had struggled to access face-to-face support.

Her experience demonstrates the significant gap that remains between the need for support and the services currently available to young people in North Wales.

“We are expected to move on, but there is no time for grief.”

Conclusion

The findings paint a consistent picture. Young people experiencing grief in North Wales largely rely on family and friends for support, yet many feel there is insufficient formal provision available, particularly through the medium of Welsh. Participants highlighted a need for age-appropriate services, greater community-based support, improved grief education and more opportunities to connect with others who share similar experiences.

Perhaps most importantly, the overwhelming positive response to *Be Gymri Di?* demonstrated the value of creating informal, creative and Welsh-language spaces where young people can share experiences of grief without judgement or pressure. The atmosphere of acceptance, belonging and mutual understanding throughout the evening showed that this type of support fills a genuine gap in current provision.

The evidence gathered through this event, alongside engagement activities across North Wales, suggests that current bereavement support for young people is not meeting demand. Investment in accessible, community-based and Welsh-language grief support would not only improve wellbeing for young people but also contribute to longer-term prevention, reducing pressure on

health and public services while building stronger and more resilient communities.

We therefore call on the Welsh Government, health boards, local authorities and community partners to recognise the need for additional grief support provision for young people, particularly through the medium of Welsh, and to invest in creative, community-led approaches that ensure no young person has to experience grief alone.

A video will be provided to convey the mood of the evening.

Report by:

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FEEDBACK

We'd love to hear what you think about this publication, and any suggestions about how we could have improved it, so we can use this to make our future work better.

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