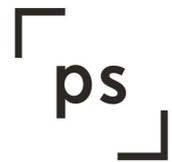# Cruse Bereavement Support: Connecting Communities.

Final evaluation report: June 2025.

ps research

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Introduction.

Introducing the Connecting Communities project (Phase 2).

What was the aim of the Connecting Communities project?

Cruse worked in partnership with Co-op to bring communities together to support one another with grief. Cruse would produce resources so that people can help themselves and others following a bereavement and deliver training to empower people in the community to support others who are grieving.

What was the plan?

- Delivery of in-person and online training to upskill community members in how to support people when they experience the death of someone close

- Focus on 12 community clusters across England, Scotland and Wales (for in-person training)

- Cruse aimed to recruit at least one Community Grief Champion volunteer in each cluster to identify and make connections with local organisations and groups and identify and establish groups of participants to receive training

- Design and delivery of online and offline resources

The Phase 2 project journey in a nutshell.

2024

April-June

Planning and set-up

Initial recruitment, building local connections, recruiting volunteers and planning the training

→

July-Sept

Pilot and develop

Resources developed, training promoted centrally and early sessions delivered

→

Oct-Dec

Pause and pivot

Training and sessions paused due to various challenges, re-focusing the approach for 2025

→

2025

Jan-June

Promote and progress

Significant increase in training activity, local promotion and evaluation activities, with Cruse Scotland fully on board

Overview of evaluation activities.

Measuring impact and capturing learnings

Through numbers

From October 2024 onwards, feedback has been gathered via **three surveys** shared with training attendees:

- **Pre-training:** to understand who is attending, what they are hoping for and what their knowledge/confidence around grief is
- **Post-training:** to gather immediate feedback on the training and understand what their knowledge/confidence levels are now
- **Follow-up** (sent approx. 1-2 months after training): to understand what impact the training is beginning to have, e.g. supporting others

Through stories

Qualitative research conducted during February-May 2025:

- Observation and discussions at **three in-person training sessions** (Manchester, Edinburgh and Cardiff)
- **Training attendees:** follow-up online/telephone interviews with seven training attendees
- **Volunteers:** One online focus group with three volunteers (in July 2024) and one face-to-face interview with a volunteer
- **Co-op Activators:** Three individual interviews (two online, one in-person)
- **Project team:** Online interview with the Co-op Community Partnerships and Impact Manager and feedback gathered from several members of the Cruse Bereavement team (online interviews with Project Managers x3, Marketing Manager and local branch representative, feedback received from Training Manager via email plus an in-person interview with Cruse Bereavement Scotland CEO
- **Trainers:** two interviews with trainers (one online, one in-person)
- **Wider stakeholders:** in-person focus group with students and lecturer from the University of Nottingham

Having confidence in the evaluation data.

In total, 1223 responses were collected across the pre, post and follow-up surveys

Number of responses per survey:

● Online   ● In-Person (England and Wales)   ● In-Person (Scotland)

Survey	Online	In-Person (England and Wales)	In-Person (Scotland)	Total	Margin of error
Pre-training survey	347	97	228	672	3.06% margin of error
Post-training survey	270	72	84	426	3.83% margin of error
Follow up survey	68	11	46	125	8.31% margin of error

? What is the margin of error?

If we report a figure from the survey, we can be 95% confident that the true figure (if all attendees responded) would be + or - the margin of error. The smaller the margin of error, the more reliable it is. A 3% margin of error is typically considered the gold standard in research.

When we highlight differences between survey data in this report, these are statistically significant

This considers the margin of error of each survey and a z-test of each proportion compared at a 95% confidence level

Overcoming challenges in data collection.

There were a range of challenges and considerations when it came to collecting evaluation data:

Inability to 'track' individual respondents through the pre, post and follow-up surveys

For operational and GDPR reasons - we therefore compare the overall sample in each of the three surveys

Impact of attendee expectations on response rates, particularly the follow-up survey

I.e. asking somebody attending a free one-hour online session to complete three surveys

Not possible to collect data and insights directly from people experiencing grief who go on to be supported

As we have no access to these people and no way of understanding the difference in the support they received from people who attended the training compared to if they had not attended training

Adopting new survey process took time

For various reasons, in the early months internal surveys were used based on previous evaluations but did not collect sufficient data to evaluate the impact - evaluation data in this report was collected from October 2024 onwards

Summary.

The project in numbers.

10   **Number of months training was delivered over, from July '24 to May '25**

69   **Number of training sessions delivered: 36 online and 33 in-person**

1,792   **Number of people attending online and in-person training**

9,318   **Estimated number of people supported who are experiencing grief or bereavement**

Nearly double the target of 5,000 people

Training was delivered across the UK and for a range of people.

In-person training was delivered in 11 locations, from Aberdeen to Croydon

- 5 sessions delivered in each of Aberdeen and Glasgow
- 4 sessions in Edinburgh
- 3 sessions in Bristol, Cardiff, Nottingham, Manchester and Sheffield
- 2 sessions in Cambridge
- 1 session in Croydon and Wrexham

Around three in five people booking onto training went on to attend

With no significant difference between online and in-person

Nearly half of training attendees work in the third sector

And workers in the NHS/health services, education and private sector appeared to prefer attending online sessions

People of all ages attended the training

With 45-54 the most common age group

Whilst the majority were female

And the ethnicity split was broadly in-line with the national population

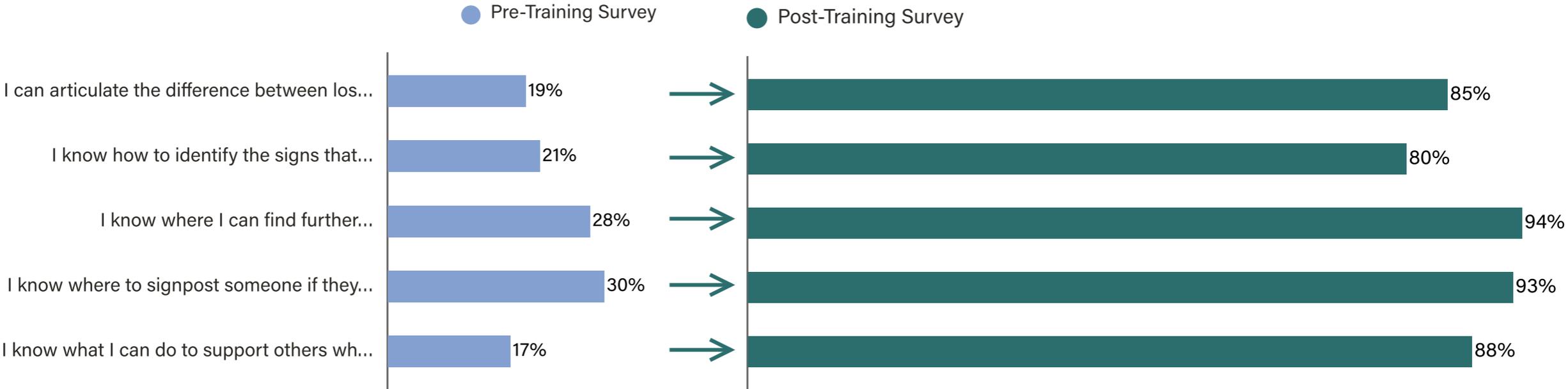# The training is clearly having a positive impact.

What were attendees hoping to get out of the training?

- Learning how to better support others (40% of pre-survey respondents)
- Increasing their understanding of grief and bereavement (33%)
- Discovering tools and techniques (25%)

And the training has delivered - knowledge and confidence around grief was significantly higher after the training

% giving an agreement score of <u>8-10</u> across key knowledge and awareness statements

(where respondents could score between 1 and 10 where 1 is disagree strongly and 10 is agree strongly)

● Pre-Training Survey   ● Post-Training Survey

Statement	Pre-Training Survey	Post-Training Survey
I can articulate the difference between los...	19%	85%
I know how to identify the signs that...	21%	80%
I know where I can find further...	28%	94%
I know where to signpost someone if they...	30%	93%
I know what I can do to support others wh...	17%	88%

And it is already being used to support people.

Four in five attendees had supported people experiencing grief or bereavement within 1-2 months of the training

5.2

Average number of people an attendee had supported within a month or two of the training

97%

Feel better equipped to support people experiencing grief or bereavement because of the training

57% felt a lot better equipped and 40% a little

95%

Would recommend the training to others

And most did not feel the training needed improving

Resources have also been developed for people supporting others

Almost 90,000 leaflets were printed and distributed and a new section on the Cruse website was launched in March 2025

Some attendees were inspired to consider starting a social action project around grief and bereavement or sharing their learning with people in the local community

# What key factors helped to make this project a success?

A partnership built on openness, trust and a willingness to adapt

The Co-op and Cruse Bereavement team have worked in an open and honest way and this has enabled the team to learn from challenges and adapt the project accordingly.

Excellent training

Training attendees rate the training highly, both in terms of the content and the delivery from individual trainers. Trainers created a safe space where attendees felt comfortable discussing experiences and asking questions. Many report having recommended the training to others/attending because of a personal recommendation from another attendee.
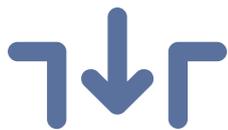
Meeting an existing need

Most training attendees report that they have never had training on how to support others who are experiencing bereavement, despite many being in a caring or support role. Resources were also created after identifying a gap in the current offer.

Leveraging local knowledge and connections

The project has been most successful in areas where there has been engaged local advocates who have been able to use their local knowledge and connections to help improve and promote the training.
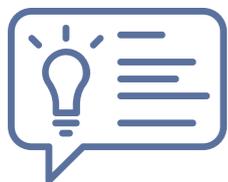
Using insight to develop resources

Resources were developed using insight gathered from people who have experienced bereavement, a new direction for Cruse Bereavement.

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Like any project, there were challenges.

Internal restructures and personnel changes

Co-op restructure impacted on early engagement with the Co-op Member Activators and leveraging their local knowledge and networks, whilst there were three different Cruse project managers over the lifetime of the project.

Lower attendance than expected at in-person sessions

This was likely to be due to a combination of the impact of free training (low commitment), online alternatives (easier to attend) and the sensitive topic. Finding the right approach to promotion was also a challenge to reach the 'right' people.

Promoting the sessions

The team could not rely on Cruse's usual marketing routes (social media/newsletters) as these resulted in overwhelming interest and registrations from organisations which were not the intended audience for the training.
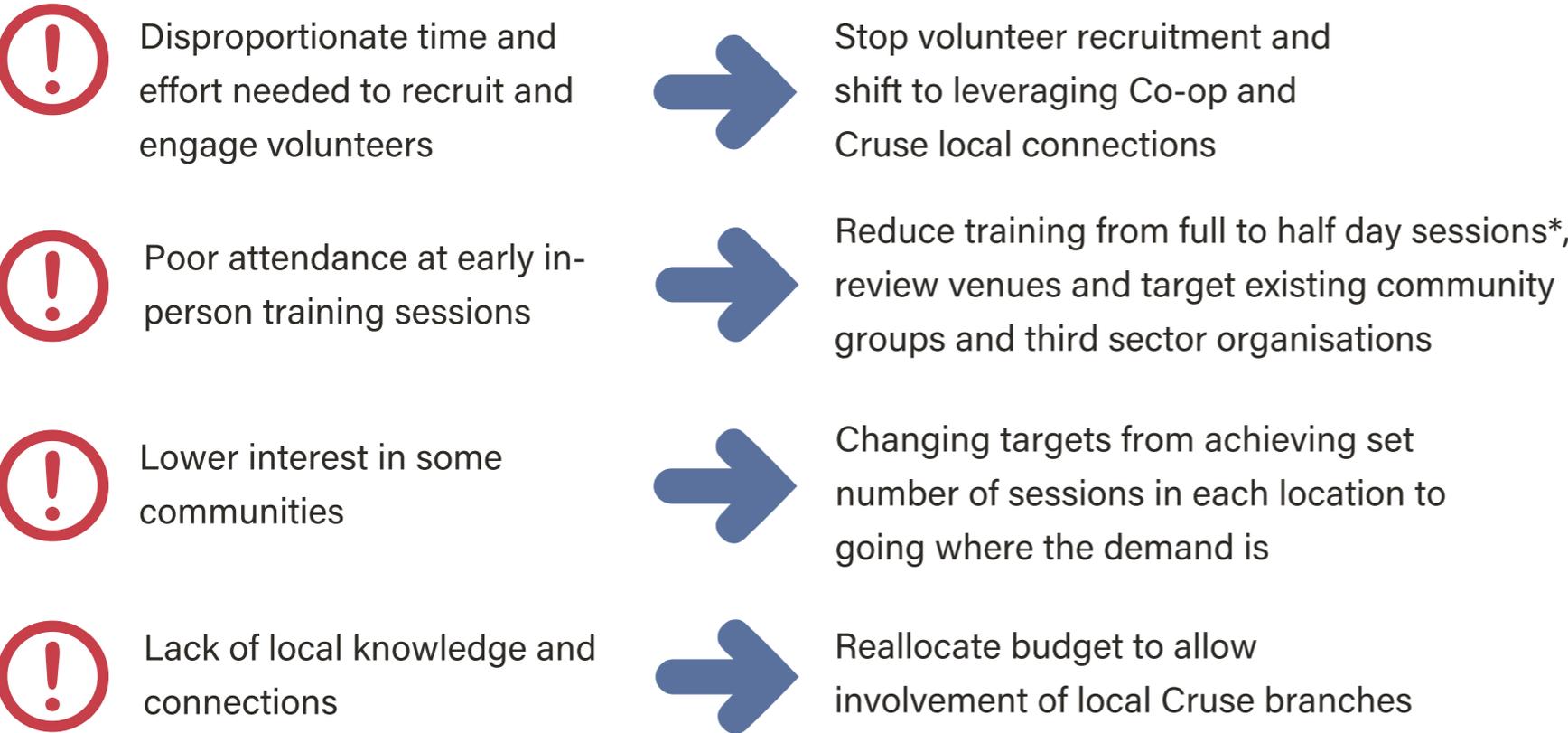
Difficulties engaging volunteers

Volunteers were potentially recruited too early in the process, engagement was difficult and most ultimately disengaged from the project.

Responding to challenges together.

The Co-op philosophy of listening and being flexible allowed the team to identify things that weren't working well and try new strategies in order improve the project

Changing strategies...

Feedback from Co-op Community Partnerships and Impact Manager

(!) Disproportionate time and effort needed to recruit and engage volunteers ➡ Stop volunteer recruitment and shift to leveraging Co-op and Cruse local connections

(!) Poor attendance at early in-person training sessions ➡ Reduce training from full to half day sessions*, review venues and target existing community groups and third sector organisations

(!) Lower interest in some communities ➡ Changing targets from achieving set number of sessions in each location to going where the demand is

(!) Lack of local knowledge and connections ➡ Reallocate budget to allow involvement of local Cruse branches

" We can challenge each other, we have that relationship. There has been lots of conversations, lots of problem-solving, reacting to on-the-ground feedback.

" This type of activity is difficult. With Cruse, we always get the outcome in the end because we have this open relationship. This project was about moving into a new space in terms of how we deliver this, we didn't know what would work and we were trying to learn.

