

Engaging bereaved families in a creative process to explore social isolation resulting from child death

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The project was an innovative collaboration delivered in partnership with The Scottish Cot Death Trust and In Motion Theatre Company led by playwright and producer Lisa Nicoll.

The effects of social isolation

Risk for developing poor outcomes in health and wellbeing

Risk for developing or worsening poor mental health

Engagement with health and social services may cease or become erratic so that optimum care cannot be delivered

Increase the incidence of alcohol and drug misuse as a coping strategy for the emotional and physical pain associated with grief

Increasing poverty through inability to remain employed or seek employment



Social anxiety

Helplessness

Depression

Loss of identity

Loss of confidence

Concept:

To explore the effect of social isolation by engaging with bereaved families across Scotland who have experienced stillbirth and sudden infant death and to allow through the form of storytelling, theatre and workshops for a play to be created based on their stories, thoughts and views.

As one mum spoke of her immediate feelings of utter loneliness when her daughter first died were expected and she coped with this. It was the longer lasting feeling of being isolated which she found difficult.

Aim:

To break the silence of child death and the barriers of isolation and social disconnectedness. The project brought together families allowing them to talk about an isolating issue in a safe environment, exploring the long term effect it has on families and for this to be shared in community settings.

To tour a play across Scotland, which tackles a difficult subject, helps remove the taboo whilst engaging and involving audience members who may themselves be feeling isolated.

“After my daughter died, my sense of isolation grew exponentially as a result of grief. While I started answering the phone and accepting some invitations, I felt isolated in the sense that I continued to think of my daughter and experience the pain constantly, but very few people talked about my grief or even mentioned her name any more. I felt completely alone”.

After months of watching from her window and seeing her husband move in and out of her world, a woman's encounter with a stranger begins her reconnection to life.



“ I was at this show last night. Although I have not lost a child, I have been widowed young (aged 42) and this play captured universal themes of all grief, especially the social isolation....brilliantly written, directed and acted play.” Audience member



The Scotsman ****
‘Nicola Roy and Gavin Jon Wright turn in two shockingly powerful performances ‘ ...‘Shattered is given a memorably cool and stylish production...’

The Wee Review ****
“Shattered is about a distressing aspect of life but it is not morose. It is sad; it is moving; it is hopeful”
“Each cast member embodies their role convincingly, with particular kudos to Kirsty Findlay as Katy who manages to hit her comedic lines perfectly while maintaining the vulnerability of the character.”

The Herald ***
‘elliptical production takes this simmering everyday crisis ..through a mix of internal monologues, an elegiac score and a quartet of finely nuanced performances..’

‘Shattered’ production shots June 2018

What was gained from the project?

The play toured 15 venues in Scotland, over 1600 miles, played to 500 audience members and also to delegates from 39 countries attending an International Conference on Stillbirth, SIDS and Baby Survival hosted by the Scottish Cot Death Trust in Glasgow. Project participants attended workshops within local communities. Whilst the play is the very obvious product, one of the most valuable outcomes was the opportunities for participants to increase their confidence, improve relationships, and participate in positive experiences. Although our research groups comprised families affected by infant death, the play resonated with the wider public, those feeling isolated by grief, aloneness and others who reflected how it resonated with their feelings of being marginalised in their community.