

# Fevered

# Sleep



**This Grief Thing**

Evaluation Report | March 2021



Photograph by Richard Tymon

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# Executive Summary

This Grief Thing is an exploratory, interdisciplinary arts project exploring ideas and experiences of grief and grieving, developed and presented by Fevered Sleep.

Comprising a temporary shop, a collection of specially-designed products, a billboard, poster and social media campaign, press and radio, a series of group discussions and, most crucially, multiple spontaneous encounters between the artists and members of the public, the project seeks to challenge broader societal responses to grief and to invite participants across the UK to engage in conversations about the subject.

## Project Activity

Led by Co-Artistic Directors Samantha Butler and David Harradine, Fevered Sleep have taken the project to five sites across the UK: Preston, Middlesbrough, Nottingham and Manchester (first inside The Whitworth gallery and subsequently at a shop on King Street as part of SICK! Festival).

Each of these five sites has seen the company work in close partnership with a local organisation, including a local creative charity, a local authority, local cultural institution and a city-wide festival.

Described by David Harradine as 'an artwork disguised as a shop and a shop disguised as an artwork', This Grief Thing invites participants to engage with the project primarily through the familiar and accessible format of a retail space where participants are welcome to browse and purchase (with a 'pay what you want' scheme) newly-designed items that prompt conversations around grief and grieving. The retail space has itself also been carefully constructed to support participants to 'dwell' in the shop and reflect on grief, engage in conversations and contribute creatively to the project as they wish.

Central to the project are Grief Gatherings, loosely structured group discussions held at each shop location (and in a number of additional venues) for members of the public to explore experiences, responses and ideas around grief and grieving. To date, 22 Grief Gatherings have been held with a total of 143 participants attending.

In addition, the project includes a poster campaign and the placing of a billboard in each site visited. A social media campaign across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram not only signposts the shop and grief gatherings, but also invites individuals anywhere in the world to reflect on grief and continue the conversation virtually.

## Project Participants

This Grief Thing has yielded rich outcomes for project participants. Feedback highlights how the project has prompted new sorts of conversations among participants, offering 'a safe space to discuss a taboo subject' as one participant expressed it.

### **Project Partners**

Project partners have shared highly positive outcomes for their organisations, stating that This Grief Thing highlighted to them just how intense the need for this sort of intervention is: 'It's very much needed. People don't have a public space where they can talk about grief and death.'

Partners emphasised how the project had clearly demonstrated to them the value of an innovative and artistic approach in addressing this sort of subject, with a number of organisations now creating other opportunities and collaborating with other artists to continue this sort of work in the future.

Partner organisations also spoke of how This Grief Thing had substantially increased the profile of their own arts-in-health work:

***"People were asking us why the shop was here and we were able to draw attention to the arts and health strand of our engagement work here."***

**Project partner**

In addition, the project had encouraged organisations to deepen existing channels or open new channels of communication with others – be it between staff and departments within their own organisation or with other local agencies:

***"I've been involved a lot more with chatting to our health team about how we in culture and arts can help them."***

**Project partner**

Lastly, project partners celebrated the truly participatory quality of the project as an inspiring and innovative feature of This Grief Thing:

***"I really do feel that this had participation at its very heart – the project absolutely envisages and invites a wide range of people to enter into a space that is really neutral, so everyone feels comfortable there. Everyone is welcome."***

**Project partner**

### **The Company**

The process of creating and delivering This Grief Thing has marked an important stage of development for Fevered Sleep, particularly in terms of the company's vision of participant engagement as a vital and inseparable part of their artistic vision. This Grief Thing is about 'connecting human beings in the moment' rather than 'presenting a final product', which in turn:

***"Feels like exactly where we should be in terms of the growth and success of the company. And sometimes that means we're in a cold shop waiting for one person to come in and talk to us. But that's what success looks like and that's what value feels like to us."***

**Conversation with David Harradine**

### Challenges and Learning

Fevered Sleep thrives on risk, and the project has been designed to allow the company to respond iteratively to the various challenges that exploring such a complex, personal and demanding topic has thrown up.

The emotional labour demanded of the Co-Artistic Directors and the Shop Assistant has proved significant. However, careful management of the schedule to include more breaks and days off has proved helpful, while the artists themselves speak of developing something of an emotional 'shield' to allow the project to feel more sustainable.

The timeframe of each residency has felt difficult: the project needs time to grow established before footfall increases. However, once established, the project can sometimes then grow so popular that large numbers of people are unable to obtain a place at a Grief Gathering. Finding a timeframe that feels sustainable for the artists' emotional well-being, while allowing time and space for this growth to happen and then be met, thus remains.

Site location and logistics proved challenging, particularly around selecting the right venue to open the shop, but it is now clear that the ideal destination is a shopping centre location, where people tend to 'slow down' anyway and so are more ready to engage with the project.

Partner organisations highlighted how it could feel difficult to articulate the project to their wider networks. They stated the conceptual nature of This Grief Thing felt difficult to grasp before they had experienced it directly, which then hampered their ability to engage other agencies and partners. In response, Fevered Sleep proposed making an introductory video about the project and this idea has been warmly met by project partners.

Photograph by Fevered Sleep  
2018



### Legacy

The nature of the project means its legacy ranges from the highly concrete to the intangible.

Many new relationships and networks have formed among project participants, while some participants also requested additional resources to keep and use because they "want to keep the conversation going here".

Partner organisations have spoken of being inspired now to follow new artistic approaches when addressing various social care issues or indeed to seek out ways to continue the project in the future: 'The conversation that keeps coming back is the need here for what you ... have done and how to get you ... back or how we can create a space that maybe once a month is a shop where people can go and talk about loss.'

The company also envisages a powerful legacy of the project in its future work, notably in terms of finding new ways to engage ever more directly with participants including drawing on the success of This Grief Thing's online component with a dedicated This Grief Thing Instagram account in the future.

Many of the project's 'ripples' are however less concrete: the intimate person-to-person interaction at the project's heart makes the idea of 'legacy' both particularly intangible, complex and special:

***'All of this project is a beginning. We just begin something and then we have no idea what happens next. With other projects – like a show – it begins and then ends... But it feels in this project, really deliberately, we've done that first part of the arc and then we've stopped and that's unprecedented.... so it's really amazing when someone comes back to see us – and suddenly we can see a little bit more of the arc.'***

Conversation with David

# 1.

## Introduction

Grief has become privatised. It's become an individual affair – private, hidden, solitary. There's something really lonely about it, but historically [grief] belonged in communities. It's a communal act that we should do together, whatever that means in practice. And the lack of that communality is what this project is trying to address.

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**David Harradine, Co-Artistic Director, Fevered Sleep**

This Grief Thing is an exploratory, interdisciplinary arts project by Fevered Sleep exploring ideas and experiences of grief and grieving. The project's roots lie in highly personal encounters with loss within the company. These experiences in turn prompted a desire to challenge broader societal responses to grief and to invite participants across the UK to engage in conversations about the subject. Comprising of a shop, a collection of products, a billboard, poster and social media campaign, a series of group discussions and, most crucially, multiple spontaneous encounters between the artists and members of the public, the project is, as one of the company's Co-Artistic Directors frames it: 'an artwork disguised as a shop and a shop disguised as an artwork'. Yet through a radical reimagining of how participation might function within the arts, This Grief Thing seeks to reconfigure what art can be and do in the context of this highly personal yet universal theme.

### 1.1 About the company

Fevered Sleep is an independent arts company and charity which has been creating art projects for adults and children for over twenty years. The company makes participatory, research-led art that brings people together to explore challenging subjects and bold ideas in experimental and accessible ways.

The work takes different forms including performance, dance, films, installations, books and digital art. Projects appear in very different places, across the UK and beyond, from theatres, galleries and cinemas, to parks, beaches and schools, and in the spaces of everyday life: in people's homes, community spaces, care settings, on phones and online.

The company is passionate about making work that is artistically adventurous, whilst also providing rich and meaningful experiences for audiences and participants. By engaging with people in it's work, the company hopes to invite new ways of thinking, feeling and being, to create a more caring, curious and compassionate world. Fevered Sleep has a strong track record for facilitating discussion and affecting change.

Fevered Sleep was established in 1996 by Artistic Directors David Harradine and Samantha Butler (hereafter referred to as David and Sam in this report). Fevered Sleep is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.



Photograph by Gary Cook

## 1.2 Project Aims

The following project aims have evolved across the course of This Grief Thing, reflecting the iterative and reflective approach of Fevered Sleep as a company.



### **Aim 1:**

**Develop multiple creative strategies that enable, encourage and facilitate conversations about grief.**

To effectively meet this aim, the project will:

- Create a public space that normalises grief and in which people can talk about grief.
- Encourage participation and provide an everyday social exchange which enables conversation.
- Confer a sense of value and status for feelings of grief for those taking part.
- Offer opportunities to purchase items which contain messages about grief.
- Create opportunities for group and intra-group dialogue.



### **Aim 2:**

**To make grief more visible in public spaces.**

To effectively meet this aim, the project will:

- Increase the visibility of grief in five public locations and also online.
- Engage targeted groups and be made visible to a wide range of people.



### **Aim 3:**

**To create an accessible and inclusive cultural offer.**

To effectively meet this aim, the project will:

- Engage a diverse range of people, including people from areas of deprivation, in dialogue and encourage participation in the project.



### **Aim 4:**

**To develop new partnership models.**

To effectively meet this aim, the project will:

- Develop relationships with a wide cross section of partners to enable a sustained life of the project beyond each residency.
- Utilise processes that are iterative and responsive: the pauses built into the project allow us to learn from each residency to inform future residencies and future partnership models.



### **Aim 5:**

**To deliver a project which has participation at its core.**

To effectively meet this aim, the project will:

- Enable increased levels of participation through its form, content and theme; and enable participants to help shape the development of the project.
- Inform Fevered Sleep's learning and practice around grief by facilitating conversations and engagement with the general public.
- Develop models for facilitation.