*This did result in losing group activities and a short section on supporting bereaved members of the community (e.g. barriers to support, safeguarding)

# The project had the potential to do even more.

Creating sustainable networks of engaged people

Volunteers wanted to be part of a Cruse volunteer community where they could share ideas and learnings, and this could have helped to create more engagement amongst the volunteers. It may also have been possible to gather consent from training attendees and to set up a network of people in local communities who are interested in supporting people experiencing loss and bereavement.
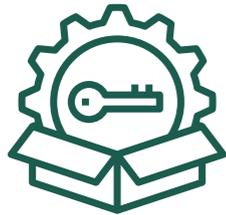
Providing support to attendees interested in setting up support groups in the community

Initially, the project included an emphasis on providing support to people to help them to set up support groups in the community and some people who attended the training were looking to do this. The shift in focus away from providing this support, either within the training or through resources, mean there were some opportunities to help people to take these next steps and set up sustainable support groups in local communities.
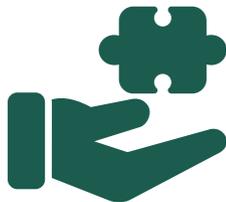
Distributing resources to training attendees

Delays in producing resources mean that people attending the training before March were not given the materials.

There have been many learnings for both Cruse and Co-op.

Not all communities are the same

Communities in some locations have less community support structures or networks, meaning it was difficult to promote the training.

Go where the people are (don't expect them to come to us)

Higher attendance was achieved by changing in-person training venues to those where people are already meeting and increasing the number of sessions in more connected, structured communities.

Offering free training brings its own problems (and especially on sensitive topics)

There were high drop out rates to training, potentially due to a combination of the low commitment (because its free) and sensitive topic. In Scotland, the team increased the registration numbers to allow for this attrition, which seemed to help increase numbers actually attending. Cruse also faced an internal challenge of promoting free training that potentially conflicts with their paid training offer.

The importance of creating a safe space

The trainers created a space where attendees felt psychologically safe, meaning attendees felt safe to speak up with ideas, questions or concerns, and training venues were chosen that were located in central, easy accessible, safe spaces.

Consider what needs to be done centrally (and by paid staff), and when local knowledge needs to be leveraged
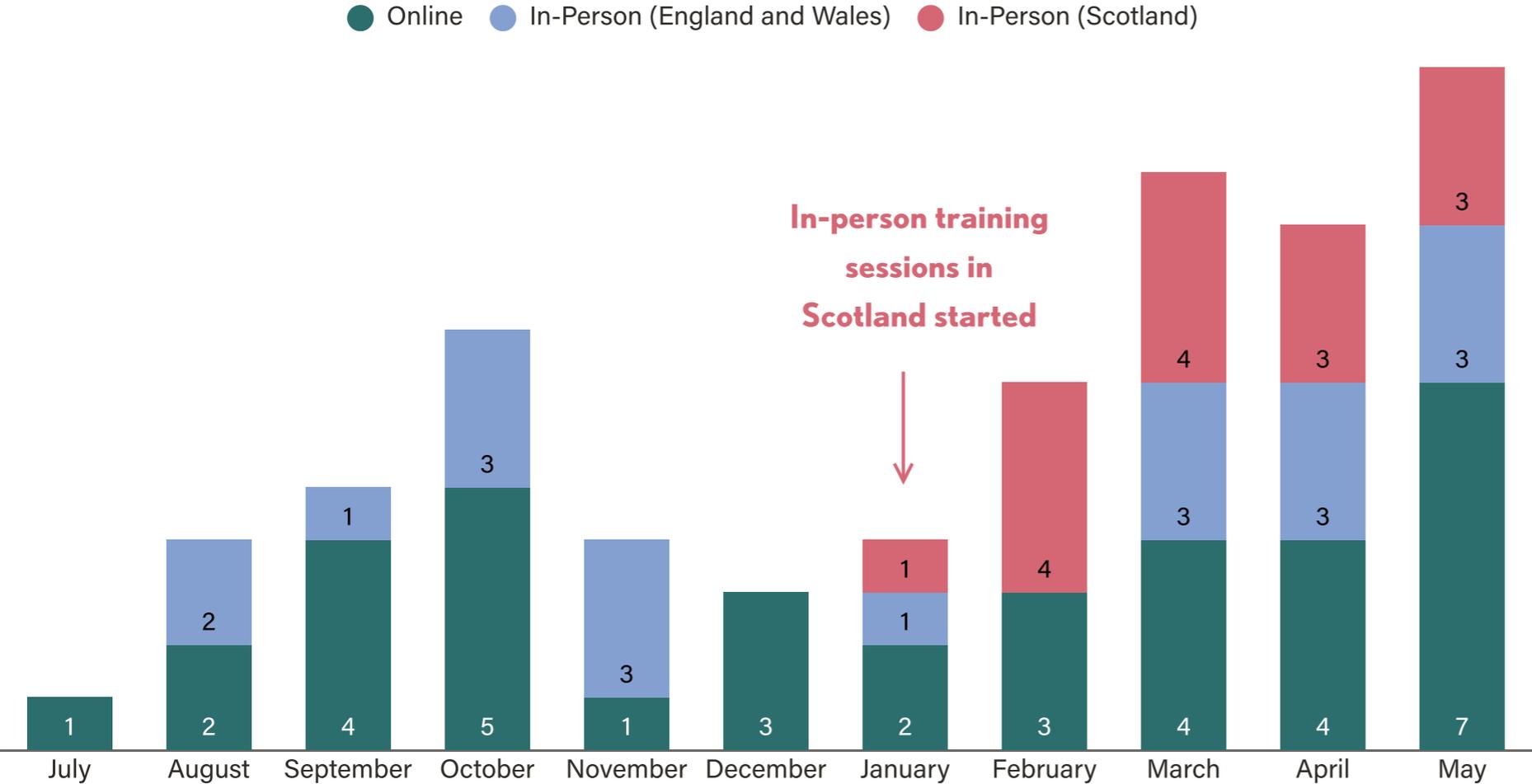
The project was most successful in areas where there was an engaged and well connected local contact, either a Co-op Member Activator, a local Cruse branch or an active volunteer. Future projects should carefully consider what can be achieved centrally, what would be better done by people on the ground in locations, and what volunteers can realistically be asked to do.

Activities.

Cruse delivered 69 training sessions between July 2024 and May 2025.

More than half of these (36) were online sessions. There were 19 in-person training sessions across England and Wales, and 14 in three locations across Scotland.

Number of training sessions delivered (2024-2025):

● Online ● In-Person (England and Wales) ● In-Person (Scotland)

In-person training sessions in Scotland started

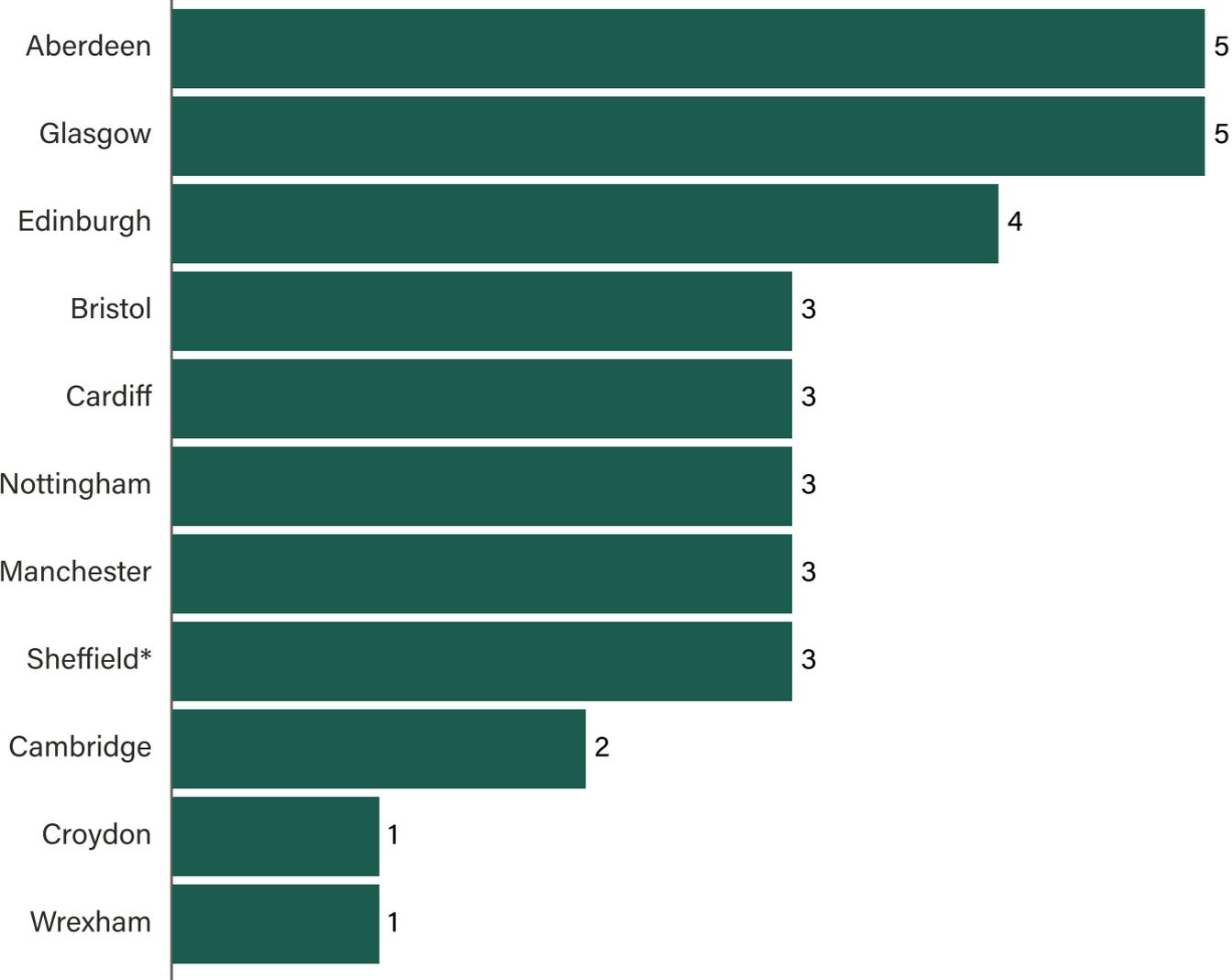| July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May
1	2	4	5	1	3	2	3	4	4	7

Additionally, 11 training sessions were cancelled during the project

9 in-person and 2 online sessions

Some sessions were cancelled due to low numbers registering, others were cancelled during the project review period (Nov/Dec)

In-person training was delivered across England, Scotland and Wales.

Number of training sessions delivered by location:

Location	Sessions
Aberdeen	5
Glasgow	5
Edinburgh	4
Bristol	3
Cardiff	3
Nottingham	3
Manchester	3
Sheffield*	3
Cambridge	2
Croydon	1
Wrexham	1

'Go to where the people are'

The original plan was to conduct a set number of training sessions per location, however as the project developed, the strategy was adapted to providing more sessions where there was more demand.

In some communities, there was less demand, they were less structured - we learnt that we should go where demand is, not just stick to a prescribed structure.
(Co-op Community Partnerships and Impact Manager)

* Two sessions originally planned for Sheffield were held in nearby Barnsley and Holmfirth

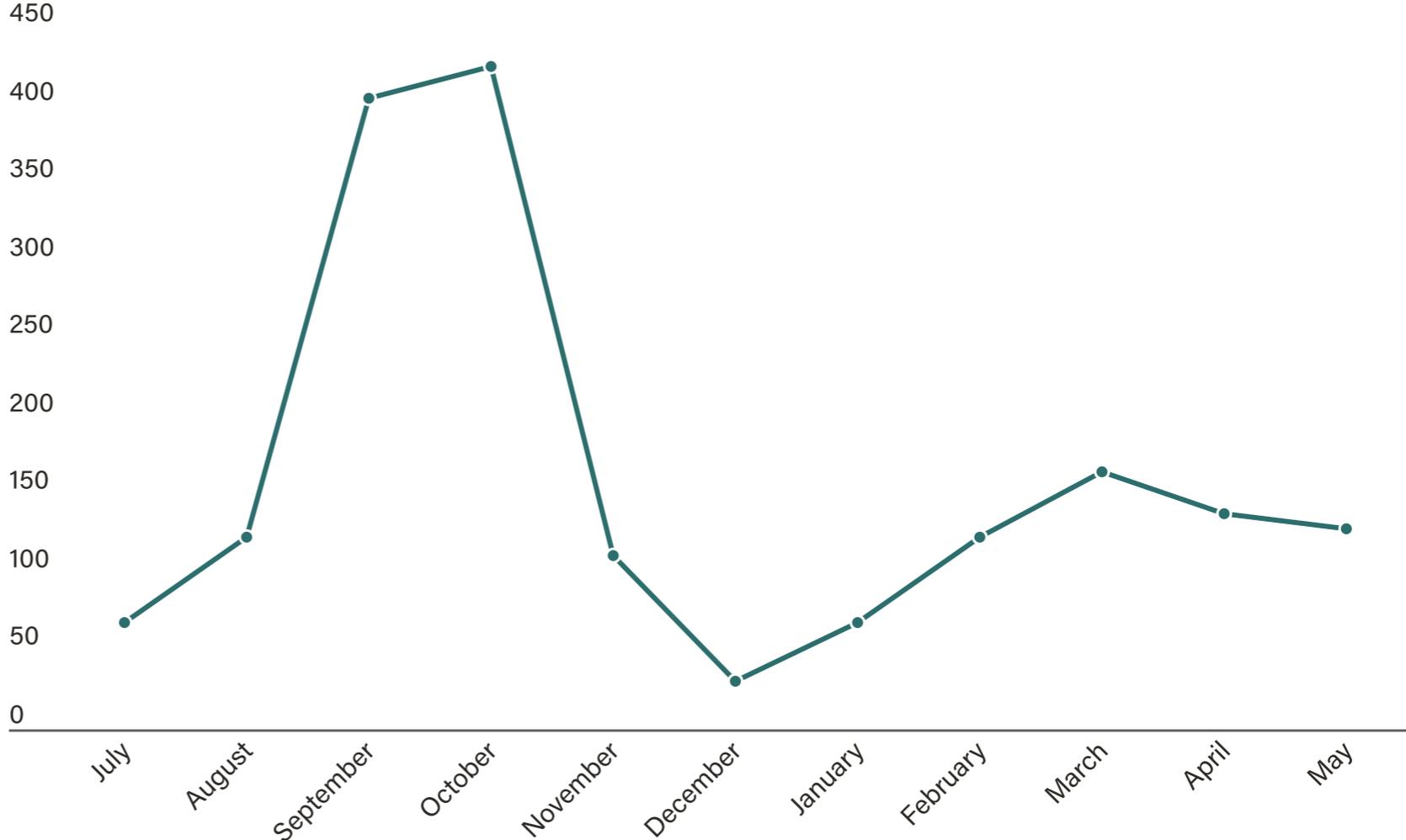# Nearly 1800 people attended training sessions since July 2024.

