

End of Life across Dudley with College Students

1. Background

Dudley has a strategy for End of Life Care which has been developed by partners including Dudley CCG, The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust, Dudley Council and Mary Stevens Hospice. The vision for Dudley is:

All people with palliative and end of life care (EOLC) needs, irrespective of their diagnosis, together with those closest to them, are able to express their needs and wishes; and that as far as clinically appropriate and practically possible, these needs and wishes are met.

In May 2018 we held a focus group with members of the public and other interested people to explore conversations around death and dying and to test out the strategy. The session was well attended and received positive and useful feedback which helped to develop the strategy further.

We were keen to test out the session with younger people to see whether views and/or experiences were different.

2. Focus group

We worked with Year 1 and Year 2 Health and Social Care Students at Dudley College to explore their thoughts around death and dying. 56 students took part over 3 separate sessions. 2 of the sessions were co-facilitated by Dr Lucy Martin, GP and Clinical Lead for End of Life & Cancer.

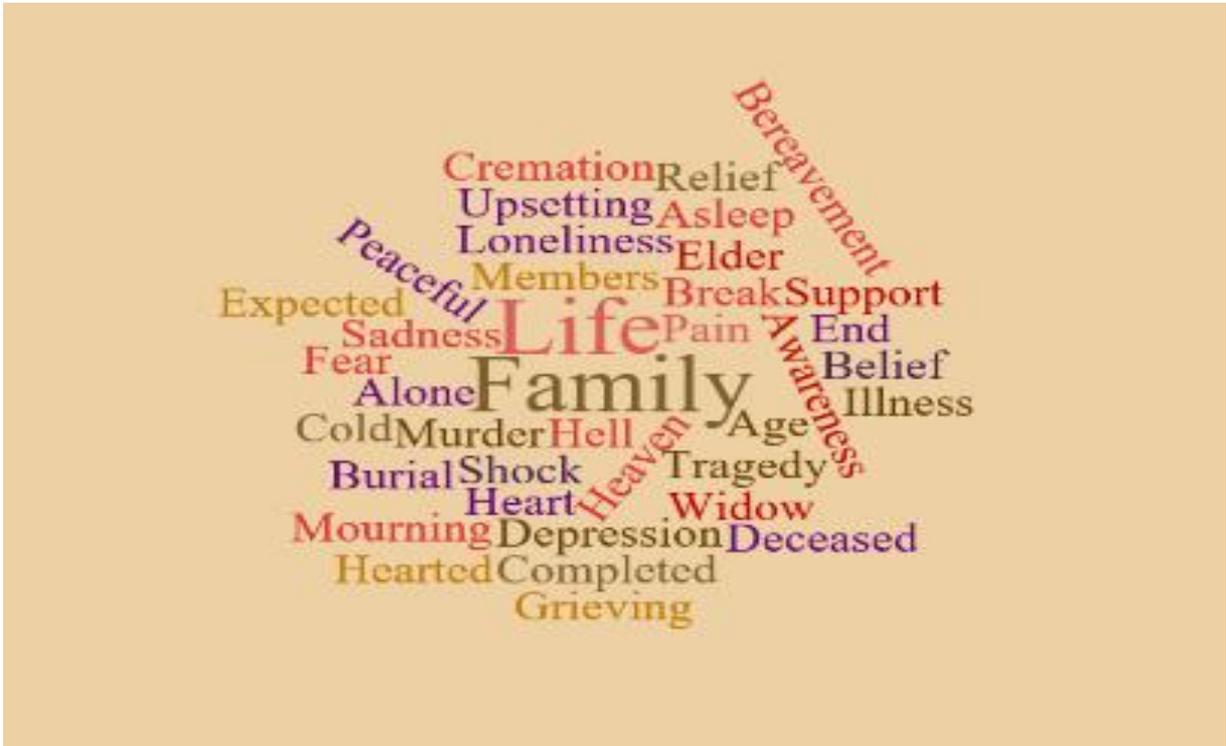


The objectives of the session were:

- To gain an understanding of how EOL works across Dudley and the work/improvements that have taken place so far
- To explore perceptions around death and dying – what words do people use and understand
- To explore perceptions around frequently used terminology
- To develop thoughts around how EOL should be working in Dudley recognising some of the barriers and suggesting solutions and/or innovative ideas

3. Activities

When we first mentioned to students we were there to talk about death and dying, there was an audible gasp. It seemed there was a reticence to engage and plenty of students avoided making eye contact. In an effort to make the subject more approachable we launched straight into the first activity. This involved students writing down any words or phrases that they associated with death or dying, even if they sounded flippant. Interestingly, although there were many similar words to the previous workshop, other words such as murder cropped up.



The next activity involved working in small groups using dice which posed different questions that they had to answer:

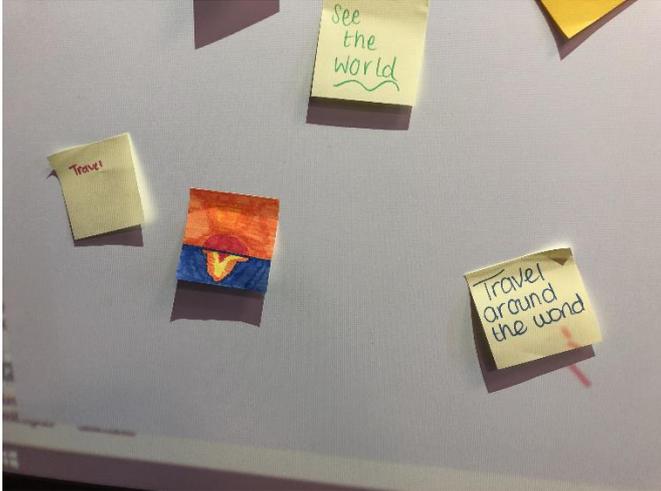
- Something that works really well in Dudley
- Why I am here today
- An idea for improving EOL care in Dudley
- What I can bring to today's session
- Something that would surprise others about Dudley
- A challenge for today



Dr Lucy Martin then spoke with the group about death. Students shared ideas of the kinds of jobs they saw themselves doing including being a midwife and paramedic and nurse. Some had not entertained the thought that they would experience death and have to have conversations as part of their career choice. Some students had experienced the death of a close relative or friend, many had not.

6. Bucket list

We showed a BBC clip to the group –‘Why grief is not something you have to get over’. Following the clip, students were asked to think about what a perfect death might look like. This included writing a bucket list of achievements or goals that people would set themselves.



There were 2 main themes on the bucket list which involved travelling and having a family. There were also other ideas about having a successful career and travelling to space.

7. Conclusion

Despite the initial hesitance, most students soon became involved in the conversation with just a couple not feeling comfortable in taking part. Feedback was positive and students felt that the session had been useful and informative and was something that there should be more of.