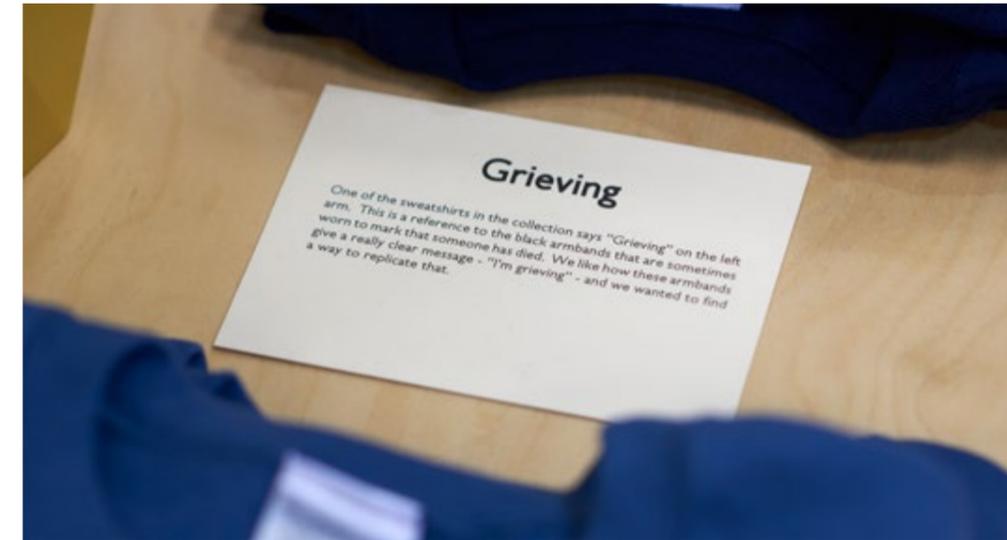
### 1.3 Evaluation Methodology and Overview

This report explores the aims and origins of This Grief Thing its execution, its outcomes and its legacy. The evaluation builds on a first interim report completed in April 2019 which covered the project's activity between September 2018 – March 2019. This new report encompasses these findings, alongside reporting on additional data gathered during the company's residency as part of SICK! Festival in Manchester in September 2019. This newer material includes fieldwork observation of a day's encounters on the shop floor and during a Grief Gathering, plus additional interviews with the company's Co-Artistic Directors, the project's Shop Assistant and with the Co-Creative Director of SICK! Festival.

Data included in the report as a whole has been drawn from the following sources:

- Participant feedback cards about the shop (including a monitoring section)
- Participant feedback cards about Grief Gatherings (including a monitoring section)
- Observation of encounters on the shop floor
- Observation of Grief Gatherings
- Interviews with the company's Co-Artistic Directors, Sam and David
- Interview with Amelia Ideh, the company's Head of Communications
- Interview with the supporting Shop Assistant, Emma Lewis-Jones
- Interviews with the staff from organisations working in partnership on the project
- Records of footfall and purchases at each of the shop's locations
- Record of engagement with the project on social media

This evaluation report seeks to unpick the five project aims outlined above. The report first discusses the genesis of the project. It examines how the project derives from personal encounters with grief and grieving which drove a powerful will to challenge societal assumptions about grieving (Aims 1 and 2). It also notes how This Grief Thing aligns with a wider company desire to reimagine the notion of participation in its work (Aim 5). There follows an outline of project activity with an overview of the five sites visited to date, including information about each of the organisations with which the project partnered (Aim 4). From here, a more analytical account of the project is given, which unpicks the artistic choices underpinning the products created and the construction of the shop as a physical and 'atmospheric' space which invites participants of all backgrounds to explore and express grief (Aims 1, 2 and 3). This is followed by discussion of the project's Grief Gatherings, including a detailed account (based on participant observation) of a single Grief Gathering held in Manchester to offer a more subjective, personal account of the project and its inner workings (Aims 1, 2 and 3).



Photograph by Joseph Hallgate

The report next details the project's impact on participants, partners and the company's development, across a wide variety of themes and drawing on feedback from participants and partners, interviews with Co-Artistic Directors Sam and David and the project's Shop Assistant, Emma Lewis-Jones, plus 'field' observations conducted as part of this evaluation (Aims 1-5). There then follows a section on the challenges that the project has faced and learning gained, before the report concludes with a discussion of the anticipated legacy of This Grief Thing.

***“We don't do participation in our projects but participation is an integral, essential part of our projects. The art we make is only fully realised and completed through the participation of others in it.”***

Some Notes on 'What Participation Does' David Harradine, Fevered Sleep. A piece exploring how Fevered Sleep thinks about the value of participatory practice for all involved.

# 2.

## The Genesis of the Project: Experiences of Grief and Reimagining Participation

The origins of This Grief Thing are rooted in a direct and personal experience of bereavement within the company, and particularly the sense that grieving is often perceived as having 'a definite timeframe to it'. From here, Sam and David began to discuss the lack of public conversation about grief, the significance and value of mourning clothes, and how 'existing spaces to talk about grief are hidden behind doctors' or counsellors' doors: they are private, hard to access and often medicalised'. As Sam describes: 'We had been making these other projects and it felt like: why aren't we dealing with this issue that needs some work?' And so, from these discussions, an artistic project began to emerge that would explore the 'historical and cultural and religious rituals to do with clothing and grief', reimagining some of these rituals in contemporary ways that could continue to be 'practically useful for people'.

The project was subsequently developed through a period of research in 2017 working with a number of academics, including scholars based at Keele University, the University of Nottingham and the Centre for Death and Society at the University of Bath. The company spoke to researchers working in the field of how people grieve (exploring the theme from medical, psychological, therapeutic and cultural points of view) and with particular expertise in the history of material displays of grief – particularly clothing. Sam and David noted that in exploring these themes, they soon concluded 'we wanted to make a project that did something, or offered something. And the idea of clothing led really quickly to the idea of a shop' (Conversation with Sam). There was something familiar and normal – even mundane – about a shop that also felt right in terms of creating a space where everyone feels comfortable.

Further to this, and crucial to the genesis of this project, has been the company's emerging mission to situate participation at the absolute core of Fevered Sleep's work. The company has stated that:

***Fevered Sleep does not exist in order to make artworks that people can passively watch or see. Instead, we see the creative processes we enable, and the artworks we make, as strategies or starting points or catalysts that allow us to enter into meaningful, reciprocal encounters with people outside the company. We don't do participation in our projects but participation is an integral, essential part of our projects. The art we make is only fully realised and completed through the participation of others in it.***

**'Some Notes on 'What Participation Does''  
David Harradine, Fevered Sleep**

As such, the development of This Grief Thing came to run in parallel with this broader strand of development in the company's work as a whole, where the company was increasingly thinking about this new focus.

**Photograph by Fevered Sleep  
2018**



***We were thinking about what we wanted the company to do and what we were for – how we wanted to encounter people during projects... [we were] trying to develop all sorts of strategies to make our work as easy as possible for people to access. So the formation of the clothing and the shop felt really key to that.***

**Conversation with Sam Butler**

Sparked by what Sam and David had identified as a fierce need for more conversation around grief, and in order to explore this form of active, integral participation further, a second strand of research was conducted in 2017-18, where pilot discussions about grief were hosted around the UK and beyond. These conversations reached over 100 people of all ages in a range of places including Leeds, London, Nottingham, Reading, Preston and in Banff, Canada. Feedback from this initial research demonstrated a strong demand for a different sort of space to talk about grief, and indicated the positive impact the project could make to people's lives in working to facilitate conversations about grief across communities.

From here the project crystallised into four strands: a temporary shop, a range of products, a billboard campaign and the hosting of group conversations open to the public, named Grief Gatherings.



# 3.

## Overview of Project Activity

This section briefly outlines the main activity of the project: the shops, products, billboards and Grief Gatherings, before giving a summary of each of the project's five sites in Preston, Middlesbrough, Nottingham and Manchester (first inside the Whitworth Gallery and subsequently at a shop on King Street as part of SICK! Festival)



### Shops

Temporary shops have been opened in (to date) 5 sites across the UK, usually for around 9-10 days in each location. Each shop is hosted by Sam and David (supported by the Shop Assistant) who welcome customers to browse the collection, buy items, or talk about grief. Each shop has been opened in close partnership with other organisations, which have ranged from County Councils to city-wide arts festivals.

Photograph by Fevered Sleep  
2018



### Products

In collaboration with Fraser Muggeridge Studio, the Fevered Sleep created a collection of specially designed items for sale in the shops to initiate and facilitate discussion around grief. These items include clothing, scarves, tote bags, badges, brooches and cards, and carry text such as 'Let Me Be Sad', 'Lost', 'Grief is Like The Weather' that came directly from the images, ideas and discussions the company conducted during their initial research. This collection is sold in shops (using a 'pay what you want' pricing scheme) and online. Fevered Sleep has also produced images of people wearing the clothes, using a wide range of people as photographic subjects.

Photograph by Fevered Sleep  
2018



### Billboards

In each location that the project has visited, a billboard has been displayed which asks 'Can We Talk About Grief?' The billboard is not a marketing or wayfinding tool but rather an end in itself, designed to raise the visibility of grief and invite participants all around the area to engage with the idea of the project as one of multiple entry-points to This Grief Thing.

Photograph by Joseph Hallgate



### Grief Gatherings

Grief Gatherings are 90-minute group discussions facilitated by Sam and David during which participants are invited to explore experiences, responses and ideas around grief and grieving. Attendance is open to anyone and free to attend. At least two Grief Gatherings have been held at each site the project has visited. In addition to sessions facilitated by Sam and David, Grief Gatherings can also be hosted by other people or organisations – hosts are offered items from the shop, some notes about ideas around grief, and suggestions on how to facilitate a conversation about the subject.

**Photograph by Fevered Sleep  
2018**

### Social Media

The project has also taken place online, via social media posts and interactions on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Curated posts featuring images from the project and expressive captions reflecting on grief have elicited conversations and shares from a wide range of participants, including many who would otherwise be unlikely to engage physically with the project.

### The Five Sites

| City                        | Date                                     | Location   | Footfall                              | Total transactions                     |
|-----------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| Preston                     | September 2018<br>(shop open for 9 days) | 65/71 Friargate Walk,<br>St George's Shopping Centre,<br>PR1 2TU | 818<br>average of 91 people per day   | 178<br>including the sale of 332 items |
| Middlesbrough               | Sep–Oct, 2018<br>(shop open for 9 days)  | Unit 10a,<br>3 Captain Cook Square,<br>TS1 5UB                   | 362<br>average of 40 people per day   | 71<br>including the sale of 270 items  |
| Manchester (The Whitworth)  | November 2018<br>(shop open for 10 days) | The Whitworth,<br>Oxford Rd,<br>M15 6ER                          | 1582<br>average of 158 people per day | 200<br>including the sale of 767 items |
| Nottingham                  | March 2019<br>(shop open for 9 days)     | Sneinton Market,<br>NG1 1DS                                      | 162<br>average of 18 people per day   | 77<br>including the sale of 332 items  |
| Manchester (Sick! Festival) | Sep–Oct, 2019<br>(Shop open for 12 days) | 58 King Street<br>M2 4LY   | 516<br>Average of 57 people per day   | 150<br>Including the sale of 332 items |



### Preston

Fevered Sleep here worked in partnership with local creative charity Derelict, 'a non-profit organisation made up of Preston based artists and producers' which aims to 'generate new audiences for international, national and regional theatre in the North West of England whilst also supporting the development of new emerging artists & producers'. With the support of Derelict, the company secured a large, highly visible unit in St George's, a major town centre shopping complex.

A wide range of people visited the shop in Preston, in terms of age (from teenagers to people in their 70s and 80s), ethnicity, and gender (a number of unaccompanied men came in, who are a target audience of the project; and the shop was visited by a number of people working at Sparkle, a charity supporting trans men and women).

**Photograph by Gary Cook**

### Middlesbrough

The company here worked in partnership with Middlesbrough Council's Cultural Services Team, (working particularly closely with the Arts Development Officer) to open a small shop on a high street in Middlesbrough.