Of the 1792 attendees, 82% of these were for online training sessions

Number of attendees by session type:

- ● Online
- ● In-person (England and Wales)
- ● In-person (Scotland)

162
160
1470
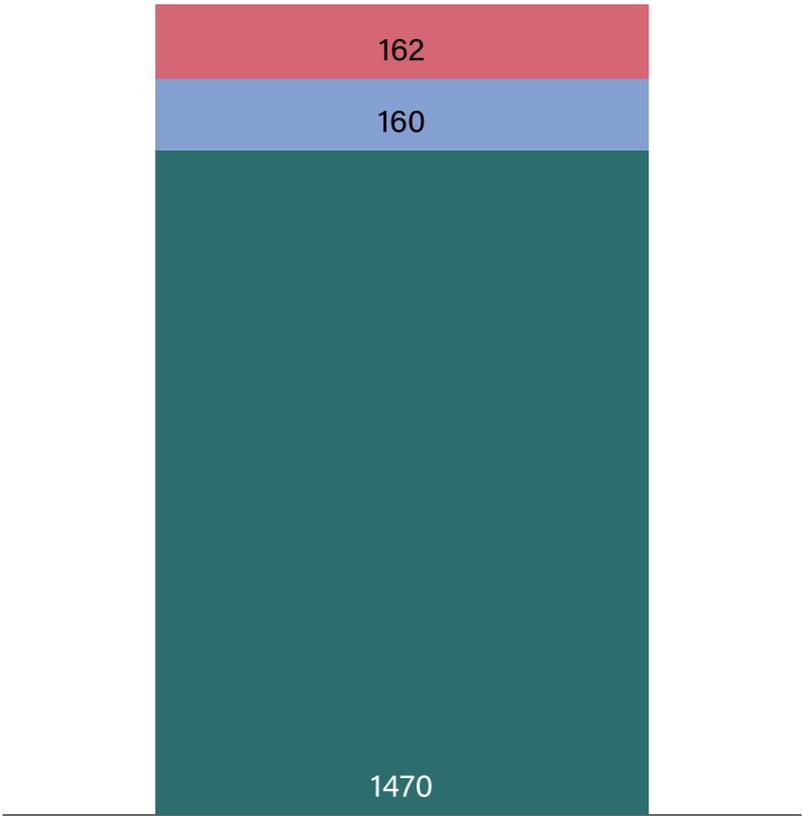
Number of training attendees across online and in-person by month (2024-2025):

The average number of online attendees reduced over time.

The average number of attendees per online session across the project was 41, but this started at an average of 82 in the early months and dropped to 15 in the final months.

**Average number of online training attendees (2024-2025):**
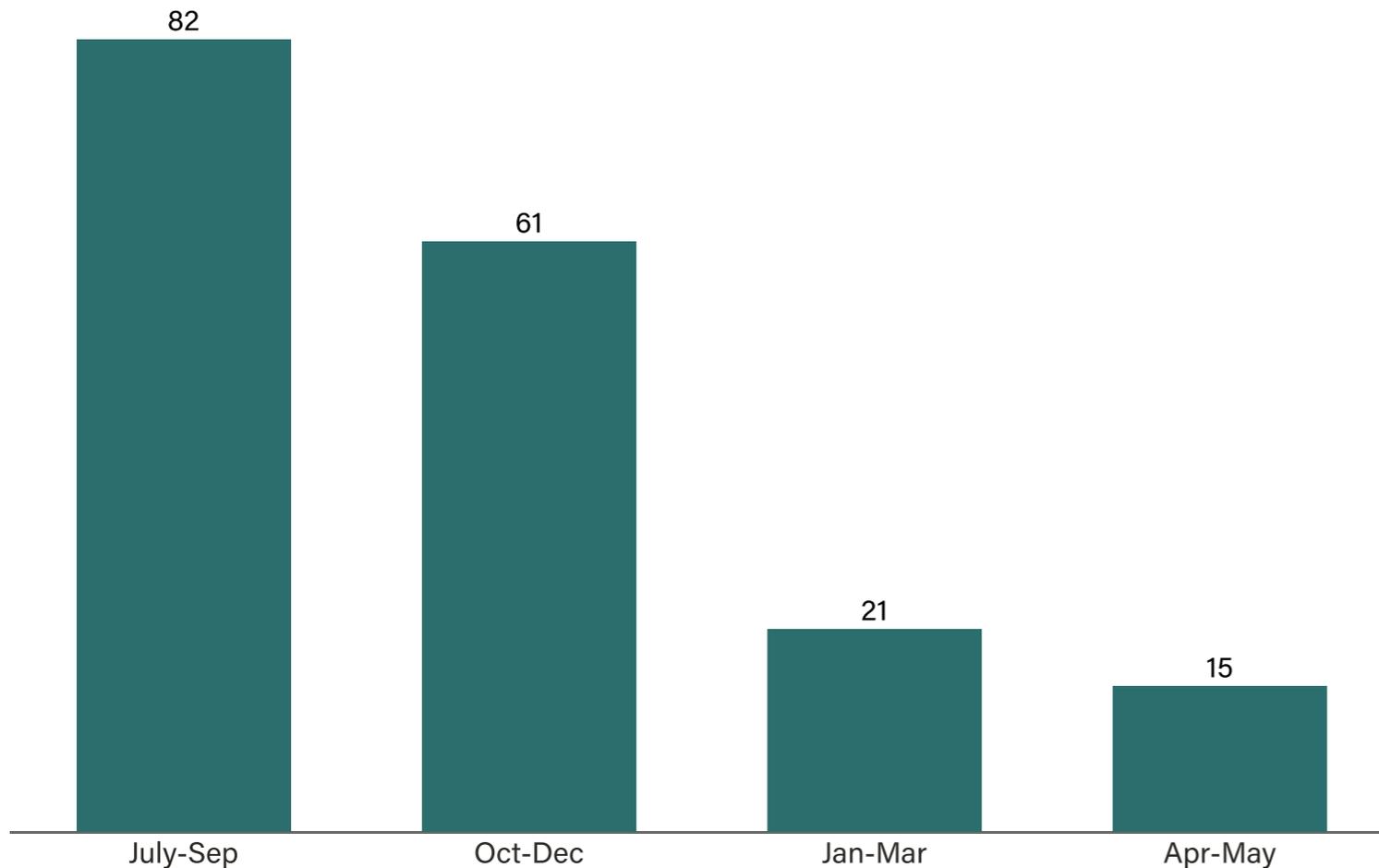
When we first put it out on social media, the response was really, really high but there was a bit of a conflict with Cruse's paid training in workplaces, so we stayed away from promoting it that way.
(Cruse project team member)

The number of in-person attendees settled in the second half of the project.

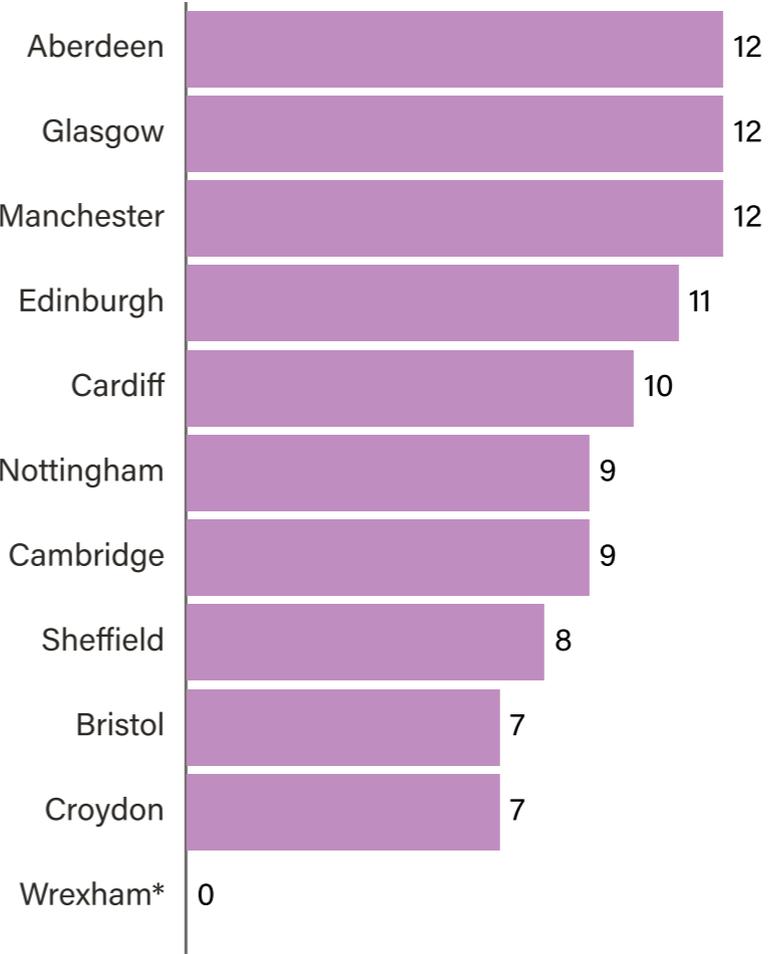## Attendee numbers were at their lowest in October and November, but increased significantly from January onwards.

Average number of in-person training attendees (2024-2025):

— In-Person (England and Wales)   — In-Person (Scotland)
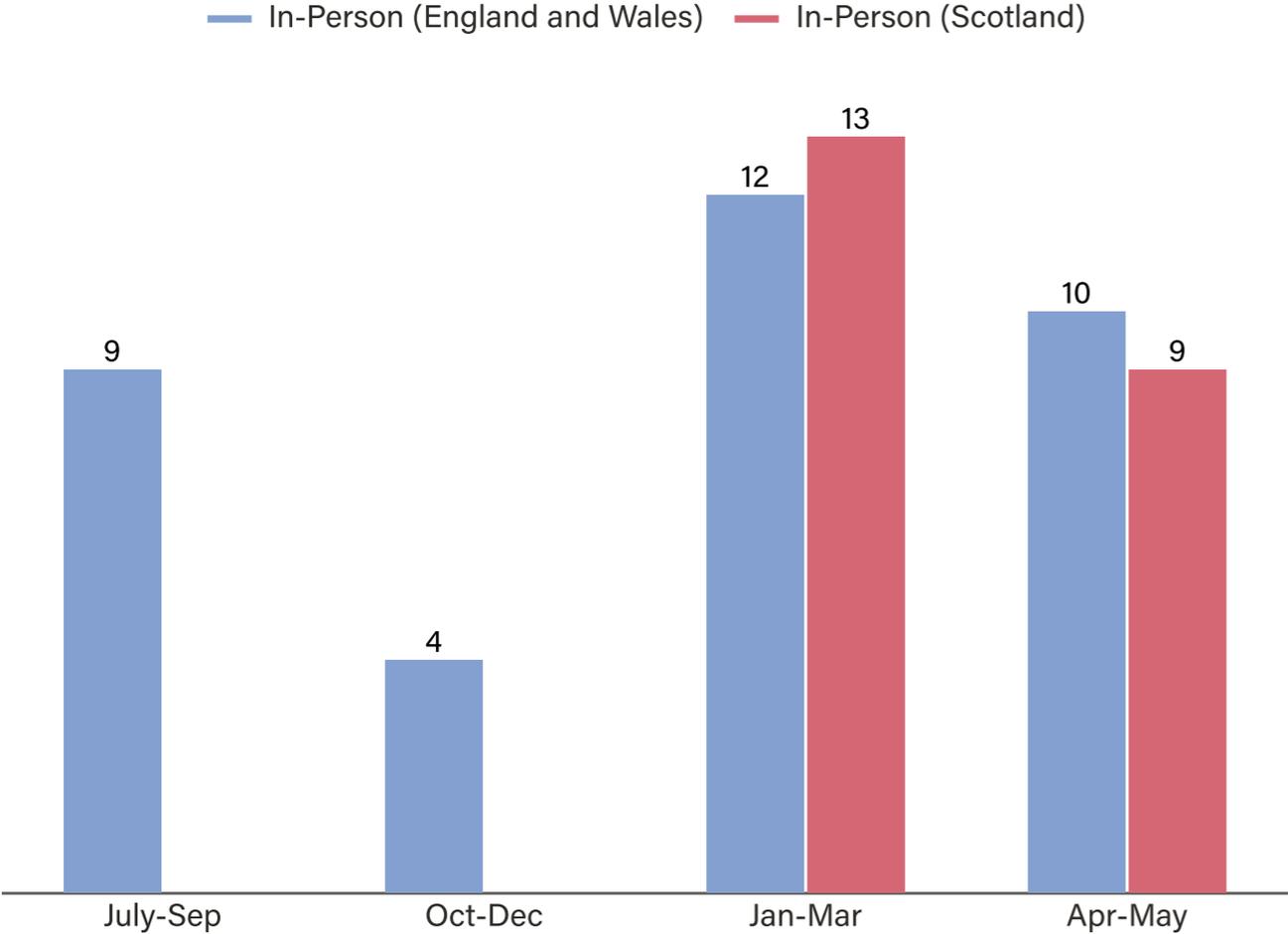
Scotland generally had higher attendance numbers

Average attendance at each location:

* People booked on a session in Wrexham but nobody turned up on the day

Spotlight: Why was interest and engagement higher in Scotland?

Levels of interest and engagement were higher in Scotland than in most other areas in the rest of the UK. Potential reasons for this success include:

Strong local networks

- Cruse Scotland has strong local networks and connections
- Two active and engaged volunteers helped promote training

> We promoted through what we call Third Sector interfaces; staff in that sector are often volunteers who care about their community.

Focused promotion

- Only actively promoted in-person training (not online training)
- Focused promotion on community and third-sector organisation (not those usually targeted for paid training)
- Produced own posters and promotional activity

> If you add online into the mix, people will opt for that instead of in-person. Also we didn't have much time [to complete all training], so we just promoted the in-person.

Safe space venues

- Chose venues specifically where wider, more diverse groups were meeting, e.g. put training on at a LGBT support organisation and at Aberdeen Footbacll Club

Pro-active engagement

- Sent several reminders prior to training sessions and emphasised need to complete surveys
- Used informal tone to help reassure people they would feel psychologically safe

> One of the things is that the email that goes out is quite chatty, rather than a business transaction, it's not a formal training work has sent you to. It's a community event.

Overall, 61% of people booking a training session went on to attend.

The average attendance rate was lowest for in-person sessions across England and Wales

Average attendance rate by session type:

	63%	61%	55%
	Online	In-person (Scotland)	In-person (England & Wales)

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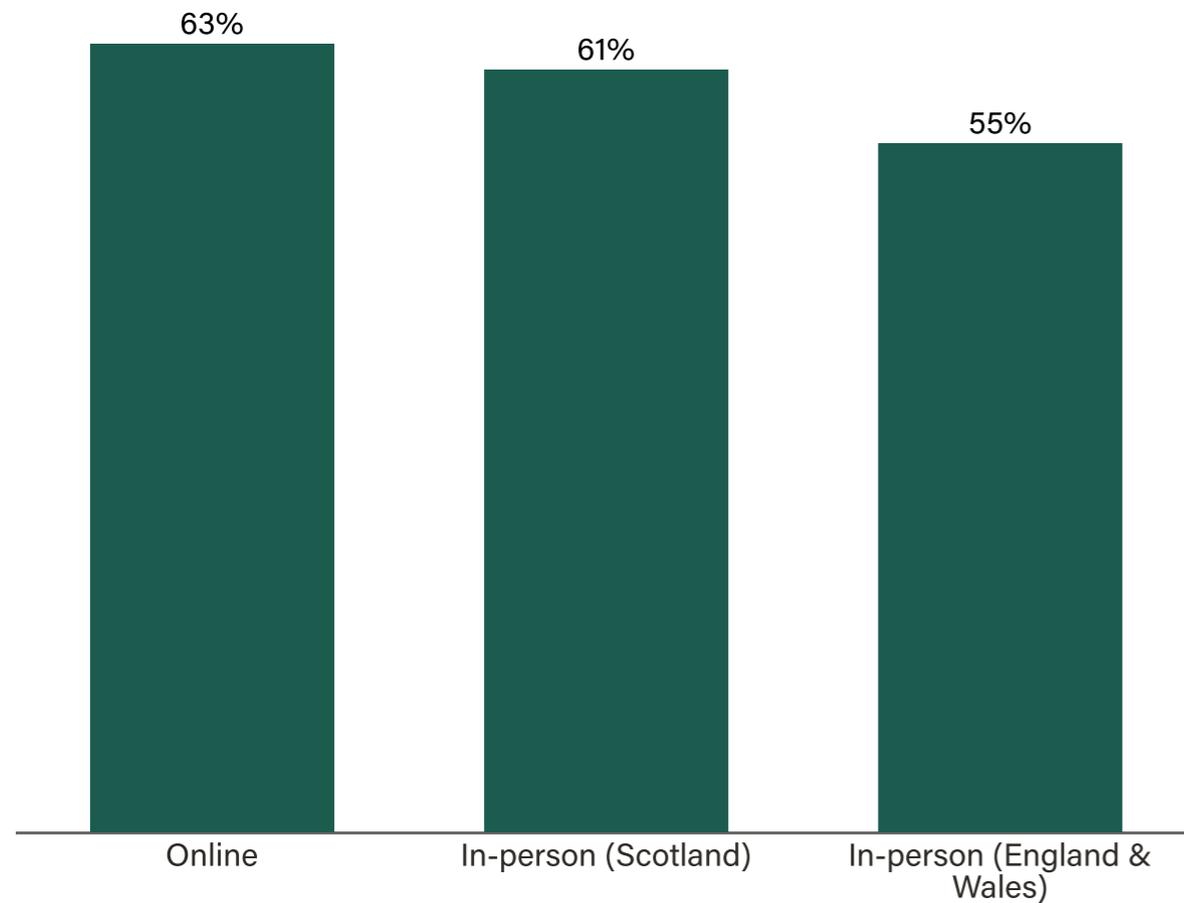
Strategies were put in place to try to increase attendance.

Feedback from those involved in the project revealed potential reasons for non-attendance;:

- Low commitment to free training (and studies have shown that charging even a small amount increases attendance and perceived value)
- The sensitive topic could be triggering for some people who may decide they cannot face it on the day
- Promoting centrally was difficult (due to the lack of local connections and potential conflict of interest with paid training) and leveraging of local knowledge and networks through local Cruse branches and Co-op Member Activators did not take place until around January 2025 onwards
- Training attendees at Cruse UK sessions reported that they had not received any/timely reminders to the training and were unable to notify if they were unable to attend

> **Over-recruit and create a sense of commitment**
>
> Cruse Bereavement Scotland allowed more people to register than the venue could cater for to allow for the likely high attrition rate (a strategy Cruse Bereavement later adopted) and sent out several reminders and followed up with anyone who didn't attend.

> **Target pre-formed groups and engaged communities**
>
> We weren't expecting the F2F to be as difficult as it was at the start. We thought we would be bringing people from different areas together but there is not a lot of psychological safety in this, particularly when the topic is bereavement. We flexed to target pre-formed groups with an existing interest in bereavement so that they would have that psychological safety.
>
> (Co-op Community Partnerships and Impact Manager)

Resources were also developed for people supporting others.

Someone has just died: how to help

When you first hear that someone has been bereaved, you may want to help them. It's common to worry about saying or doing the wrong thing. But reaching out can make a huge difference.

Read more →

Supporting a bereaved colleague

When someone at work has been bereaved it can be difficult to know how to react and what to do or say.

Read more →

Almost 90,000 leaflets printed and distributed

- 80,000 printed for distribution through Co-op Funeralcare
- 8,000 printed (7,200 currently distributed) for distribution by Cruse

The leaflets are simple and easy to understand which is really important in the circumstances in which it is given out. I think they have been pitched perfectly and can have maximum impact given Co-op's reach [through Funeralcare Homes]. they add value to our business and to our clients. What I hoped would happen has happened.
(Co-op Community Partnerships and Impact Manager)

New section on website launched late March

- 'How to help someone with grief' section on Cruse website
- Launched March 23, 2025
- 6368 website hits (up to 3 June 2025): 15th most viewed Cruse page

Resources promoted widely

Promoted via external newsletter (over 25k recipients), internally via volunteer and staff newsletter and through social media posts.

Using insight and co-production to create resources has been successful.
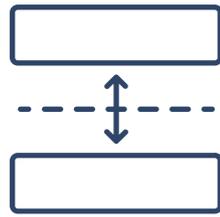
Identifying a gap

- Cruse was not providing information on how to support someone else who has suffered a loss
- Brand illustrations and current resources were not inclusive enough

> We identified there was a gap on the website where people could go when they are supporting bereaved people, and how these people can support themselves.
> (Cruse Project Team member)

Using the voice of the people to create resources

- Questions on social media to ask for people's experiences
- Surveyed bereaved people's advisory group
- Students at Nottingham University worked on a project on how to make website and illustrations more inclusive

> We all have a passion for ethnic minority groups and inclusivity. [The Cruse website] didn't have anything. The illustrations just had plain figures with brown skin, it didn't show any culture.
> (University students)

> It feels like we need to do more of this insight-led work. It has shown the power of using people's voices in shaping the content. It has probably changed the way we think about future content.
> (Cruse Project Team member)

Potential to do more if resources had filled other gaps and been made available sooner

- Resources were not published until and therefore couldn't be shared with many in-person training attendees
- Some people attending training sessions were looking to set up support networks in their local communities and would have welcomed resources to enable this (e.g. posters, example policies etc), as outlined in the original bid
- Students at Nottingham University would have liked to have been more involved (e.g. giving feedback on initial designs etc)

Attendees.

Nearly half of training attendees work in the third sector.

And in-person training in Scotland was even more likely to attract workers from charities and the third sector (56%)

Type of organisation online and in-person training attendees were from:

Charity / third sector — 47%
NHS / health service — 12%
Attended as an individual — 11% → **Rises to 14% for in-person sessions** Compared to 9% for online sessions
Education — 7%
Local authority — 5%
Private sector — 5%
Co-op service/organisation — 3%
Other public sector — 2%
Other — 8% → Including students, hospices and funeral directors
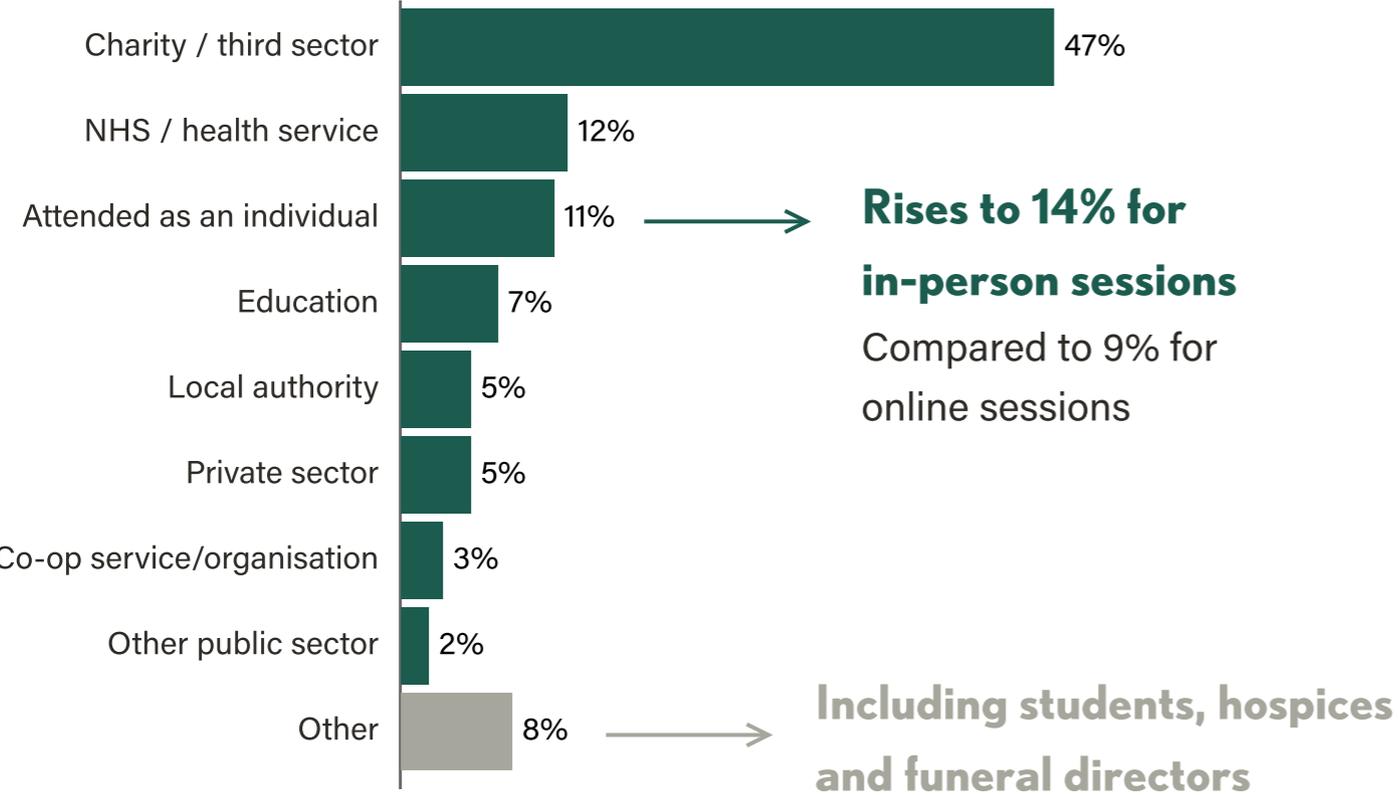
Workers in a number of sectors appear to prefer online training

% of online and in-person attendees in different sectors (where there is a significant difference)

Online ● In-person ●

NHS / health service: Online 18%, In-person 7%
Education: Online 10%, In-person 4%
Private sector: Online 6%, In-person 3%
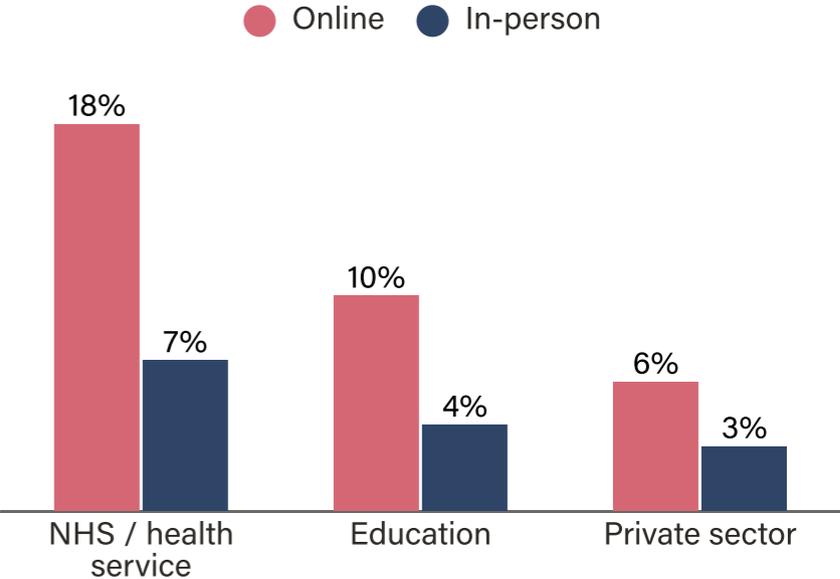
Q. Which of the following best describes the organisation you work for?
(Base: all training attendees across online and in-person responding to the pre-training survey, n=672)

But attendees had a wide range of roles.

The most common roles were support workers, counsellors and mental health workers, and volunteers.

Top 10 roles/professions of training attendees across online and in-person:
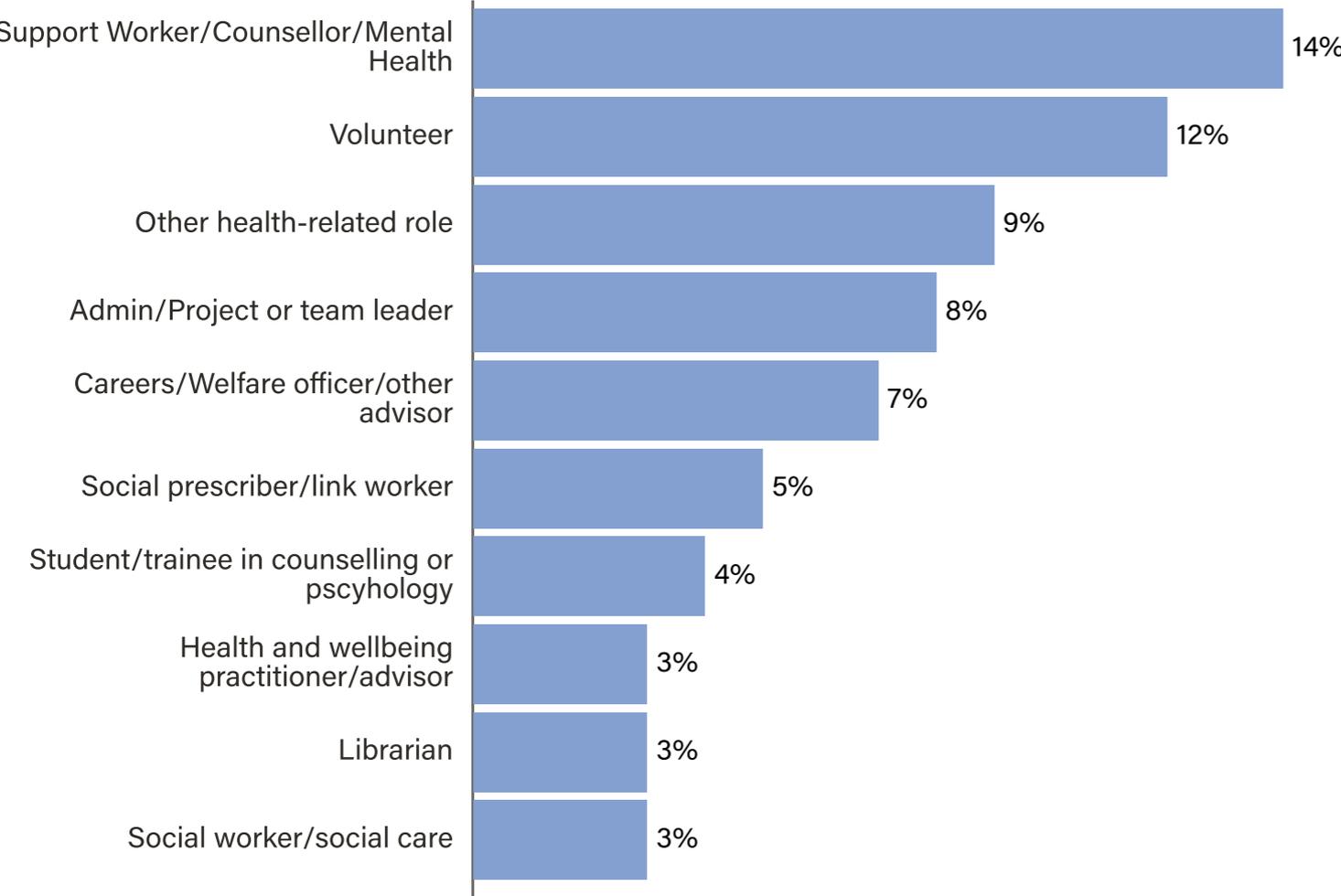
Role	Percentage
Support Worker/Counsellor/Mental Health	14%
Volunteer	12%
Other health-related role	9%
Admin/Project or team leader	8%
Careers/Welfare officer/other advisor	7%
Social prescriber/link worker	5%
Student/trainee in counselling or pscyhology	4%
Health and wellbeing practitioner/advisor	3%
Librarian	3%
Social worker/social care	3%

Q. If applicable, how would you describe your role/profession?

(Base: all training attendees across online and in-person responding to the pre-training survey, n=599)

Various other roles were represented including:

- Working at funeral homes, crematoriums or mortuaries
- Working in HR roles
- Co-op member activators
- Working in retail and hospitality, e.g. hairdresser, tattoo artist
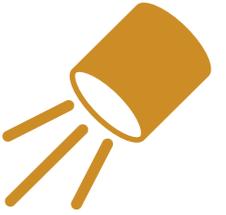
A surprise has been how many professional people and practitioners came to the training, and teachers too. And some had found it themselves, they weren't necessarily told by work to come. It is a surprise that they are not offered this kind of training.