The daily shop reports from Middlesbrough indicate that the visitors to the shop were from diverse age groups and backgrounds (and it was also noted that a high number of men visited alone). Shop reports highlighted a key difference from Preston in that this location was palpably economically deprived: 'More poverty – we can see it and at least two people who came in the shop have referred to it.' Fewer people came into the shop than in Preston, but the phenomenon of repeat visitors was noted several times. It was reported that 'a good proportion of the people who come in are engaging us in conversation, and there are still big challenging moments when people declare things related to death and grief.' The shop also received visitors from community charities and organisations, including the local branch of Cruse Bereavement Care and an organisation named Recovery Connections.

**Photograph by Fevered Sleep  
2018**



### Manchester (The Whitworth)

Working in partnership with The Whitworth (particularly the gallery's Arts and Health Partnership Manager from the Learning and Engagement department), the company took over one of the shop spaces inside, adjacent to the main entrance and positioned directly opposite the gallery's other shop.

The space of the shop at The Whitworth was distinctly different to Preston and Middlesbrough: 'It was more rarefied... More like an art project, less like a shop', noted David. The daily shop reports indicated that the people visiting the shop were from a range of age groups and ethnic backgrounds.

Three Grief Gatherings were held: one in the St Mary's Hospital in conjunction with the hospital chaplaincy and the remaining two gatherings held at the shop.

**Photograph by Joseph Hallgate**



### Nottingham

In Nottingham, Fevered Sleep worked with established partner, Dance4, a local dance development agency 'working to support UK and international artists to create new ideas in choreography and provide experiences for the public as spectators, participants, commentators and commissioners'. A shop in Nottingham City Centre had been secured for the residency, however two days before the project was due to be installed the landlord pulled out. The shop moved to an alternative unit in Sneinton Market, 'a community-based local social enterprise', located just outside Nottingham city centre where Dance4 have strong links as it is close to their venue.

One important addition to this shop was a sofa, placed near heaters. This proved popular with visitors as a place to settle and talk, and this residency involved substantially more children and families than other locations. Footfall was generally lower than at other sites, likely due to the location of the shop being outside the city centre, as opposed to on a high street with its own passing trade. Sneinton Market has also been described as a 'destination' which attracts a certain demographic of people and this may have been a barrier to some people attending the shop. Partly in response to this trend, and partly as a planned idea to ensure the project reached multiple 'local' places, Dance4 designed a series of 'project pop ups' allowing Sam and David to visit a number of civic spaces with a portable version of the project. As part of this initiative, Fevered Sleep visited five locations, including a council building, a library, two coffee shops and a pub, engaging a further 117 people with the project.

In Nottingham, the company held six Grief Gatherings: five in the Shop and one at Dance4, attended by a total of 40 people. In addition, the company held a further workshop at Oak Field Special Educational Needs School in Bullwell which focused particularly on the expression of emotion.

Photograph by Adam Lewis

### Photograph by Gary Cook



### Manchester (SICK! Festival)

Returning to Manchester, this shop was opened in partnership with the 2019 SICK! Festival. The festival presents an international arts programme exploring mental and physical health, weaving in perspectives from researchers, clinical practitioners, public health professionals, charities and those with lived experience of the issues addressed. One of the festival's themes this year was 'end of life' which connected closely with the aims of This Grief Thing.

The shop was located on a pedestrian shopping street in central Manchester, in a relatively affluent area of the city. Visitors to the shop nonetheless proved varied and footfall was relatively high. A number of participants returned to the shop on repeat visits (including participants travelling from other cities that the project had visited previously). A number of participants returned to the shop on repeat visits (including participants travelling from other cities that the project had visited previously, and those who had already engaged with the project at The Whitworth). Most striking of all was the tremendous popularity of the Grief Gatherings here once the project had grown established at the site. The first scheduled session had to be cancelled due to a lack of participants, but all subsequent Grief Gatherings held at this site were vastly over-subscribed, with over 100 people signed up on a waiting list to attend.

***'It's an artwork disguised as a shop and a shop disguised as an artwork.'***

**- Conversation with David Harradine**

# 4.

## Constructing the Space: Objects, Layout and Atmosphere

A great deal of care has been put into crafting every aspect of the physical space for each This Grief Thing shop. Each temporary shop layout necessarily responds to the different space provided, but the shop nonetheless has a distinct visual identity which connects strongly to the company's work and identity more generally:

*'The design of all our projects... tends to be simple, clean, and highly precise, but with space for texture and warmth.'*

Conversation with Sam

The distinct visual identity of the shop is reflected across the objects on sale too, which include: T-shirts, hoodies, scarves, tote bags, badges, brooches and greeting cards and statement cards which all explore ideas and expressions of grief. One of the most popular items has been a contemporary version of a Victorian mourning brooch, an item which was worn to pay quiet tribute to someone who has died, sometimes containing a lock of hair or including the words 'In Memory Of'. Sam has reflected on the power of re-imagining this item with contemporary design and highlighted the importance of creating something that felt both socially meaningful and aesthetically special – that a real sense of love and care had been put into its creation:

*'These brooches were a thing that existed once to do that job and that we don't use anymore – and I know how many people like brooches... I thought we needed something really pretty and attractive that feels like it is a bit valuable.'*

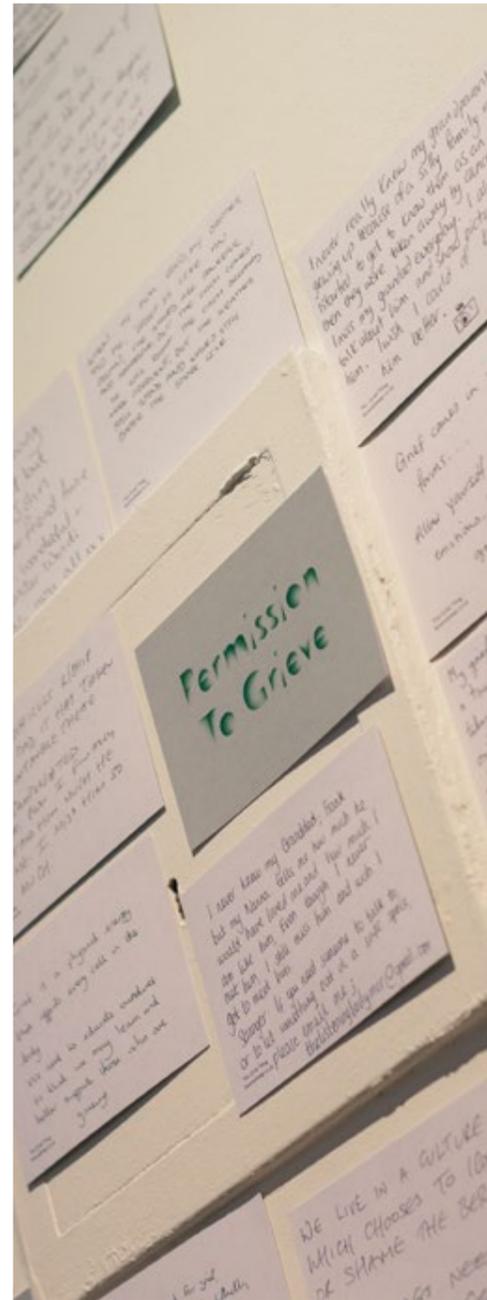
Conversation with Sam

An interesting development with the items on sale was the collection of 'phrase' cards. These cards featured brief paragraphs of text about grief and grieving, compiled from the research discussions carried out in an earlier phase of the project.

These cards were originally produced only to be placed around the shop as a means of explaining the project, helping to illustrate the significance of the other items on sale and the origins of the text featured on T-shirts etc. However, participants began asking if they could buy these cards, and so the company produced packs of the cards: 'People said these are so comforting, that "I know what to do with them,"' notes Sam about these objects. The cards have also been celebrated as particularly useful to give as gifts for feeling less potentially 'intrusive' than buying someone else an article of clothing to wear:

*'I think people feel: "I can have them for myself or I can give that to someone – they're useful. I don't know all the stuff and it feels as if there's something here that can help." And, as a gift, it's not something another person has to wear – which could feel like a bit of an imposition.'*

Conversation with Sam



Photograph by Richard Tymon

In developing this design, considering the impact of the shop's layout was crucial. Sam and David were particularly focused on how to 'soften' the entry to the shop with the understanding that 'crossing the threshold' into such a space may feel challenging for many participants:

***'We talked a lot about how to make that entrance easier. I did lots of research around shopping psychology and the way people enter a space and the way they move around it and what needs to be where. Hence, we've got some plants and the little areas where you can disappear a bit or feel a bit less exposed. And obviously everywhere we go we have to reinvent that – often we walk into the space for the first time and we haven't seen the shop before we arrive: right, OK, it's like this... How do I move through the space? How does it feel to walk up to the shop front and come in and then what do I do when I'm there?'***

Conversation with Sam

As such, the company has developed a layout with what is known in retail theory as a 'decompression zone' where entrants can take their time to adjust to the environment of the space having crossed the threshold. From here, participants then encounter a visual display outlining the background and purpose of This Grief Thing.

***'Once people have stood there and read it and thought 'I kind of understand this' then you'd see them go 'so I can come in' – and then there are a few things right at hand – right by your hand – that you can just pick up as a prop really, as a way to occupy yourself, because it's difficult to know what to do in that space. Because it is a shop. But it's obviously not just a shop.'***

Conversation with Sam



Photograph by Richard Tymon

As this expresses, the shop both does and doesn't feel like a conventional retail space. It is striking that the shop allows people to follow the usual conventions of moving through a store and This Grief Thing shop layouts have tended to use the popular 'loop' format: here the customer passes to the back of the shop, towards a lit sign which says 'This Grief Thing', before they loop back round the other side, ending up at the till. However, the shop also invites participants to 'transgress' this convention of near-continuous movement with the offer to settle down on a sofa, read one of the books provided there, fill in a postcard and affix it to the wall or indeed strike up a conversation with Sam or David.

Whatever the type of encounter with the shop a participant chooses for themselves, they are being invited – either explicitly or 'atmospherically', as David has phrased it – to engage with the idea of grief. This engagement can take many forms, however. The scope for treating the shop purely as a 'standard' shopping space was strikingly important for some participants:

***'Someone came into the Preston shop and I don't know how he knew [about us], but he came in and went straight to a particular item, picked it up, carried it to the counter, paid for it and he went. And there was no other interaction. But it was the sweatshirt that says 'GRIEVING' on it like an armband – so it was really explicit. And it was so transactional and his state of tension was so high that there was nothing we could do but support that transaction and let him go.'***

Conversation with David

Other participants evidently wished to experience a shift away from a 'normal' shopping environment into a space where something more emotional and intimate could occur. This would often take participants time:

***'Other people come in and they look at stuff, and then they look at stuff some more, and they are clearly wanting to engage with us but they can't quite... and so with those sorts of people we might gently approach. And often this approach is just asking 'What brought you here, or were you just passing?' And sometimes people might say 'Oh I was just passing' but often people answer that question by disclosing who they are grieving for and would start the conversation. I ask 'How did you hear about us?' and someone suddenly replies, 'My daughter died last week' and then the conversation starts.'***

Conversation with David

***'It surprised me at first in Preston when people started to use the shop not just as a shop but as a space. They were coming into the shop and spending time there – without necessarily engaging with us or buying anything – but you could see people coming in, walking round really slowly and just standing there for ages and just being in the space.'***

Conversation with Sam

This sense of 'just being' in the space connects to the theme of silence. One of the project's key aims is to challenge societal silence about grief, but the shop itself, even when populated, is often a place of intense quiet.