(Co-op Community Partnerships and Impact Manager)

The active volunteers helped to reach more diverse groups.

- Community Learning and Development student
- Youth Worker

- Previously volunteered for Cruse
- Saw role on Cruse Facebook
- Felt role would fit with personal interest in grief and field of study

Successful promotion of the training to diverse groups

Key activities:

- Reaching out to local groups online that might encounter people experiencing bereavement to promote training, e.g. students, tattoo artists
- Distributing flyers within local community, e.g. in cafes, libraries, GP surgeries
- Attended Co-op event with other local charities

Positive experience overall

- Sees the value of and the need for the training
- Appreciated flexibility of role
- Enjoyed meeting people

> I went to the Tattoo Convention and met the main admin for the social media group and he was so supportive of it. Tattoo artists do commemorative pieces all the time.

> I I feel like it's connected me to more people in my community, which is kind of what I wanted from it.

But she expected the volunteer journey to be better

- Lack of volunteer policies, procedures or supporting materials
- Unsure who to contact when issues arose
- Project felt chaotic at times
- Would have liked Cruse to facilitate a volunteer community
- Would have liked to have done more within role, e.g. help local community to set up support groups

> I truly believe that it's an amazing project, but it's just been a bit of a muddled experience, which is a shame. I think if you were to give people better training at the beginning for how to do the role, give them a pack of ideas, get people connected. I think the possibilities of what that could do for a community is amazing.

But most of the volunteers had a different (and unsatisfactory) experience.

High initial expectations

Although volunteer recruitment and retention is a significant challenge nationally, the initial plan for the volunteers was ambitions, with volunteers expected to undertake roles potentially better suited to a paid role.

'Open' remit led to confusion

Volunteer role was unclear and left open to misinterpretation - many signed up thinking they would be supporting bereaved people directly.

Recruited (too) early

Significant amount of time spent on recruiting volunteers from the start, before the in-person training had been fully developed, tested and dates set.

Difficult to keep engaged

It was difficult to keep volunteers engaged when they were not connected as a group, had nothing to promote, and Project Manager time needed to be spent elsewhere.

No clear volunteer strategy

Volunteers were not given policies or procedures or supporting materials (e.g. a volunteer 'pack' with T-shirts, posters etc).

Volunteers disengaged

Of the initial 30 applications received, nine volunteers were still engaged by September and this dropped to 2-3 by February. Engaged volunteers also wanted to be part of a community and to be empowered to do more in the role.

Poor volunteer experience
Less promotion in some areas

But were volunteers really needed?

What do we know about the demographics of people attending training?

Attendees were most likely to be aged 45 to 54

Q. Which age group do you belong to?
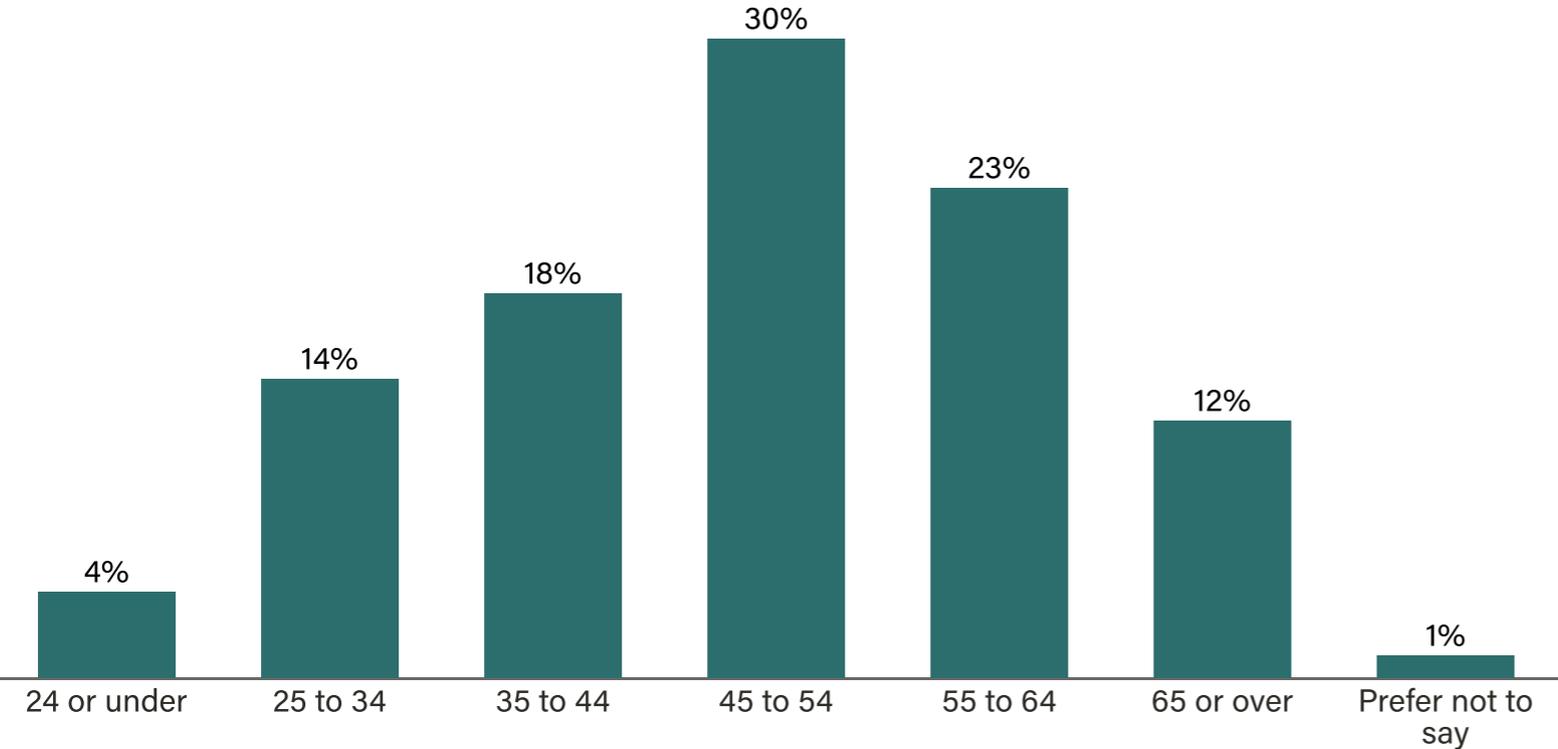
The majority of attendees (85%) were female

Attendees were also more likely to be White (85%)

This is broadly in-line with the UK population, with 82% identifying as White in the 2021 Census

Base: all training attendees across online and in-person responding to the pre-training survey (demographic questions were added in December 2024, n=515)

Most found out about the training from someone at their place of work.

How did attendees find out about the training?

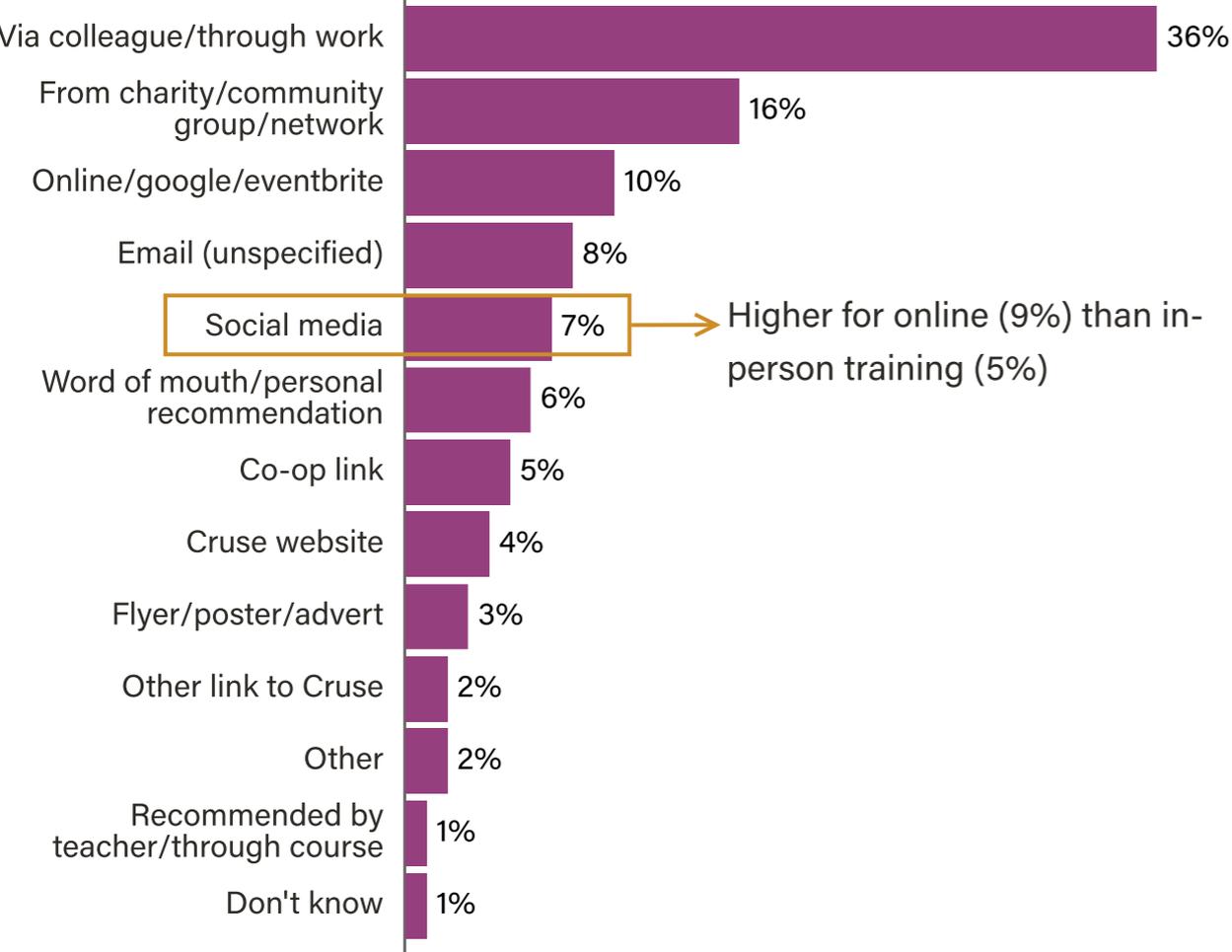| Category	Percentage
Via colleague/through work	36%
From charity/community group/network	16%
Online/google/eventbrite	10%
Email (unspecified)	8%
Social media	7%
Word of mouth/personal recommendation	6%
Co-op link	5%
Cruse website	4%
Flyer/poster/advert	3%
Other link to Cruse	2%
Other	2%
Recommended by teacher/through course	1%
Don't know	1%

Social media → Higher for online (9%) than in-person training (5%)

Example survey comments:

" Colleague who heard about it at SCVO (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations) Gathering in Edinburgh

" Scottish tattoo club group

" Head Teacher passed on the information and asked if I would like to take part in the training

" Through St Lukes Hospice who are supporting me to start up a compassionate café.

Q. How did you find out about the training? (Open-text, coded into themes)

(Base: all training attendees across online and in-person responding to the pre-training survey, n=654)

3 in 5 hope to learn how to better support others who are grieving.

What did attendees hope to gain from the training?

Category	Value
Learn how to better support others	40%
Increased understanding of grief and bereavement	33%
Tools and techniques (e.g. what to say/not to say)	25%
Enhance/refresh skills	10%
Improve confidence in conversations	6%
Knowledge of resources/wider support	6%
Personal reasons	4%
Share knowledge with others (e.g. work colleagues)	3%
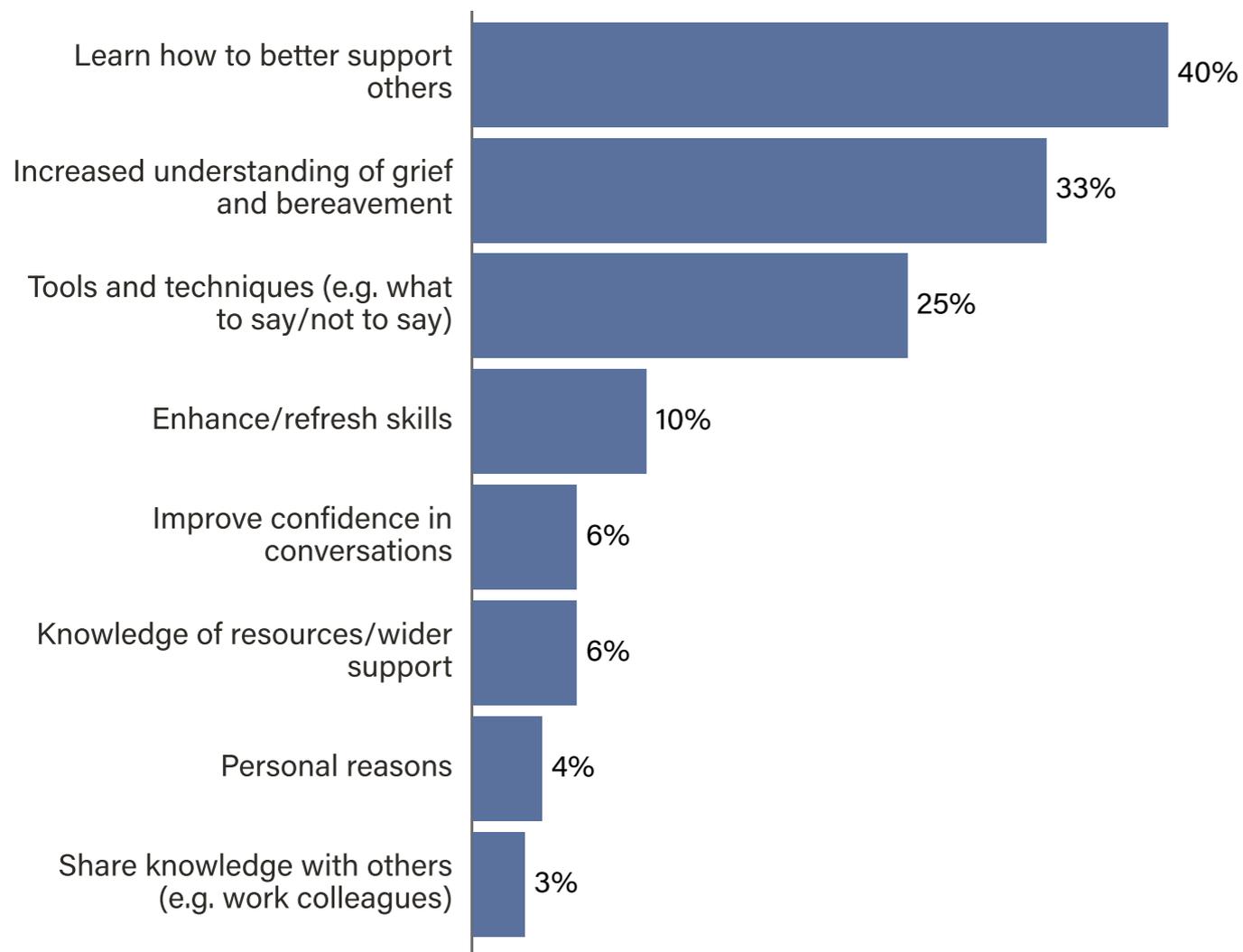
Q. What do you hope to gain from the training? (Open-text, coded into themes)

(Base: all training attendees across online and in-person responding to the pre-training survey, n=xxx)

Learning how to better support others is higher for in-person

45% of in-person attendees hope to learn how to better support others, compared to 36% of those attending an online session

And enhancing/refreshing skills is higher amongst online attendees

13% of online attendees are attending the training to enhance or refresh existing skills, compared to 8% of those attending an in-person session

There are some potential interesting knowledge gaps by sector

Attendees from Local Authorities are more likely to be looking for knowledge of wider support and to share knowledge with others than those attending from the charity/third sector

Do online attendees go into the training with more confidence/knowledge?

Throughout the training surveys (pre, post and a follow-up), a series of statements were included to understand the attendees' confidence and knowledge around the subject of grief and bereavement.

% who strongly agree (gave a score of between 8 and 10) for a range of statements <u>prior</u> to attending:

(where respondents could score between 1 and 10 where 1 is disagree strongly and 10 is agree strongly)

- Attending online
- Attending in-person
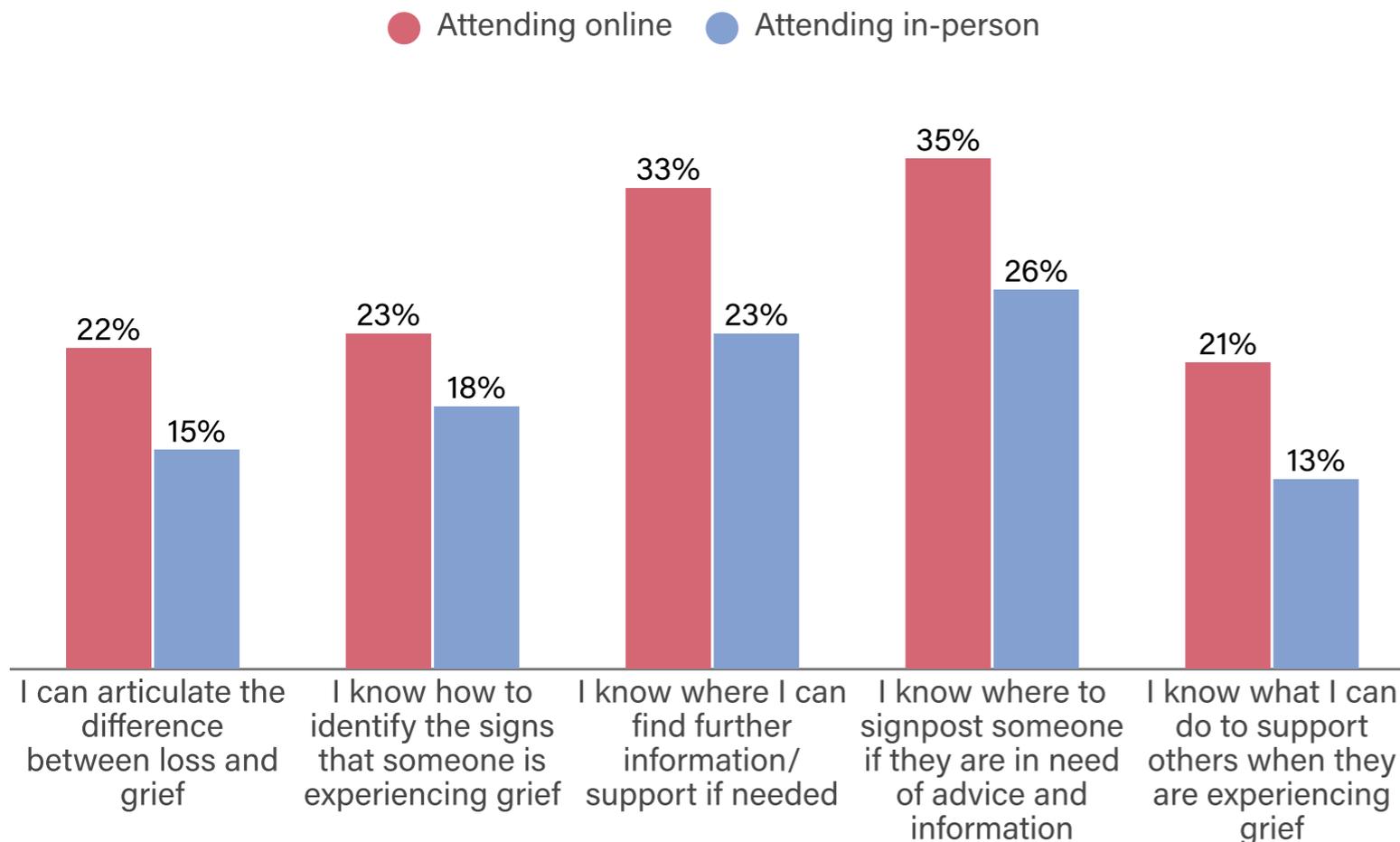
Across four of the five statements, online attendees had a higher agreement level than in-person attendees <u>prior</u> to the training session

The only statement with no statistically significant difference between online and in-person attendees is for knowing how to identify the signs that someone is experiencing grief.

Q. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1= disagree strongly and 10= agree strongly, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?

(Base: all training attendees across online and in-person responding to the pre-training survey, online=347, in-person=325)
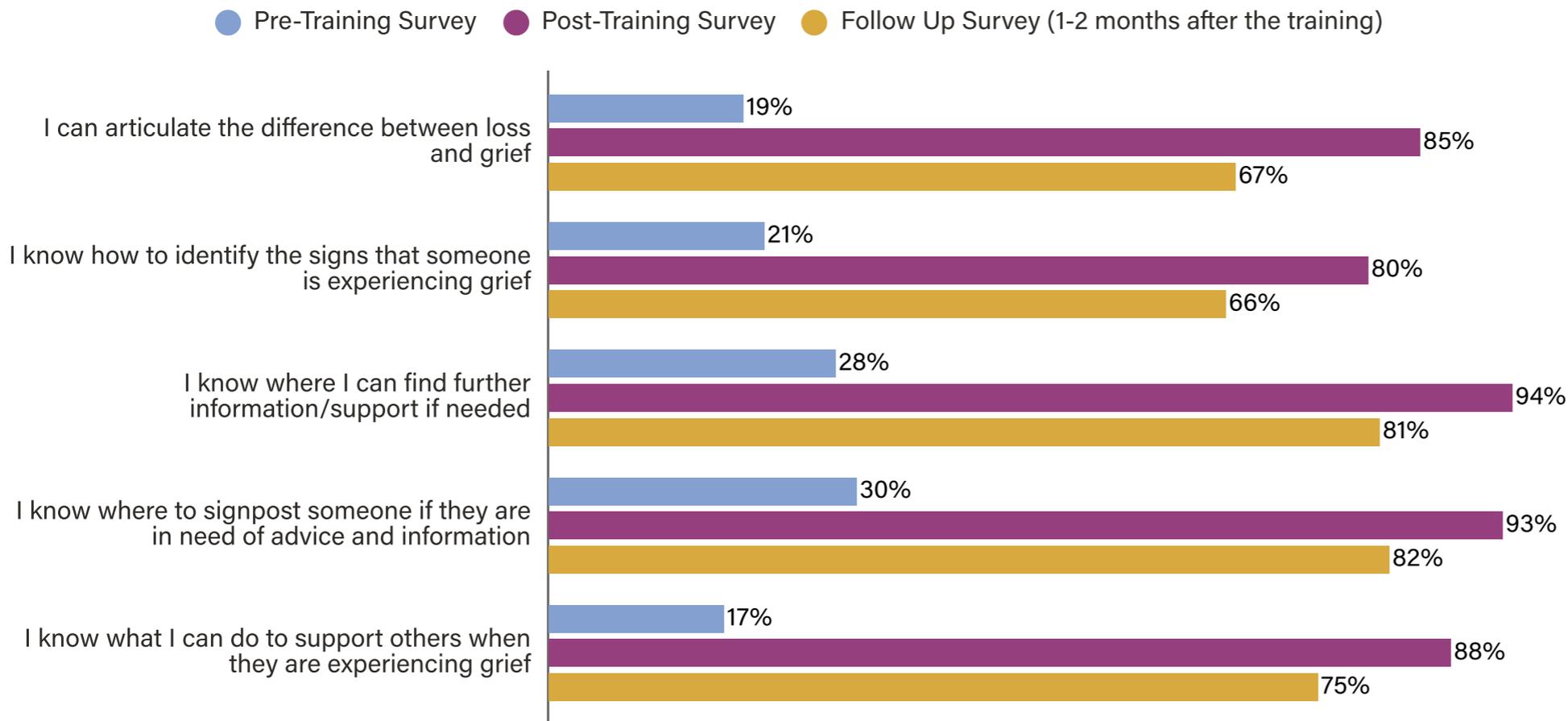
Impact.

The training clearly has an impact on confidence and knowledge of grief.

There is a statistically significant increase in the proportion of attendees strongly agreeing with all statements relating to their confidence in and knowledge of grief.

% giving an agreement score of <u>8-10</u> across key knowledge and awareness statements
(where respondents could score between 1 and 10 where 1 is disagree strongly and 10 is agree strongly)

- ● Pre-Training Survey
- ● Post-Training Survey
- ● Follow Up Survey (1-2 months after the training)

I can articulate the difference between loss and grief
- 19%
- 85%
- 67%

I know how to identify the signs that someone is experiencing grief
- 21%
- 80%
- 66%

I know where I can find further information/support if needed
- 28%
- 94%
- 81%

I know where to signpost someone if they are in need of advice and information
- 30%
- 93%
- 82%

I know what I can do to support others when they are experiencing grief
- 17%
- 88%
- 75%

The training appears to have the biggest impact on an attendee's knowledge of where to find further information and support and where to signpost someone

Q. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1= disagree strongly and 10= agree strongly, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?
(Base: all training attendees across online and in-person responding to each survey; pre-training=672, post-training=426, follow-up=125)

Case study: Increased confidence and knowledge.
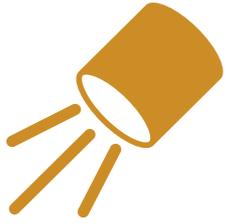
Helena*

In-person training attendee

- Married, mother of two
- Studying community development
- Works in the community supporting young people from Black and Global Majority backgrounds

Hoping to gain skills for both personal and professional use

- Was informed of the course by the volunteer
- Initially interested for personal reasons: recently lost her Aunty and is finding it difficult to support her mum
- Also felt it would be helpful for her work in the community
- Death is not commonly talked about in her culture, and she does not always feel comfortable discussing this

Training was excellent and inclusive

Helena thought the trainer was very good and created a safe space: "he found the correct words that made us feel relaxed".

Training has had an impact on her personally and on how she supports others

- Gained an increased understanding of grief and how to support others
- The training has helped Helena to reflect on her life and experiences of loss and grief
- In recent conversations with family members, she felt more confident about speaking about grief and feels she is more understanding towards the different ways family members are dealing with grief
- Helena also made some useful connections at the training with local members of the local community
- The training has prompted her to look into facilitating a session on grief with young people

In my previous role as a support assistant in schools, I was only told that you should just say 'I am sorry for your loss' and I found this insufficient. By going on this training, I was hoping to find more information to help me support my family or the young people I work with.

After the training, I spoke to my cousins whose mom passed. And one of the things I was saying to them was that grieving can be different, the fact that today you are crying a lot, tomorrow you can laugh, listen to music, dance, but it doesn't mean like you stopped feeling that.

*Names have been changed

Has the training had a positive impact on community and wellbeing too?

There is a statistically significant increase in the proportion of attendees strongly agreeing with all statements relating to their connection to community and own wellbeing between completing the pre- and post-training surveys.

% giving an agreement score of <u>8-10</u> across community and wellbeing statements
(where respondents could score between 1 and 10 where 1 is disagree strongly and 10 is agree strongly)

● Pre-training survey   ● Post-training survey

	Pre-training survey	Post-training survey
I feel connected to my local community	31%	63%
Overall, I am satisfied with my wellbeing	57%	75%
Overall, I feel optimistic about the future	60%	78%
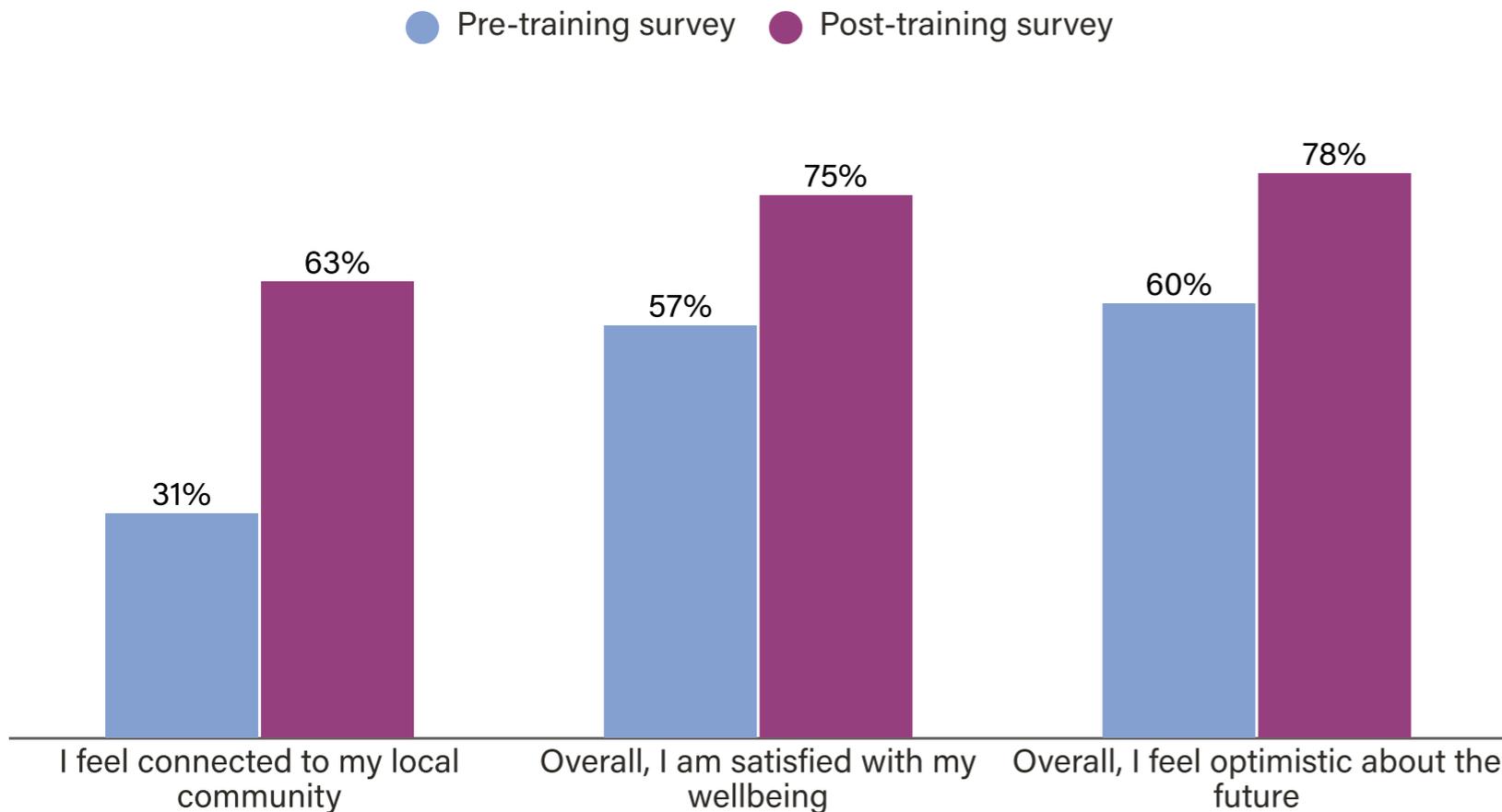
> The way the trainer explained grief, I was like, oh, some of the stuff that has happened to me, all that was me grieving but I didn't have anyone to talk to. After the training, lots of stuff in my personal life made sense.
> (Follow-up telephone interview)

> It was a good place to speak to other people in similar positions. I found out about a few grief cafes through chatting to people. It was a space that was needed, I think to talk about death and bereavement.
> (Follow-up telephone interview)

Q. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1= disagree strongly and 10= agree strongly, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?
(Base: all training attendees across online and in-person responding to each survey; pre-training=672, post-training=426)

Attendees particularly valued learning the tips and tools on how to better support people and the information on different models of grief.