This is, however, clearly a very different form of silence, where even if words are not exchanged there is nonetheless a clear sense of expressive, authentic communication between everybody present in the shop about the significance of grief:

***'Whether it's said or not, it's all acknowledged in the shop's space. By a person walking through the door, by making eye contact, by our being witness to someone coming in: everything is acknowledged, whether we speak or not. It's very full... It might be silent but it's full of eye contact and communication and interaction and care.'***

Conversation with David

The creation of this atmosphere is in large part due to the responsive nature of the artists, but also supported by physical qualities of the shop itself. For instance, the addition of a sofa has been hugely helpful in inviting participants to take time out to be in the shop. This addition came about in response to a slightly different sort of shop location in Nottingham:

***'The position of the shop was much more out of town and it was much more of a 'destination'. We hardly had any [spontaneous] footfall there, so people attending were making a decision to come to the shop: they'd have read about it or heard about it, so it was a destination. And that's when we first decided to get the sofa because when people came they then wanted to stay longer and chat and be like 'I'm here' – and that was a bit of a revelation.'***

Conversation with Sam

The sofa emphatically invites people to 'dwell' in the space: it is a clear invitation that anyone is welcome to spend time here:

***'without all those insecurities you have about being in a space or even in a shop, asking yourself 'how long can I linger?''***

**Conversation with Sam**

And this adjustment seemed to invite another development. At another site (The Whitworth gallery), one participant spontaneously wrote a message on a spare postcard while sat on the sofa. One of the Co-Artistic Directors later pinned this postcard on the wall and from there, other participants began to do the same, writing cards and pinning them up to build a wall of messages. These postcards (of which there are now over 60) offer a highly creative mixture of responses from participants, which range from:

- **Injunctions**, offering advice and guidance to other people who may also be grieving.
- **Testimonies** that document people's personal grieving processes.
- **Memorials** using the postcard almost as a plaque to commemorate an individual who has died, often including a full name and dates of birth and death.
- **Expressions** of gratitude and appreciation for the project itself.

The postcard wall offers both a display for participants to view and an invitation to participate. The space is thus further transformed, inviting participants to become active and creative contributors to the physical environment.

The way in which participants respond to other participants in the shop is also strikingly different from conventional shopping environments. The queue for the till is often where particularly intimate conversations between participants and one or both of Sam and David happen, often before or after a payment transaction. And in turn, the queue often becomes a site of emotional and supportive conversations between participants too.

***'We've had instances when someone is talking to us and then someone else has overheard the conversation and they've felt able – and wanted – to say to that other person: "I've had that too and just to let you know it's really amazing what you're doing and I hope you're going to be OK.'***

**Conversation with Sam**

On other occasions, the structure of a conventional shop queue dissolves entirely. If a particularly intimate and emotional conversation has begun between a participant and one of the artists, it is striking to observe how often all other visitors present instinctively leave the queue to explore other areas of the shop again, offering the first participant space to complete this discussion without the sense of a queue waiting behind them.

# 5.

## Grief Gatherings

Central to the project are a series of intimate group conversations, open to the public and free to attend, named Grief Gatherings. Each Grief Gathering is a very loosely structured 90-minute group discussion for up to 16 people to explore experiences, responses and ideas around grief and grieving. The majority of the project's Grief Gatherings have been facilitated by Sam and David and held in the shop (which is then closed to the public), but the company has also created some guidance and resources so that community groups and individuals can host Grief Gatherings in their own spaces.

To date, 22 Grief Gatherings have been hosted by the company, with a total of 143 people participating, and further Grief Gatherings have been hosted by other individuals and organisations, including Ageing Better in Middlesbrough, Preston's Women's Centre and Dance4 in Nottingham.

The following section presents a more descriptive and personal account of a Grief Gathering held at the Manchester This Grief Thing shop, opened as part of SICK! Festival in September 2019.

### An Account of a Grief Gathering

The shop closes its doors to the general public at 18.00 and soon after people begin to arrive in time for the 18.30 gathering. The atmosphere is warm and expectant. We stand around quietly at the front of the shop, peering at objects and making conversation, before gradually taking our seats in a circle in the middle of the shop.

David and Sam introduce themselves and the gathering begins. They explain that while they are poised with some prompts for things to discuss should that prove helpful, the conversation is intended simply to run wherever we choose. Sam and David emphasise that silence is welcome and not to be feared in the conversation, and they also note that there is no 'hierarchy' of grief in this room – that no one need feel that their experience of grief and grieving is in any way less important or less painful than another person's, whatever the differences in each person's circumstances might be.

The group then introduce themselves, moving around the circle. Some individuals disclose deeply personal information immediately, while others prefer to say less. There are several adults in their twenties present whose parents or siblings have died. An older person speaks of having lost their grown-up daughter just weeks before. Someone is present whose partner died by suicide several years previously. Another person is here to reflect on the sense of grief they feel about a deeply painful relationship with a parent and the difficulties that this relationship spelt for them throughout their life, and how these difficulties have only heightened since the parent's death. Another participant notes that they do not have any particularly intense personal experiences of grief but had rather asked to attend the gathering more out of interest and curiosity.

Following these introductions, Sam and David open up the discussion and the conversation gradually begins to flow. The discussion covers many themes and issues and many moods and tones. There is abundant laughter, there are exclamations of relief and solidarity ('I'm so glad it's not just me who does that') and there are moments of almost unbearable sadness and distress.



Photograph by Fevered Sleep  
2018

The group discusses the need to keep the person lost present in the cycle of the year, particularly during celebrations such as Christmas and birthdays. The value of forging certain sorts of rituals among family and friends to keep that person present is also mentioned. Discussion turns to the confusing and discombobulating combinations of emotions often experienced – such as how grief can mix uncomfortably with hope and happiness, leading to discussion about the ‘pace of recovery’ from grief and complex sensations of guilt. Several people then mention a certain anxiety that can sometimes accompany a pocket of happiness arriving ‘too soon’.

An interesting thread in the conversation explores the Manchester bombings and how some of the participants have struggled with the sense that the terrible drama of this event somehow ‘eclipsed’ the more ‘normal’ sadness of the death of a family member in ways that felt particularly hurtful, difficult and – particularly challengingly – somehow unspeakable to others.

A number of people reflect ruefully on how often they have felt that the only person who would ‘get’ the situation is the very individual who has died – and how participants find themselves going to ring this person on the phone to chat through the implications of the death, before realising this is of course now impossible.

The structure of the discussion evolves, entirely organically, in an interesting way. At first, comments from the group are all directed towards Sam and David, who act as a sort of conduit for each person’s reflections. Gradually however, participants begin to speak more directly to the whole group. This then develops into group members asking one another questions and from here, attendees begin to offer one another suggestions or little snippets of advice. A few of the group members then address the group as whole with a question (‘So, what do you do about Christmas?’) and this then leads to a sense of co-narration, where participants increasingly interject or even fill in the gaps of one another’s testimonies with their own experiences in warm and familiar ways. Finally, the group begins to ‘coin’ various new approaches and phrases together: for instance, the notion of ‘mining sadness’ is coined by the group – several people speak of sometimes seeking to really ‘dig into’ feelings of grief and sadness, perhaps through music or other prompts to weep or feel sad, and there is a sense of satisfaction and relief among the group in finding new shared words to capture this distinct sensation.

As the session reaches its end, David and Sam mention the difficulty of having to go back out into the world after such a discussion and so they welcome people to linger on in the shop until ready to leave. They also invite everyone to think of one positive thing they have gained from the gathering to take with them as they step outside. Slowly, the group disbands. People hug one another goodbye and several people exchange phone numbers with a view to meeting up again at a later date. The last participant leaves and those working on the project briefly reflect together on the discussion, noting how particularly raw and heartrending some of the accounts heard this evening had felt, before the shop is closed up for the night.



# 6.

## Marketing & Communications: Meeting People Where They Are

*'[The project] happened in the shop, it happened on the street with billboards and posters, it happened at Grief Gatherings and it happened online – and is happening still online. The conversation occurred in all those places.'*

Amelia Ideh, Head of Communications, Fevered Sleep

Fevered Sleep recognises communications as an integral part of the company's creative work. This approach has proved especially pertinent in a project focused on prompting and nurturing conversation. In the context of This Grief Thing, communications have centred on two main aims: firstly, to signpost participants to engage with the project in person via the shop or Grief Gatherings; secondly, to align with the wider purpose of This Grief Thing itself, seeking to 'help spark or facilitate conversations about grief that we're not always going to be a part of – so, without us there' (conversation with Amelia). Thus, much of the communications activity for the project has been about extending the project's reach through a variety of tangible and intangible ways:

***'The aim [was] that people were having those conversations. Whether they were having them with us in the shop or online with us or in their homes – that really was the goal – to get people talking about grief – even if we can't track all the conversations that we aren't part of.'***

Conversation with Amelia

These conversations were prompted by a wide range of marketing tools, including billboards and posters, a series of portrait photographs and social media posts across a variety of platforms, as discussed below.