The most valuable thing attendees learned from the training

Category	%
Tips/tools to better support people (e.g. active listening, what to say, what not to say)	54%
Better understanding of grief/theories/models	30%
What is normal/everyone grieves differently	13%
Refreshed skills/confirmed knowledge	7%
Trainer good/good content/good delivery	7%
Other	6%
Other sources of information/services	5%
Impact of grief	4%
Self-care	3%
Identifying those in need of more support	1%

Higher amongst under 35s (70%) than 55 and over (45%)

Higher amongst in-person attendees (36%) compared to online (26%)

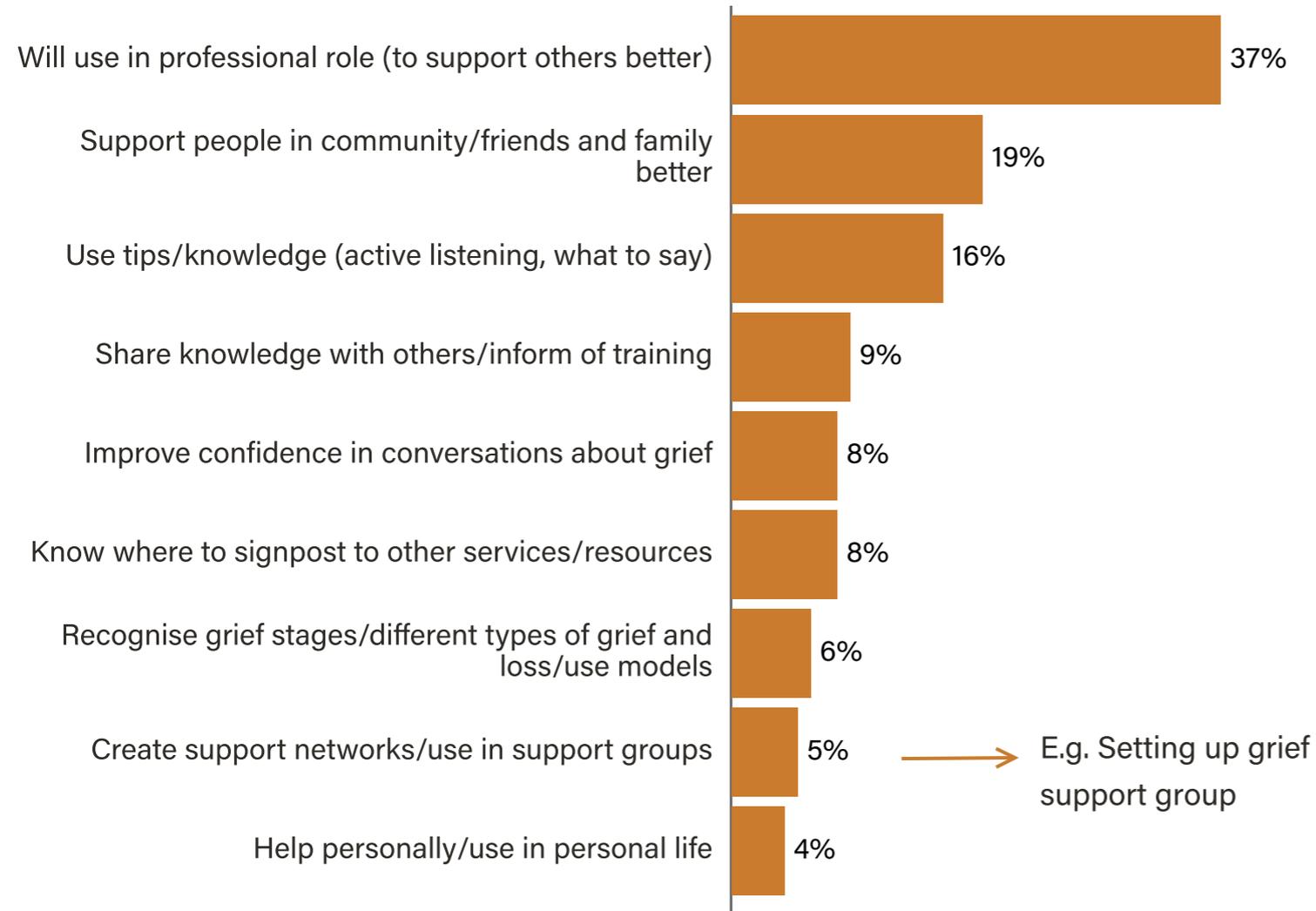> A better general understanding of what grief is like - a mess not a linear process. And Do's and Dont's.

> The tips for ways to talk to people going through grief - the practical pointers will be useful.

Q. What was the most valuable thing you learned from this training?
(Base: all training attendees across online and in-person responding to the post-training survey, n=414)

Attendees planned to use skills learned to better support others, both in a professional capacity and in the community.

How do attendees plan to use what they learned in their role?

Category	Percentage
Will use in professional role (to support others better)	37%
Support people in community/friends and family better	19%
Use tips/knowledge (active listening, what to say)	16%
Share knowledge with others/inform of training	9%
Improve confidence in conversations about grief	8%
Know where to signpost to other services/resources	8%
Recognise grief stages/different types of grief and loss/use models	6%
Create support networks/use in support groups	5% → E.g. Setting up grief support group
Help personally/use in personal life	4%

> I work with young people who experience loss not just by death. I will use this to help them understand and move through their grief.

> Trying to recognise what stage of their grieving journey someone is in, listen to them actively. I will hopefully be better at supporting the students I work with.

> Organising a safe space within our current project for people to come along. Lots to think about!

Q. How do you plan to use what you learned in your role?
(Base: all training attendees across online and in-person responding to the post-training survey, n=255)

On average, each training attendee goes on to support 5 people who are experiencing grief or bereavement.
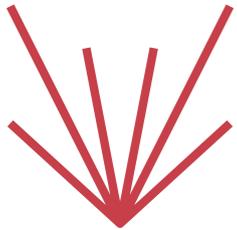
Through a follow-up survey, attendees were asked how many people experiencing grief or bereavement they had gone on to speak to or support since the training:

5.2
Average number of people then supported by an attendee of the training

Which equates to....

9,318
Estimated number of people experiencing grief or bereavement supported by someone who attended a training session

So far...

This is based on feedback from attendees typically 1-2 months after the training session.
We do not know how many people they will go on to support in the months and years to come.

ps

One in three training attendees have supported more than 3 people experiencing grief or bereavement.

One in two have supported between 1 and 3 people; one in five have not supported anyone (yet)

Approximate number of people training attendees say they have spoken to or supported who were experiencing grief or bereavement since completing training:

The most number of people supported by someone was 60
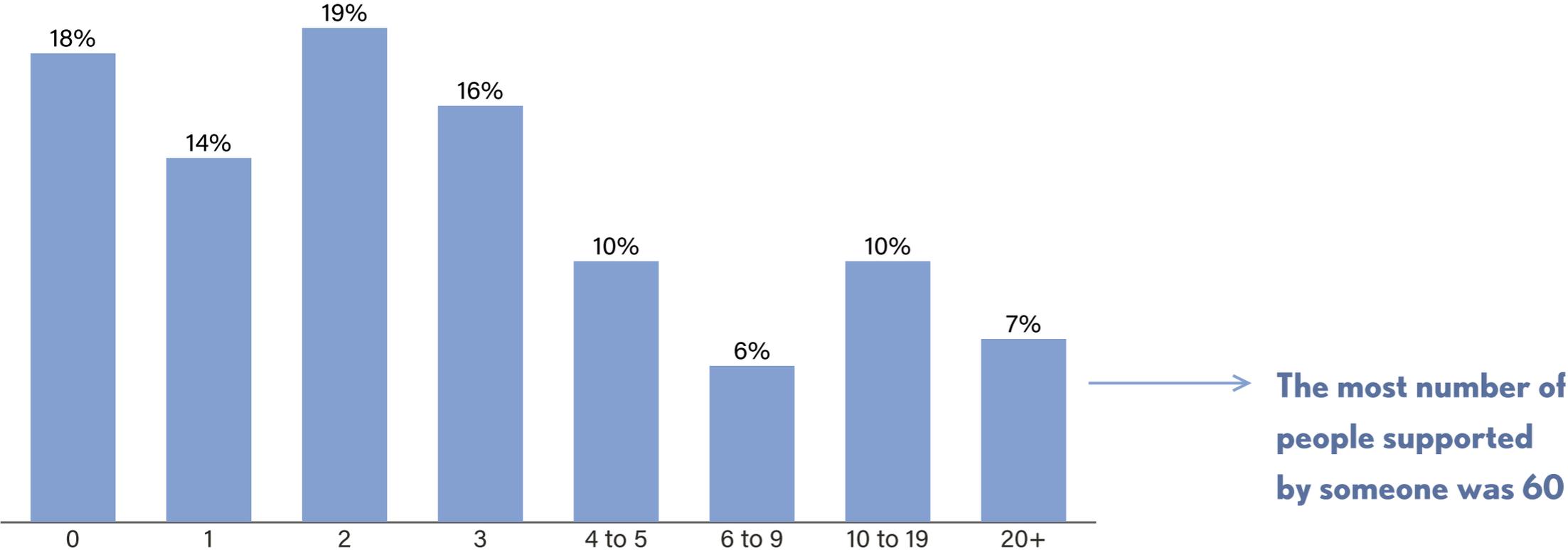
Q. Since completing your training, approximately how many people have you spoken to or supported who were experiencing grief or bereavement?
(Base: all training attendees responding to the follow-up survey; n=125)

Almost all feel the training helped them to better support these people.

Over half (57%) of training attendees responding to the follow-up survey who have supported people experiencing grief or bereavement felt <u>a lot</u> better equipped to do so as a result of the training

"To what extent did you feel better equipped to support these people experiencing grief or bereavement as a result of the training?"

● A lot   ● A little   ● Not at all
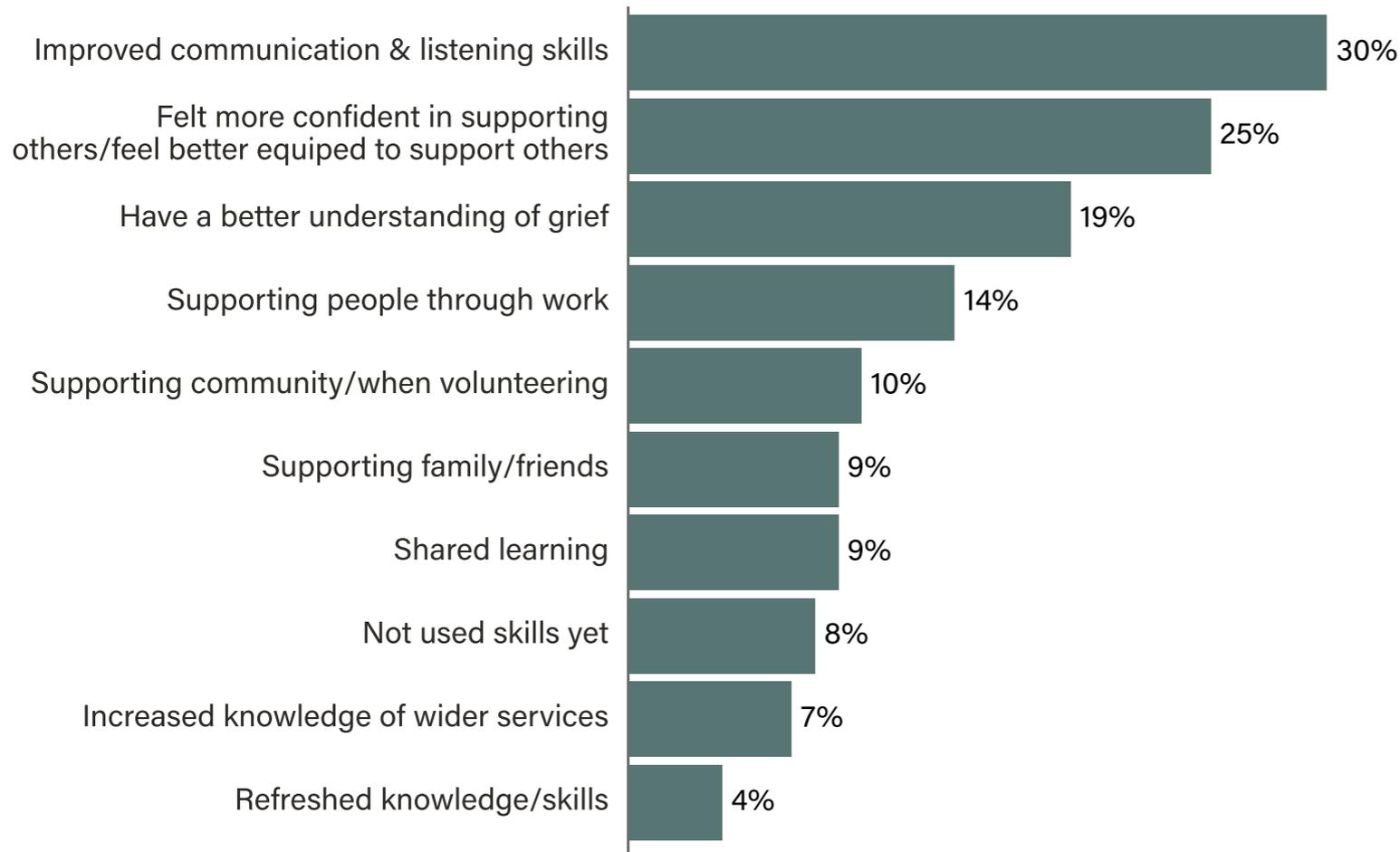
57%   40%   3%
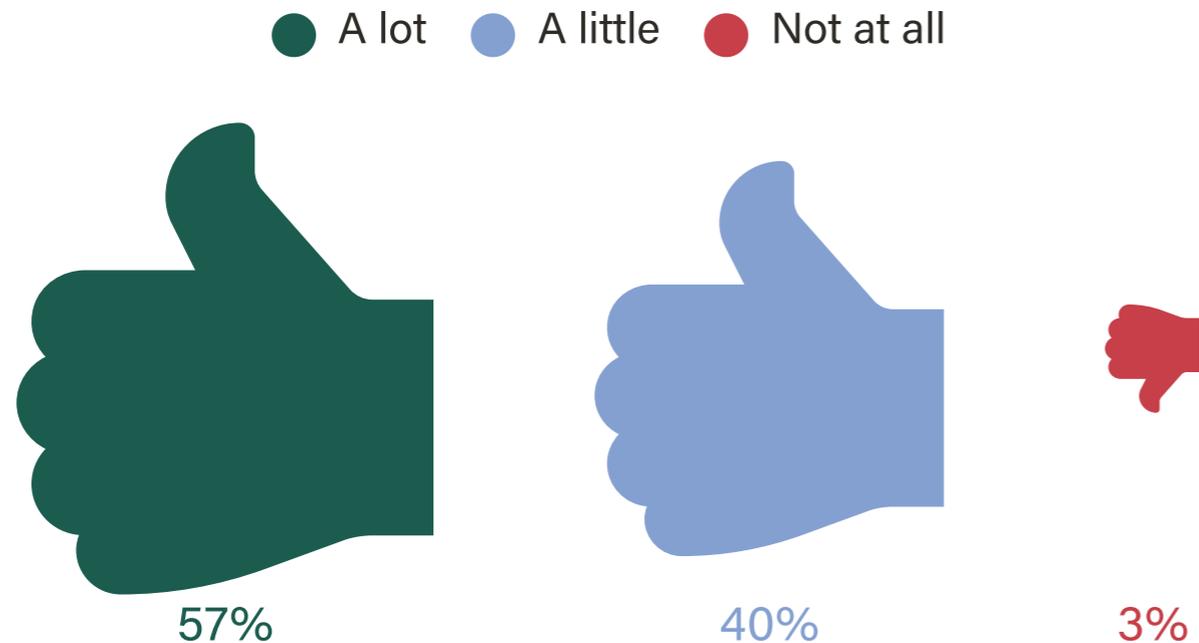
> A school mum lost someone recently and I think [the training] gave me that permission to acknowledge the death and do so in quite a matter-of-fact way, you know to say, I'm sorry your mum has died.
> (Follow-up telephone interview)

Q. To what extent did you feel better equipped to support these people experiencing grief or bereavement as a result of the training?
(Base: all training attendees responding to the follow-up survey and have supported someone experiencing grief; n=103)

In particular, many say they have been implementing the communication and listening skills learnt during the training when supporting others.