Photograph by Joseph Hallgate

### **Billboards and posters**

As well as running a poster campaign in each location, the company has also displayed a sizeable (3x6m) billboard in each city visited. The billboard features minimal text and information, simply asking: 'Can We Talk About Grief?' with a link to the website. As such, it is not designed as a piece of advertising to direct participants to the shop; rather, any reaction the billboard stimulates in an observer is an end in itself:

***'The idea for the billboard was that anybody who walks past it will be struck by the question we're asking. We were really thoughtful about the design of it and how little text there was on it. It wasn't meant to be a 'get people through the door' tool. It was more like: if someone's walking past or driving past, how can we get them to turn to their friend and say 'Oh yeah, I want to talk about grief'. Or for it to sit with them and when they get home for them not even to have realised that we planted the seed and for them to start having that conversation. That was the thinking behind it.'***

Conversation with Amelia

The billboards are also a key way of extending the reach of the project, enabling the company to target particular groups of people and invite them to interact with the project:

***'We spent a lot of time looking at maps and we'd consider things like: not many men are interacting with the project but this billboard in Manchester is actually quite close to a football stadium, or this particular billboard in Nottingham is on the road that you take to the cemetery. We were really thoughtful about where we put those billboards. We didn't just put them where there were lots of people for the sake of it.'***

Conversation with Amelia

An interesting feature of the billboard campaign is how intangible the extent of its direct impact is. While there are certain ways of tracking who views the billboards (the estimated total number of "impacts" or views is 535,376), the nature of individuals' responses remains unknown. However, the billboards have nonetheless added meaningful breadth to the company's presence in each city This Grief Thing has visited:

***'I think it would make a big difference to our presence in a city if we were just in a shop inside a shopping centre and we had some posters up and that was it. [The billboard] feels like the project really happened in a couple of locations in each city.'***

Conversation with Amelia

## Photo Shoot

Having developed the range of products for the shop, the company arranged a photoshoot in September 2018 to feature these items in use. The original impetus for these photographs was to create promotional images to include on the company's website and online shop. However, the scope of the photoshoot grew to become a core artistic element of the project itself, also expanding to include some 19 models in order to represent a richly diverse collection of individuals:

***'It turned into a massive production where we had so many models – and we were really focused on the diversity of those models'***

Conversation with Amelia

Models weren't chosen for their appearance but rather for their experiences, with many of those pictured having experienced recent bereavements: 'so they weren't just models, they were taking part in the project in some way'. Due to this, the photoshoot created something of a community in itself, demonstrating the unfolding and iterative quality of the project:

***'It felt like the people we photographed were also participants in the project, it felt like another part of This Grief Thing. I invited a trans friend who had experienced a family bereavement recently, and she also has to carry the grief of so many trans women being killed. Another friend had also experienced a lot of grief and had previously taken part in a Grief Gathering – many of his tattoos have personal meaning so it felt fitting they featured in the photos.'***

(Conversation with Amelia)

The resulting photographs are arresting and beautiful, and have come to form a key component of the project's aesthetic: they are displayed in large prints around each shop site, have been used as poster images and feature prominently in This Grief Thing's online presence.

## Social Media

Social media has played a significant role in This Grief Thing, encouraging a wide range of people to interact with the project: be it through raised awareness of the shop or of the Grief Gatherings, or feeling invited take part online in sharing reflections on grief. To date, the project's posts on Instagram and Facebook have elicited over 8700 positive interactions.

Different content has been created by the company for each of the three social media platforms used (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram), with engagement varying in corresponding ways.

Crucially, it soon emerged on all three platforms that social media interaction comprises another core element of This Grief Thing itself:

***'The comments that were coming back from posts feel like they are part of the conversation and part of the project, not just spreading the word.'***

Conversation with Amelia

**With Instagram, the company has more recently moved to a 'very curated look, where we really think about how the posts connect with each other, almost like an online gallery. Much of the content we add there has been specially created for Instagram.'**

#### Conversation with Amelia

These closely-crafted posts have in turn prompted rich and personal responses from followers, sometimes taking the form of testimonial-like commentary, akin to some of the postcard messages written and displayed by participants on visiting the shop.

**With Facebook, the company's approach has been 'something not so curated. People want a photo of a person that looks like them that they can connect with – and then some information about "how do I get to see this thing.'"**

#### Conversation with Amelia

Men proved much less responsive and much harder to reach on Facebook than women, so the company began to increase the amount spent on ads targeted towards them in order to try and reach them. The number of men coming into the shop increased immediately and the company have subsequently applied this method with success in each further residency.

Facebook posts by the company about the project also yielded a particular style of interaction, where participants frequently used This Grief Thing posts as a form of 'referral' for friends and family members:

**'This thing that happened where people would tag their friends – so we'd sometimes get 40 shares on a post or people not necessarily joining the conversation but just tagging their friends.'**

#### Conversation with Amelia



The company's Twitter presence also stimulated rich interaction among project participants, including testimonials about the experience of taking part, personal accounts of grief sparked by engaging with the project, and acts of remembrance.

#### Press and Radio

This Grief Thing has been featured in a range of national and regional press to date, including an interview in The Stage, a feature article in the i newspaper, a review (as part of SICK! Festival) in The Guardian, as well as articles and mentions in The Big Issue, the Middlesborough Gazette, the Lancashire Post, the Nottingham-based Left Lion, The Double Negative and Blog Preston among others.

**'Arts company Fevered Sleep invites audiences to make room for grief. This Grief Thing takes the form of an unassuming shop in the city centre, inserting death and loss into the familiar landscape of the high street. It's somewhere visitors can buy things – clothing, tote bags, cards printed with phrases about grief – but also somewhere they can start conversations. Small printed cards prompt us to consider those we've lost, while one wall is plastered with the thoughts of visitors, from the pained to the profound... Personal grief rises to the surface as I move quietly around the space.'**

Catherine Love, The Guardian, Sept 2019

Television interviews have been broadcast on That's Manchester and Ey Up Notts and the Co-Artistic Directors have also taken part in an hour-long podcast episode of 'Inviting Abundance' called "To Grieve". The project has also featured on a number of local radio stations, with live interviews on BBC Radio Tees, BBC Radio Lancashire, and BBC Nottingham. For Amelia, these local radio interviews have a particularly special quality in terms of engagement:

***'I felt like those interviews that Sam and David did were a really integral part of the conversation around grief, because in a sense the people interviewing them would become participants in the project somehow – they were taking part in that conversation. And, of course, you don't know exactly who was listening and who went on to say 'I heard something on the radio...' And I think it's quite different from reading an article in a newspaper that you might go on to forget about.'***

Conversation with Amelia



Photograph by Joseph Hallgate

### **Meeting People Where They Are**

The project's marketing and communications strategy has dramatically widened the reach of the project in a range of tangible and intangible ways. Through the company's online presence and through initiatives such as the poster and billboard campaign, conversations about grief have likely been sparked in any number of unexpected places:

***'We are asking that question 'why can't we talk about grief?' everywhere. There have been posters inside laundrettes, inside takeaways, inside cafes and pubs.'***

Conversation with Amelia

Crucially, this approach aligns with a key principle of the company's work as a whole: meeting people where they are.

***'This goal of meeting people where they are is really important to us now – it's really central to how we work. During [Men and Girls Dance] we would be in shopping centres, and cafes having conversations with people because we realised some of these people are never going to come to the theatre. And so, we have to find ways to meet people where they are and have conversations about the themes of the project somewhere else – and This Grief Thing feels like a really direct through-line from that. And so choosing where we put the posters, choosing where we put the billboard, having those things in the first place, having those conversations online, it feels like yet more of us meeting people where they are because we know they're perhaps not going to come into the shop or maybe even walk past that part of town.'***

Conversation with Amelia

# 7.

## Outcomes of the Project

### 7.1 Outcomes for Project Participants

The impact of This Grief Thing on participants has been profound, both in terms of feedback shared explicitly with the company and through observations of the encounters and exchanges taking place in the shop or at Grief Gatherings. These outcomes encompass a wide range of themes, as explored below, and clearly demonstrate how This Grief Thing has met its aims to 'enable, encourage and facilitate conversations about grief' (Aim 1) in public spaces (Aim 2), particularly in ways that have proved 'inclusive and accessible' (Aim 3), with the project always placing 'participation at its core' (Aim 5).

#### Space for new sorts of conversation

Many participants celebrated the project for publicly highlighting the need for more open, verbal acknowledgement of the subject of grief:

***'I've long felt we need to be talking more about grief + loss – that culturally we're not encouraged to grieve deeply, or for long.'***

Participant feedback card, Preston

***'Grief, especially among men, is another thing we're expected not to show openly and that needs to change.'***

Participant feedback card, The Whitworth, Manchester

***'I loved the simplicity of the event. Just sitting and talking was powerful which made it even clearer how we don't do this.'***

Participant feedback email, Grief Gathering, SICK! Festival, Manchester

In turn, many participants commented on the value of being offered a space where grief was openly acknowledged and could be discussed as 'normal', without any sense of the subject being viewed as transgressive or 'out of bounds':

***'Offers a safe space to discuss a taboo subject. Desperately needed.'***

Participant feedback card, Preston

***'I found it a really positive experience where everyone got to contribute and many insights were provided... it made me feel that grieving is allowed and normal!'***

Participant feedback card on a Grief Gathering, SICK! Festival, Manchester

***'Such a relief to see people openly writing, thinking etc. about something so universal yet private.'***

Participant feedback card, The Whitworth, Manchester



Photograph by Fevered Sleep 2018

***'Made me think about how we still mask grief – refreshing to see more open approach.'***

(Participant feedback card, Nottingham)

***'It encourages others to speak about grief. Grieving is important.'***

Participant feedback card, Preston

***'Breaking the taboo is really helpful – made me feel comforted.'***

Participant feedback card, Preston

The objects on sale in the shop were also mentioned by participants as explicitly helpful for opening up conversations around grief in other contexts:

***'Useful to buy resources e.g. badges so it can spark further conversations.'***

Participant feedback card, Preston

***'I wish I had had some of these t-shirts when I was experiencing my worst grief.'***

Participant feedback card, The Whitworth, Manchester

***'I think the items for sale highlight the need to be more open about grief and that we should feel we can ask for support.'***

Participant feedback card, Nottingham

Sam and David also noted how they frequently witnessed new lines of communication open up between participants visiting the shop. Sometimes this was facilitated simply through the physical 'fact' of the shop:

***'We once had three generations in the shop [a grandparent, parent and child]. It was amazing. They all came and sat on the sofa and were talking about the loss of the son – this girl's brother – and they read books to the child. It was a real, whole event for them. They were there for a couple of hours and they kind of looked after themselves. They didn't really need us. They were just using the space and the props that were in it to get what they needed.'***

Conversation with Sam

Conversely, sometimes these new lines of communication were created primarily through the presence of the artists in the shop facilitating and 'holding' a conversation with participants:

***'A couple came in together – a couple with a baby in a pram. That was really remarkable. They'd looked around for a long time and they were going to leave and I can't remember how it started, but we got into conversation, and she started by saying, 'I can't talk about it. I can't talk about my grief,' and he said something similar. They both said, 'we're not talking to each other about it'. And then they had a conversation with each other about it – they were both talking to me, but they were making eye contact with each other. I would drop in the odd question just to keep this conversation going, and they would occasionally look at me... but really, they talked to each other.'***

Conversation with David

The sense that the project gave participants space to explore and express their own personal and complex responses to grief – however ‘difficult’ or unexpected these responses might be – was also highlighted by a number of participants:

***‘It lets me feel I can grieve in public, in my own way and it’s OK’***

Participant feedback card, Preston

***‘It makes me feel at ease with being sad’***

Participant feedback card, Preston

***‘Really important that grief is allowed to be owned as a positive emotion’***

Participant feedback card, Nottingham

***‘It has made me realise everything I feel is normal’***

Participant feedback card, Middlesbrough

***‘It allows me to explore my darker feelings’***

Participant feedback card, The Whitworth, Manchester

Photograph by Fevered Sleep  
2018



### The quality of the space – inclusive and accessible

The physical and atmospheric qualities of the space created by the shop and by the Grief Gatherings – especially how welcoming and accessible the project felt in all its dimensions – has been widely commented on as contributing to this sense of openness, acceptance and self-exploration:

***'Grief is a difficult subject to approach but the shop makes it feel easy to express and share.'***

Participant feedback card, The Whitworth, Manchester

***'Such a safe, rewarding experience, such a wonderful atmosphere – thank you.'***

Participant feedback card, Grief Gathering at The Whitworth, Manchester

***'It was such a beautiful space for sharing hard experiences with one another.'***

Participant feedback card, Middlesbrough

***'We love the fact it's approachable and making an unspoken subject open.'***

Participant feedback card, Middlesbrough

***'It was a very peaceful and relaxing space.'***

Participant feedback card, Grief Gathering at SICK! Festival, Manchester

***'It made me feel safe.'***

Participant feedback card, Middlesbrough

***'I liked the fact that this was public – in a shop in Manchester. It was so beautifully held together by David and Sam – they set a tone that was both provocative and gentle... it was pitched just right.'***

Participant feedback email – Grief Gathering at SICK! Festival, Manchester

### New sense of community

In turn, the space opened up by the project has created new sensations of community among both participants and artists. David has reflected on one powerful outcome of the project being 'a big invisible community of people who the project has invited to come together', noting how even though project participants may be spread across a city or the country as a whole, the project is nonetheless connecting them. This sense of connection comes about, for instance, through the growing collection of postcards affixed to the shop's walls, but also through the lived experience of the Co-Artistic Directors and their ability to share their broadening experiences with more and more participants:

***'There's an accumulative development that I really like – of conversations and our experiences... For example, in a Grief Gathering, it feels really good to be able to say to people: 'someone in Middlesbrough said exactly that,' or 'we've heard that so many times from other people'. And that's not just having a useful thing in my pocket to keep the conversation going, it's actually about building relationships and building solidarity between people who are not in the room together. I want to drop something useful into those conversations that might give people hope or something positive in the middle of something that had seemed wholly negative... to offer some relief.'***

Conversation with David

This sense of community has often been commented on by participants too. It is strongly apparent in Grief Gatherings, where participants frequently mention the relief of finding that 'others feel the same', while feedback cards have noted similar sensations of reassurance and solidarity in sharing their experiences with others:

***'It makes me feel human... sense of togetherness'***

Participant feedback card, Middlesbrough

## ***'Lovely idea to feel not alone'***

Participant feedback card, Middlesbrough

## ***'Brings people together in a unique way.'***

Participant feedback card, Preston

## ***'It welcomes / invites conversations and human interaction. And challenges the anonymity of urban living.'***

Participant feedback card, The Whitworth, Manchester

### **An expanding model of participation**

One unexpected outcome of the project was how intensely deeply some participants engaged with the project, beyond just visiting the shop once or twice, or attending a single Grief Gathering.

The Co-Artistic Directors were struck by the amount of time that many participants chose to spend in the shop, sometimes passing several hours there or returning again and again to spend time in the space across the duration of the residency:

## ***'What you've created is an incredible space here where I feel I can just come when I need to be here. And I might just need a moment here and I know that that's OK and that's all I need.'***

Participant verbal feedback, Preston

Furthermore, each shop site received a number of repeat visitors, including people who had been to a Grief Gathering and then came back to browse the shop again and talk more. A number of participants also subsequently travelled to different cities to visit the next temporary shop established there. Participants also increasingly wished to hold an active stake in the project. The spontaneous creation of the postcard wall in 2018 in Preston, saw participants reimagine their potential to contribute actively and creatively to the physical space, and the artists also reported that a number of individuals who visited the shop repeatedly 'asked if we have any resource which they can keep and use because they "want to keep the conversation going here"'. A number of participants also attended more than one Grief Gathering and it was striking that these repeat attendees would often then begin to take on a more custodial role in the discussion:

## ***'What was interesting was that there were several people who'd been to conversations before. It was great that they wanted to come back and that they felt it was that valuable. They also kind of shifted into being able to say 'well I found this...' They shifted into a different role – I really noticed that. They were seeking to actually be helpful in that space rather than only using it for them – which I don't mean in a bad way– more that they were holding the group, in the way that David and I do.'***

Conversation with Sam

Online interaction has come to form a crucial component of This Grief Thing's model of participation. The project's social media presence has elicited many expressive and personal reflections on grief from participants (both those who have physically visited the shop or a Grief Gathering and those who have not), with individuals also sharing the project with friends and family online.



Photograph by Richard Tymon



***'[This Grief Thing] happened in the shop, it happened on the street with billboards and posters, it happened at Grief Gatherings and it happened online – and is happening still online. The conversation occurred in all those places.'***

Conversation with Amelia

### **Exploring and expanding ideas of what constitutes 'Art'**

Sam and David have discussed how This Grief Thing is in some ways an artwork 'in disguise', but a number of participants were keen to highlight how the project felt to them explicitly like art:

***'I was interested in thinking about [the Grief Gathering] as a piece of art – as it didn't fit with many expectations of a 'show' but the fact that I sat in the pub after with my friends and discussed it for a number of hours – made it be just that. This is something you tend to do after a really moving performance or challenging film.'***

Participant feedback email, Grief Gathering, SICK! Festival, Manchester

***'This is a wonderful project – a great example of community engagement through art.'***

Participant feedback card, Preston

***'I look at art as an emotion – how people express it & different people's way of dealing with it.'***

Participant feedback card, The Whitworth, Manchester

Photograph by Richard Tymon

## **7.2 Outcomes for Project Partners**

The project has explored a range of partnership models, including working with a local creative charity, local authority, local cultural institution and a city-wide festival. Each partner was later interviewed to gain feedback about their experience of working with This Grief Thing, and to explore the impact on the organisation of working with Fevered Sleep. These interviews indicate that the company's flexible, open and innovative approach to partnership work proved successful (Aim 4). Feedback also highlighted how the project was particularly valued by project partners for meeting a substantial need in communities to make grief more visible and approachable in conversation (Aims 1 and 2); for creating a project that felt highly accessible and inclusive (Aim 3); and for placing participation at the project's heart (Aim 5).

### **The need for this kind of project**

Feedback from partner organisations stated how This Grief Thing clearly demonstrated the intense demand in many communities for such an intervention that made grief at once more visible and approachable:

***'I think it is very clear from all the conversations I've had – ranging across time from the beginning of the project, through to delivery and after it ended – that it's very much needed. People don't have a public space where they can talk about grief and death.'***

Project partner

***'There is completely a need for this project. There is an overall loss that hangs in the air here. It's specific to post-industrial towns, ex-mining towns, where there has been a huge unresolved social issue that has been carried down generationally throughout local society. There's a lot that people here want to talk about, to work through, and resolve, but they don't have opportunities to do that. Of course, there are also people who don't feel like they want to talk and open up but who we believe would really benefit from talking. A project like This Grief Thing, which revolved in lots of ways around giving people a place to talk, about opening up conversations, tried to engage with both of those groups.'***

Project partner

#### **Emphasising the value of an innovative, artistic approach**

A number of the organisations interviewed also mentioned how This Grief Thing had shown them the value of using imaginative, artistic approaches to explore and unpick such a difficult issue for participants. One individual in a partner organisation spoke of how the project had given them 'new tools to talk more openly about grief' while others emphasised the value of creating arts-led, non-medicalised spaces for individuals to work through difficult emotions and experiences:

***'We've actually now been working with artists around end of life care and death.'***

Project partner



Photograph by Richard Tymon

***'Encounters that would deal with people who are sponges for grief, like palliative care staff, doing some kind of work and Grief Gathering work with them would be really useful, I think – the arts can offer a different avenue in.'***

Project partner

***'Our culture team has just been given the opportunity to have another shop space and one of the great conversations around that coming from the project is that we want to have a maker space as part of the shop facility, and offer a creative advice bureau there. It's about shops as a 'front' but doing more than selling. We want a village hall concept in the town centre, where people can come and talk to someone if they are having a rough day. There will be picnic benches outside for people to talk to each other.'***

Project partner

***'Our space is now being used in a different way – we have pop ups happening in it all the time – the project sparked a different way for us to use the space.'***

Project partner

***'We work with a lot of people with dementia and they will often talk about people who have passed away, and so the project was really relevant to our work here and has made us feel things and think about how we can talk to those people openly about their grief.'***

Project partner

Discussion with the Co-Creative Director of SICK! festival also highlighted how Fevered Sleep's bold creative approach – where the artistic form of the company's projects is led entirely by the subject matter – had reframed his thinking about commissioning and programming:

***'These sorts of approaches lodge inside you – seeing this project has helped me formulate this idea of 'subject as practice'... where the artist starts with the subject and everything comes from that. It has an integrity when the form is driven entirely by the subject. Fevered Sleep and this project have been influential in how I've ended up framing this idea when I talk about it...It's been formative in my thinking.'***

Project partner

### **Increased visibility**

Partner organisations also spoke of how This Grief Thing had substantially increased the profile of their arts-in-health work:

***'The project also helped to raise the visibility of the arts and health programme here as a whole – people were asking us why the shop was here and we were able to draw attention to the arts and health strand of our engagement work here.'***

Project partner

Another organisation also noted how This Grief Thing had connected them to wider audiences who may not normally engage with their programme of work:

***'The public presence of this project is really important. It's not just in the arts world. We're keen to connect the festival more deeply with the city and connect with a wider audience not just the usual theatre crowd, so that's been great.'***

Project partner

### **New conversations**

A number of partner organisations mentioned how the project had encouraged them to deepen existing channels or open new channels of communication with others – be it between staff and departments within their own organisation or with other local agencies etc. – having witnessed the value of This Grief Thing.

***'In the interim period from when it happened up to now, I've been involved a lot more with chatting to our Health team about how we in Culture and Arts can help them.'***

Project partner

***'It's prompted us to have conversations, because we need to start making some headway on certain local social health issues, like suicide prevention, and that's only going to occur with more spaces where people can talk. So this project is a constant in my mind and the idea of how we can keep it going is a constant.'***

Project partner

### **New models of participation**

Project partners welcomed how deeply participatory the project felt and noted the value of this approach in engaging individuals of all backgrounds:

***'I really do feel that this had participation at its very heart – the project absolutely envisages and invites a wide range of people to enter into a space that is really neutral, so everyone feels comfortable there. Everyone is welcome.'***

Project partner

### **7.3 Outcomes for the company**

The process of creating and delivering This Grief Thing has marked an important stage of development for Fevered Sleep, particularly in terms of the company's vision as to what participation means (Aim 5) and what constitutes a 'successful artwork' for Fevered Sleep.

Over the last two years, Fevered Sleep has been continually exploring the role of participation. In a document entitled 'Some notes on 'what participation does'', the company discusses how radically re-centralising participation in their work has in turn led them to reconfigure what constitutes an artwork:

***'[Participation] calls into question the separation of artwork and context, or artwork and audience. It recognises that artworks are not passively encountered by people, but they are completed by people... [Participation] connects and activates artists, co-creators, and audiences in different ways, and it blurs the lines that have historically separated these different groups.'***

'Some notes on 'what participation does'',  
David Harradine, Fevered Sleep

Sam and David have stated throughout this project that This Grief Thing does not exist without its participants; participation is not an optional extra but the core of the project. This is not an easy stance, however, and Sam and David have noted how This Grief Thing has, they sense, met with some uncertainty in places as to how far it constitutes a piece of art:

***'I think this project in particular has done something to what the art we make might look like. We're artists and this project is in keeping with all of that, but it's also a collection of clothing in a shop on a high street in Manchester [to which] people can come and buy stuff and then we have a conversation... so therefore, shops and clothing and conversation are also art in a certain context. And I feel really comfortable with that. People have maybe wondered: is conversation and clothing in a shop actually art? It is to me. But also not... It's an artwork disguised as a shop and a shop disguised as an artwork.'***

Conversation with David

***'Everything is born out of conversation between me and David. What excites us, what angers us... To take it a step further and make the whole thing about conversations seems really natural now, but in the past we were geared towards making shows and presenting a final product. As we moved away from feeling that was important and realised that these connections could be made by actually connecting human beings in the moment, I think it all just came together at once.'***

Conversation with Sam

Furthermore, This Grief Thing seems to have crystallised the sense that for the company's work to feel worth executing, it needs to be 'useful' in very direct ways. And while this vision might spark other challenges (in terms of how Fevered Sleep's work is received by the conventional arts world) the company feels it is timely and ethical to continue exploring in this way:

***'As an artist, I am much happier now that we're doing this. I used to have a bit of: 'uhhh, I don't know what the value is of what I do'. And now I can see and hear the value of what I do.'***

Conversation with Sam

***'This project feels like exactly where we should be in terms of the growth and success of the company. And sometimes that means we're in a cold shop waiting for one person to come in and talk to us. But that's what success looks like and that's what value feels like to us. And that's very different to what those markers elsewhere look like. And that's challenging – how you're judged against your peers... But I think it's become really clear to us that this company doesn't exist so that it can exist... it exists because the world is fucked and there are a lot of things we need to work out, and if we can make some interventions to help some people work out some stuff in relation to those things... that's what it's for... in a really direct, person-to-person human level.'***

Conversation with David

## 8. Challenges & Learning

Fevered Sleep is not averse to risk and thrives on working with large, complex themes. Thus, while engaging with such a huge topic as grief has at times been daunting, the company has always remained open to the challenge. The iterative and reflective approach at the core of all Fevered Sleep's work means the company remains committed to continually adapting the project to cope with any such difficulties as they arise.

### 8.1 Emotional labour

The emotional labour demanded of the Co-Artistic Directors and also of the Shop Assistant can be huge and places a significant strain on each of these individuals working in the shop day-to-day. Effective and appropriate support is needed so that the artists can talk through their encounters in the shop and at the Grief Gatherings and then receive additional emotional support. It also became clear that careful management of the shop's schedule is critical, allowing the artists to take sufficient breaks across a day alongside full days off across each residency.

It is also interesting that the strain of this emotional labour has sometimes proved especially arduous when placed alongside the various administrative/logistical procedures required to keep the shop running. This was a particularly challenging situation for Emma Lewis-Jones, the Shop Assistant, who spoke of often feeling torn between the need to carry out necessary practical tasks like restocking shelves, while at the same time being drawn into intimate and emotional conversations with participants. As Emma expressed it: 'it's a strange balancing act'. This was particularly strongly felt through the advertised phone line for reserving a place at a Grief Gathering. While intended as a purely functional phone number for booking a space, callers would sometimes wish to engage in a longer conversation about grief with Emma, placing a particularly conflicting emotional strain on her.



Photograph by Fevered Sleep  
2018

Sam, David and Emma have each noted how they have developed various mechanisms for contending with the emotional toil of the work, however:

***'We've grown much better at protecting ourselves. At the start we opened up too much and... I hesitate to say 'traumatised', but after the first three [residencies] I felt really weepy for a long time. I think we are now better at having a bit of a shield.'***

Conversation with David

## 8.2 Timeframe

In this vein, establishing a timeframe for the project at each site that feels both meaningful yet also sustainable for the company has proved challenging. It is striking how the project has needed time to establish itself before footfall increases and Grief Gatherings fill to capacity. However, once established, the project can sometimes then grow so popular that large numbers of people have been unable to obtain a place at a Grief Gathering which has felt particularly painful and frustrating for the company:

***'The temporariness of it feels difficult... The momentum just starts to build and then we go. There are 100 people on the waiting list for the Grief Gatherings here [in Manchester]... and we can't talk to any of these people and that's really difficult – to have made the thing really visible and offered this invitation and for people to accept that invitation and then for us to say we're throwing that invitation away.'***

Conversation with David

Establishing a schedule in future locations that feels sustainable for the artists, in terms of their emotional well-being, while also allowing time and space for this growth to happen and then be met, thus remains.

## 8.3 Site location and logistics

Having partnered with a range of different organisations – a local creative charity, a local authority, a local cultural institution and an arts and health festival – the company is now clear that the most important elements of a successful partnership are capacity and reach (connections to and engagement with a range of local organisations) with which Fevered Sleep can share news of the project and find partners and participants for Grief Gatherings. As such, forging partnerships with multiple organisations at each location seems wise, while also ensuring these multiple partnerships include arts organisations as well as local health organisations, charities and community groups in order to work across communities.

Various challenges arose in the course of these collaborations, particularly around the logistics of selecting and liaising over the site for the shop. Ensuring the right location for the shop was critical and it is now clear that the ideal site for the shop is a shopping centre location, which feels like something of a destination ('people slowed down when they arrived in the shopping centre'). People in Middlesbrough were 'moving faster; with more of a sense of people passing on their way somewhere, while in the gallery setting there was a sense that the shop didn't reach as many visitors who wouldn't already ordinarily be comfortable with visiting a gallery or museum and so proved less inclusive.' In addition, there were often logistical difficulties around gaining the use of sites, with the cancellation of the expected site in Nottingham adding a great deal of stress to the organisation of the project and resulting in a less-ideal site with considerably lower footfall.

However, the goodwill, determination and particularly the flexibility of Fevered Sleep to make these partnerships work was celebrated, as one organisation warmly expressed:

***'We were up against logistical problem after problem after problem and without our strong relationship the partnership would have fallen apart, but Fevered Sleep was open to change.'***

Project partner

#### **8.4 Articulating the project to wider networks**

Partner organisations spoke with great warmth and positivity about This Grief Thing and about their experiences of collaborating with Fevered Sleep. However, a significant challenge voiced by a number of the partner organisations was how difficult This Grief Thing felt to articulate to others before it had been directly experienced. This hindered progress within partner organisations (e.g. gaining support from other staff/departments etc.) and also restricted organisations' ability to advocate for the project to external networks, and crucially, to potential participants:

***'In some ways, before you see it, the project is quite a conceptual thing, so it's quite difficult to explain somebody else's ideas when you've not had a chance to experience it yourself. It would have been useful for Fevered Sleep to suggest ways to approach our partners – they have experience in talking about grief and I don't.'***

Project partner

***'The shop model confused some people – how and why it was in that form. I wanted to be more easily able to explain that to them.'***

Project partner

***'I was worried about impacting the trust I'd built up with some of our network and contacts, by asking them to do something that I wasn't confident in explaining.'***

Project partner

***'Hampering the partnership work was the lack of awareness between the culture department and public bodies which would have given more promotion. But in lots of ways it was a hard project to explain so even if I had made those connections earlier, people need to see the project, that it's been done once, experience the story of it and the feedback and then want to bring it back.'***

Project partner

***'In terms of partnership working, I personally would liked to have met the team in person before the residency – a face to face meeting would have been really helpful. If I had known what a Grief Gathering would have been like that would have helped. I felt a lot of pressure to organise Grief Gatherings and it was quite a hard sell to our partners, mostly because I hadn't personally experienced it so it was not as easy to articulate what it was.'***

Project partner

One potential solution to this was the idea of Fevered Sleep creating a film or some other physical resources which help explain the 'story' of the project and demonstrate its impact. This idea was raised by the company and has met with an enthusiastic response from partner organisations:

***'To be able to show a film and show the impact straightaway – people would get on board straightaway, I think.'***

Project partner

***'The products were so beautiful and the space looked amazing so if we had had examples – if some physical kit or a film had been sent up before I could have taken samples to a staff meeting.'***

Project partner

***'We just held a big meeting about how culture and artists could support the agenda of public health in terms of grief, loss and male suicide. Social prescribing. I wanted to show evidence of how culture has helped to open up conversations that you are struggling to open up yourself and so a video would have been amazing to share.'***

Project partner

# 9.

## Legacy

### Participants

A number of participants have spoken about This Grief Thing as having a profound and transformative impact on their personal experience of grief in ways that will resonate for years to come. Furthermore, many new relationships and miniature networks have also formed among project participants: as Sam notes, almost every Grief Gathering finishes with a number of attendees 'swapping numbers and planning to go for a coffee'. Other individuals even took on something of an activist role, with Sam and David reporting that a number of participants asked if we have any resources which they can keep and use because they 'want to keep the conversation going here.'

The online component of This Grief Thing has enriched this conversation further. Social media posts have invited participants to reflect on grief in a shared online space. Through responses to these posts, participants have communicated both with strangers and also with friends and family through tagged comments and shared posts, all of which has created and renewed connections between individuals.



However, as described below, while the project's legacy – or, as David phrases it, the project's 'ripples' – feels rich and active, the intimate person-to-person interaction at the project's heart makes the idea of 'legacy' particularly intangible, complex and special. The idea of the billboards and the shop window is simply to invite passing individuals to reflect on grief in ways that it are impossible to quantify, while:

***'If someone's wearing something from the shop in the street that others see... If we demonstrated that it is possible to be heard and that participants might now demand to be heard or invite that differently elsewhere... The ripples of the project feel really different from the ripples from other sorts of projects... All of this project is a beginning. We just begin something and then we have no idea what happens next...With other projects – like a show – it begins and then ends and of course people have reactions or feelings, but our work is complete and it has an arc. But it feels in this project, really deliberately, we've done that first part of the arc and then we've stopped and that's unprecedented.... so it's really amazing when people we've already met come back to see us – and suddenly we can see a little bit more of the arc.'***

Conversation with David

### **Partner Organisations**

In terms of partner organisations, as highlighted in the project's outcomes (see 6.2) interviews with staff emphasised the rich variety of ways that the project would live on through their future work. This includes two of the partner organisations now collaborating with artists in delivering social and palliative care, as well as the formation of many new connections and conversations within organisations (e.g. one partner spoke of how 'I've been involved a lot more with chatting to our health team about how we in culture and arts can help'). For other organisations, the project's legacy is felt through shifting perceptions and approaches. For instance, the Co-Creative Director of SICK! Festival has stated how Fevered Sleep's approach in This Grief Thing 'has helped me formulate this idea of 'subject as practice'' which has in turn been 'influential' in future approaches to the festival's programming. For some partner organisations, the legacy is even more concrete, however. Certain organisations have said that their contact with This Grief Thing has sparked the urge to keep things going, be it through further work with Fevered Sleep or through the organisation creating new such opportunities itself:

***'The conversation that keeps coming back is the need here for what you ... have done and how to get you ... back or how we can create a space that maybe once a month is a shop where people can go and talk about loss.'***

Project partner

## **The Company**

In terms of legacy within Fevered Sleep as a company, Sam and David have spoken about how This Grief Thing has sparked a profound sense of change, in terms of where the company might head next. Most crucial of all, the project has prompted the company to value even more the power of immediate engagement with participants:

***Our work has changed enormously over the years. From the very early days of making shows which definitely involved people in the initial development of a piece, to extending that process to involve more and more collaborators and participants across the whole of the project; going into schools, nurseries, meeting with all sorts of people who fed into the work. In Men and Girls Dance for example, we wanted to create other ways to reach and meet people besides seeing the show – we made a newspaper, and The Talking Place etc, and it just feels more honest, and generous, I suppose. Less precious – that we weren't guarding this "great art project" and I think that you can see with This Grief Thing – well, not just see it – people tell you to your face, we get very direct feedback: "This is really wonderful. I'm so glad you're here. Thank you for doing this." This happens so many times a day – which you don't really get if you're not inviting participants to actually converse with you. And there's also the fact that people really appreciate and are surprised asking us serving at the till whose idea this is when we say: "It's ours. We are the artists". I think they feel it shows our real care and desire to do this in a deep way – that we haven't removed ourselves.'***

Conversation with Sam



Photograph by Fevered Sleep  
2018

# 10. Appendices

## Appendix 1: Aims and Objectives (refreshed November 2019)

### **Vision for the Project**

To encourage people to accept grief as a normal, healthy response to death which doesn't need to be silenced, hidden or ignored.

### **Mission for the Project**

To develop a programme of work through which grief can be acknowledged, accepted and shared.

### **Aims for the Project:**

#### **1. To develop multiple creative strategies that enable, encourage and facilitate conversations about grief.**

To effectively meet this aim, the project will:

- 1.1 Create public space that normalises grief and in which people can discuss grief.
- 1.2 Encourage participation and enable conversation via multiple entry points.
- 1.3 Create an environment in which grief has a sense of value and status.
- 1.4 Offer a collection of clothing, accessories and cards on the theme of grief, which in turn will stimulate conversation.

#### **2. To make grief more visible in public spaces, both physical and digital.**

To effectively meet this aim, the project will:

- 2.1 Increase the visibility of grief in public locations, by means of a shop in a prominent location in an area with high footfall, and posters and billboards.
- 2.2 Drive online traffic and create social media traction via Fevered Sleep's website, [www.feveredsleep.co.uk](http://www.feveredsleep.co.uk), Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts.
- 2.3 Engage targeted groups, encouraging word of mouth recommendations and online conversations.

#### **3. To create an accessible and inclusive cultural offer.**

To effectively meet this aim, the project will:

- 3.1 Include a diverse range of people in its marketing materials and campaign.
- 3.2 Encourage a culturally and socially diverse range of participants via audience development and marketing initiatives and activities by Fevered Sleep and our partner organisations.
- 3.3 Create an accessible, welcoming space which encourages people from a variety of backgrounds to cross the threshold of the shops.

3.4 Create a range of offers and multiple points of entry to the project – shop walk-ins, Grief Gatherings, community conversations, online and in-shop collection of clothing and accessories.

#### **4. To develop new partnership models.**

To effectively meet this aim, the project will:

- 4.1 Continue to expand on existing and forge new relationships and partnerships with arts & cultural venues and the health, care and community sectors eg. NHS and library services, community groups, schools, universities and the commercial sector (shopping centres, retail property providers).
- 4.2 Develop existing and explore new research relationships with members of the academic sector and their networks.
- 4.3 Build on previous iterations of the project, to be flexible and responsive, informed by the learning from each of the previous residencies.

#### **5. To deliver a project which has participation at its core.**

To effectively meet this aim, the project will:

- 5.1 Ensure that the form, content, theme and nature of the delivery will encourage participants to shape the development of the project.
- 5.2 Offer multiple and responsive methods of facilitation, including structured and informal conversations, the provision of reading materials, interaction with the creative team and other members of the public and community.
- 5.3 Ensure that Fevered Sleep's learning and practice around grief is informed and regularly adapted in response to feedback from partners and participants.
- 5.4 Be based on an Action Learning model of development, offering multiple methods of engagement and is responsive to participant feedback.

#### **6. To recognise the importance of legacy and after-care for a project of this nature, for participants and partners.**

To effectively meet this aim, the project will:

- 6.1 Ensure that the wellbeing and welfare of the participants, artists and production team is at the forefront of the monitoring protocols.
- 6.2 Signpost participants to professional services if appropriate.
- 6.3 Abide by a clear Distress Protocol, with Risk Assessment, for managing behaviour and emotions arising from the subject matter.
- 6.4 Establish continuing links with participants, if desired, offering them methods of maintaining contact with the project and team, with appropriate boundaries.

## Outputs

We will continue to develop creative strategies through which grief can be acknowledged, accepted and shared. The project will have the following outputs:

- Engagement with over 2000 people, many with protected characteristics, and non-arts attenders through presenting the project outside 'traditional' arts spaces.
- People will take part in Grief Gatherings during shop residencies and at one-off events.
- Ten Grief Gatherings will be delivered by associate artists, specifically targeting audiences that may not ordinarily engage with our work.
- Two micro-commissions will be awarded to artists from a range of artforms and backgrounds to deliver three public art works around the theme of grief.
- People will use the collection items to help them talk about grief and make grief visible in public spaces.
- An intensive and carefully pitched marketing campaign will make grief highly visible in public spaces, on billboards and posters in locations around the two main venues and other locations in London.
- A range of different partners across sectors including arts & cultural, health & care, voluntary & community, will host conversations about grief including the Museum of Homelessness, St Margaret's House and local councils.
- The project will engage with health and academic professionals and research in bereavement services.
- The project will signpost people to professional support services.

## Outcomes

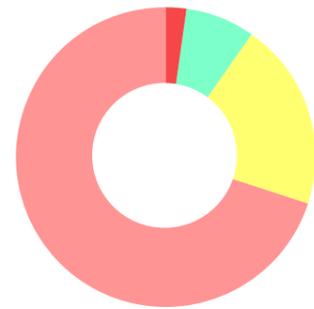
- As a result of the project, people will report feeling more comfortable talking about grief, acknowledging and sharing their own grief and speaking to people about others' grief.
- People will talk about grief on social media, opening up conversations in new platforms and contexts.
- People will recommend the project to others by word of mouth and through social media.
- Communities will be empowered to host their own Grief Gatherings and continue the conversations around bereavement.
- Participants will make local connections, both formal and informal to access support.

### Appendix 2: Monitoring

Monitoring information was gathered via optional feedback cards completed by participants in the shop or at Grief Gatherings and either dropped directly into a box in the shop or sent via a freepost address to the company.

A total of 174 cards were completed and the following monitoring data obtained about these respondents:

- 11.5% respondents defined themselves as BAME
- 6.9% respondents defined themselves as disabled
- 69.5% respondents defined themselves as women
- 20.1% respondents defined themselves as men
- 2.3% respondents defined themselves as non-binary
- 17.8% respondents defined as Gay / Lesbian / Homosexual / Queer / Bisexual / Pansexual
- 32.1% respondents defined themselves as having a religion



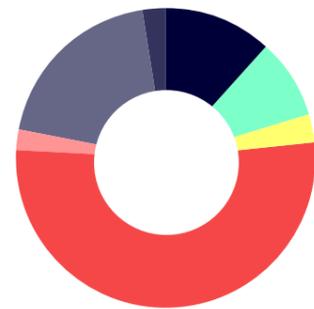
**Gender**

- Non-binary 2.3%
- PNTS 7.5%
- Female 69.5%
- Male 20.1%



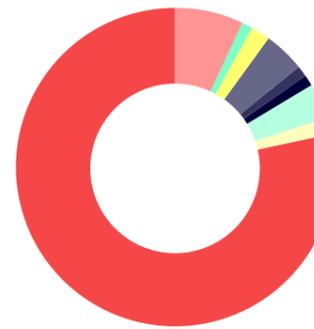
**Disability**

- No 78.7%
- PNTS 14.4%
- Yes 6.9%



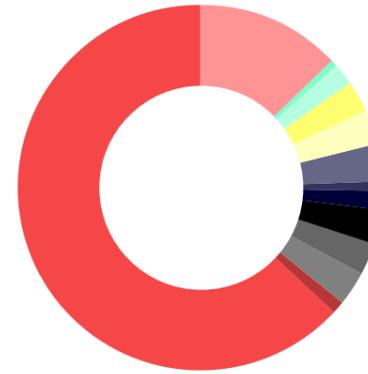
**Sexual orientation**

- Heterosexual 51.7%
- Queer 2.3%
- PNTS 19%
- Pansexual 2.3%
- Other 11.5%
- Bisexual 8.8%
- Gay 2.9%



**Ethnic Origin**

- White British 75.3%
- PNTS 6.9%
- Traveller 1.1%
- South Asian 1.7%
- White other 4.0%
- White Irish 1.1%
- Black African 1.1%
- Black Caribbean 3.4%
- Mixed White and 1.7%



**Religion (174 participants)**

- PNTS 107
- Christian 22
- Catholic 1
- Agnostic 3
- Roman Catholic 5
- Atheist 5
- Other 6
- Anglican 1
- Pagan 3
- Buddhist 5
- Spiritualist 5
- C of E 5
- Humanist 2

### Appendix 3: Press

The project was promoted widely in both the national and local press.

The three most significant placings in the national press were an interview with The Stage (online 400,000 and in print 30,000) and interview with BBC Radio Five Live (channel has 4,965,000 listeners every week), a review in The Guardian, and a feature article ~ (in print and online) with the i newspaper (248,230 in print and online).

Regionally, the project featured on BBC Radio Tees (Radio Interview); BBC Radio Lancashire (Radio Interview); and BBC Nottingham (Radio Interview). There was a TV interview on That's Manchester (which had 878 views online), a TV Interview on Ey Up Notts and an article in the Middlesbrough Gazette.

Online, there was a feature in Nottingham on Left Lion and an interview with David on the e-hospice website. The project featured in Blog Preston and also was listed online in two Manchester platforms (Visit Manchester and The Double Negative) and on Visit Nottinghamshire. Sam and David also took part in an hour-long podcast episode of Inviting Abundance called 'To Grieve'.

#### Themes of grief and death explored by Manchester arts festival



# Fevered

# Sleep



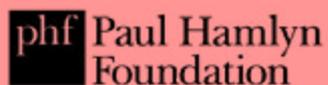
**This Grief Thing**

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[feveredsleep.co.uk](http://feveredsleep.co.uk)



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