Ways in which attendees have been using the skills learnt (reported several weeks later in the follow-up survey)

| Category	Percentage
Improved communication & listening skills	30%
Felt more confident in supporting others/feel better equiped to support others	25%
Have a better understanding of grief	19%
Supporting people through work	14%
Supporting community/when volunteering	10%
Supporting family/friends	9%
Shared learning	9%
Not used skills yet	8%
Increased knowledge of wider services	7%
Refreshed knowledge/skills	4%

> My partner lost his dad, and rather than feeling anxious about how to support him I felt much calmer (which in turn meant he didn't feel like he needed to be supporting me when he was the one going through it).

> Mentioned about the grief doesn't go away but you grow around it which really helped my friend. Also just listening, validating, not minimising.

Q. Please can you tell us how you have been using the skills learnt from the Community Grief training course? For example, this could be how you have been supporting individuals or implementing ideas learnt within your organisation. (Base: all training attendees across online and in-person responding to the follow-up survey, n=106)

The training inspired some to consider setting up social action projects.
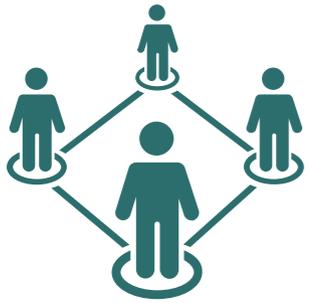
Some of the people attending the training sessions are already part of social action projects in their community to support people with grief and bereavement

And they generally attend the training to improve understanding and skills in order to better support others

❝ The shared models were really useful. I am currently supporting our curate in setting up a community grief café in Waddington.
(Follow-up survey comment)

And some attendees were inspired to consider starting a social action project around grief and bereavement or to share their learning with people in the local community
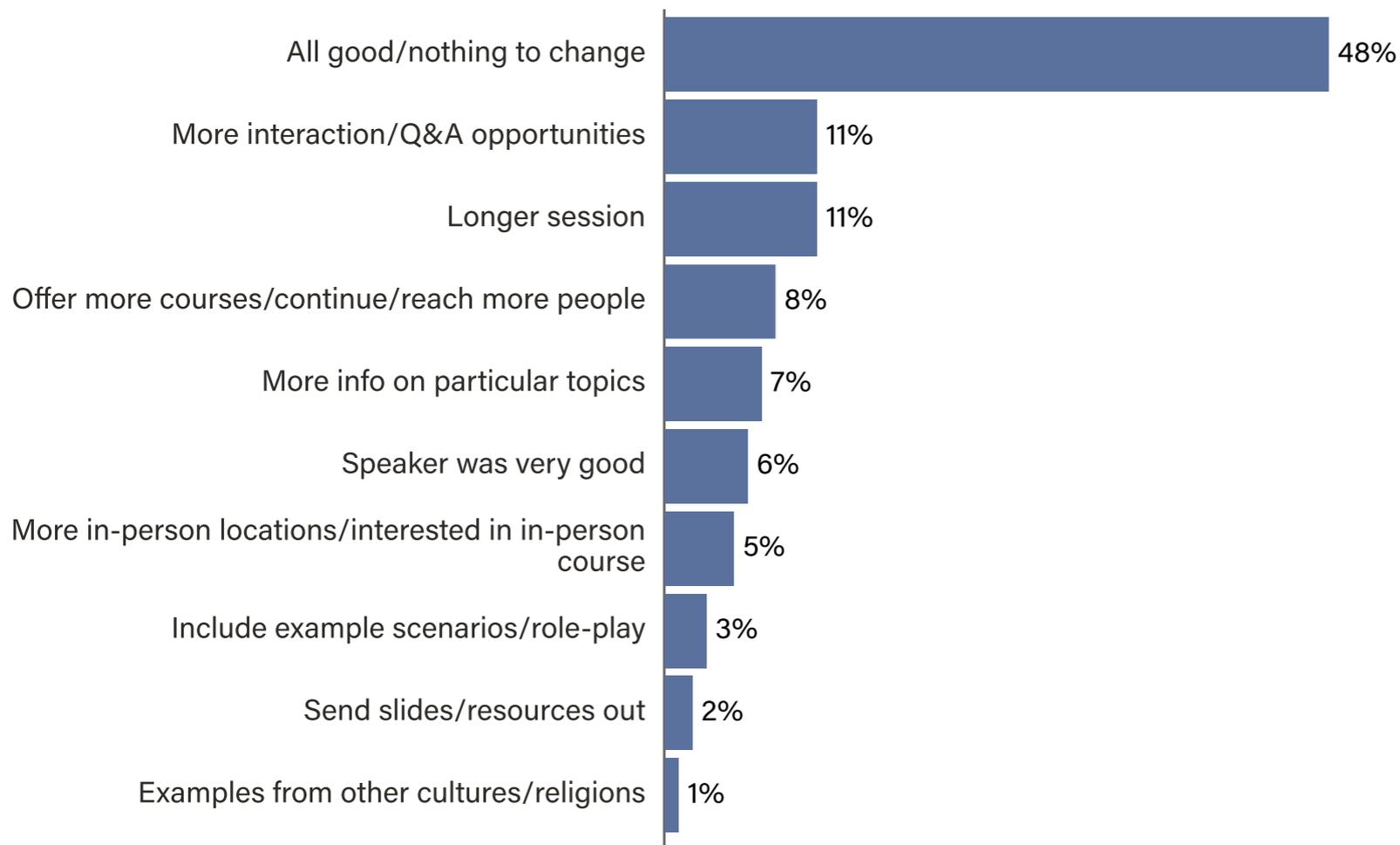
- Some attendees have been inspired to look into starting a grief cafe or other support group in their local community
- Many attendees commented that they would like to facilitate a session on grief and bereavement either in their local community or at their place of work and many were planning share the resources and learnings from the training with others

❝ After the training, I spoke to someone in one of my community groups [for elderly residents] who has done some other longer Cruse training and asked him how he feels about us doing something at the community centre. We have a well being group and we're thinking about running as session about bereavement and grief.
(Training attendee follow-up interview)

Most do not feel the training needs improving, and if anything people wanted more - longer sessions, more interaction, more courses...

Suggested improvements to the training

Improvement	%
All good/nothing to change	48%
More interaction/Q&A opportunities	11%
Longer session	11%
Offer more courses/continue/reach more people	8%
More info on particular topics	7%
Speaker was very good	6%
More in-person locations/interested in in-person course	5%
Include example scenarios/role-play	3%
Send slides/resources out	2%
Examples from other cultures/religions	1%

There are some differences by delivery method

- Online attendees more likely to say nothing needs changing (55% vs 35% for in-person attendees)
- In-person attendees were more likely to want more courses (16%) and particularly those attending in England and Wales (27%) and more likely to want more information on particular topics (11% vs 4% online)

95% would recommend this training to others

Q. How do you think we could improve our community grief training?
(Base: all training attendees across online and in-person responding to the post-training survey, n=349)

The training has had a wider positive impact for both Cruse and Co-op.

For Cruse Bereavement:

- Increased awareness of Cruse, particularly amongst some of the harder to reach audiences
- Generated interest from some attendees in booking paid-for training for wider organisation
- More partnership working between sister organisations (Cruse and Cruse Scotland)

> There are people that have come forward for this training that we would never have connected with otherwise. We are reaching people that we might not have. And it's been a great opportunity for us to work with our sister organisation on something.
> (Cruse Scotland team member)

> We have been in touch with Cruse since about their training that is specific to dementia grief. We are hoping to get the funding for that because I think it would be really beneficial to the wider team.
> (Training attendee; follow-up telephone interview)

For the Co-op:

- Increased awareness of Co-op's work in the communities
- Attendance at training from Co-op colleagues, particularly Funeralcare colleagues
- Opportunity for Co-op Member Activators to network and offer training to local causes and organisations

> Attending the training has been great. For me, it's really important that I'm here and that I meet people. Everyone [attending today's training] are all from Co-op causes or people in my network. It's really positive.
> (Co-op Member Activator)

> [The in-person training] give us a bit more in-roads into community groups and to offer them quite an exciting opportunity.
> (Co-op Member Activator)

Appendix.

Theory of Change (revisited July 2024).

Activities

Relationship Building:
With community members, organisations and local stakeholders

Community Grief Champion (CGC) support:
Monthly meetings and development workshops

Compassionate Communities training:
Online and face-to-face training to upskill attendees on understanding of grief, how to 'actively listen' and education on places/resources to signpost to

Community Social Action projects:
Projects/ideas identified by training participants as relevant for their local community

Project Management, insight and data collection, evaluation

Mechanisms of Change

Communities and Infrastructure:
- Have trust in the project and CGCs
- See the value of the project and are motivated to get involved
- Resonates with their own knowledge of the community and willing to take ownership and responsibility of the issue to better support their community
- Prepared to use assets and resources within the community to support this, beyond the life of the project

Cruse and Co-op:
- Able to identify strengths and assets in the community
- Are committed to learning

Outcomes

SHORT-TERM

Community interventions and connections
- Increased availability of information, support and resources
- Increased community connections; making communities part of the support structure by listening to and meeting community needs

Communities
- Increased knowledge, understanding and confidence around grief and how to support bereaved people
- Greater awareness of available information, support and community resources
- Feeling better prepared/having more knowledge about end of life

MEDIUM-TERM

Community infrastructure
Stronger partnerships between communities, service providers, VCE and statutory organisations

Communities
- Increased community capacity to support bereaved people
- Increased death literacy
- Community members feel better supported by their community following a bereavement
- Self-sustaining community activity

Impact

Community members are equipped and empowered to support others to cope and manage their grief

Create evidence to help shape UK policy and practice

Community members access bereavement support from local community and are less likely to need more formal interventions

Measuring goals and outcomes (July 2024).

Project goal/outcome	Outline evaluation activities	Limitations/challenges
Recruit 12 Community Grief Champion (CGCs) - minimum one per cluster	Application form data	
Deliver 48 online training courses to min. 2,000 individuals	Training data	
Deliver 48 face-to-face training courses to min. 960 individuals across 12 clusters	Training data	
Support a minimum of 2,880 community members within each cluster - based on estimate that each training attendee will go on to support three people	Include question on number of people supported in follow up survey with training attendees (to validate estimate)	Not possible to reach all the actual people supported by training attendees (e.g. due to issues around consent, ability and appropriateness of asking people to give feedback following a conversation etc)
Design and deliver offline resources	Numbers from distribution data and feedback on effectiveness from surveys with Funeralcare colleagues	Difficult to measure how many resources are used (only measuring how many are distributed)
Impact of support on people in the community	Qualitative feedback during visits at three 'spotlight' clusters and from statements in surveys amongst people attending engagement events	Explicit consent will need to be gained in order for Cop-op and Cruse to be able to use and share feedback (esp. images/videos)
Increased knowledge, understanding and confidence of grief	Include statements within registration forms and surveys; interviews/focus groups with volunteers and feedback gathered during in-person spotlight visits	Not feasible to gather a quantitative measure of the impact amongst community members
Greater awareness of available resources	Feedback from Funeralcare colleagues; Questions in follow-up impact survey of training attendees (e.g. did they tell people/ signpost to resources); Qualitative feedback from in-person spotlight visits	Not feasible to gather a quantitative measure of the impact amongst community members
Understand volunteer journey and experience	Regular engagement with volunteers via surveys, qualitative interviews, video diaries etc.	Explicit consent will need to be gained in order for Cop-op and Cruse to be able to use and share feedback (esp. images/videos)
Positive impact on wellbeing of volunteers and those trained	Project specific questions in registration and surveys around wellbeing; qualitative interviews with volunteers	Self reported based on answers to questions that focused on specific impact of project only - we cannot use validated measurement tools (usually used to measure impact of a specific intervention) as these would need to be collected pre and post activities/support and are not necessarily appropriate to ask of training attendees

An overview of the evaluation.

Early project (April-June 2024)

Feedback surveys designed and put in place by Cruse PM (based on phase one evaluation):

- Pre and post training surveys for in-person attendees
- Application form for volunteers
- Detailed DEI survey for volunteers and in-person attendees only
- Immediate post-training survey for all attendees

Sample sizes are very small for in-person feedback and online feedback is from post-training only

Independent evaluators in place (October 2024 on)

All feedback methods and surveys are reviewed:

- Surveys are updated to include new questions (whilst retaining core original questions)
- All surveys put into specialist survey software
- Regular volunteer feedback tools no longer deemed appropriate

Three surveys put in place for all training attendees (online and in-person):

- Pre-training, immediate post-training and follow-up (to be sent 2-3 months post training)
- Surveys updated again in December 2024: all pre-training surveys now include DEI questions (previously only asked of in-person attendees to minimise survey length for online attendees)

Planned qualitative research was delayed on advice from Cruse and an updated plan is now in place for February-May 2025

Qualitative evaluation plan.

Planned qualitative research, February - May 2025:

Examples of areas to be covered:

Volunteers

In-depth interviews, either face-to-face or remote, with six volunteers - three volunteers (in Edinburgh, Cambridge and Manchester) agreed to take part so far

- Motivations to becoming a volunteer
- Experience of volunteering in this role
- Learnings for future

In-person training attendees

Attend 3-4 in-person training sessions to observe training, gather ad-hoc feedback from attendees and recruit min. 3 for follow-up half-hour remote interviews (a few weeks later)

- Motivations to attend
- Assessment of the training
- How training will be/has been used

Wider stakeholders in the community

Use a variety of methods as appropriate (e.g. online interviews, short surveys with open questions) to research stakeholders in the community involved in the project

- Views of and involvement in the project
- Learnings for future projects

Co-op Activators

In-depth interviews, either face-to-face or remote, with approx. 3-4 Co-Op Activators

- Challenges and successes
- Learnings for future projects

Partnership team

In-depth interviews with Cruse Project Managers (two completed), Cruse Scotland CEO, the Cruse Marketing Lead and Co-op Community Partnerships and Impact Manager

- Challenges and successes
- Learnings for future projects

People supported within the community

Although we are not able to directly evaluate the impact of the project on people supported in the community (as we have no access to these people and no way of understanding the difference in the support they received from people who attended the training compared to if they had not attended training), we will gather anecdotal evidence about people supported from in-person training attendees in follow-up interviews and from the follow-up survey.

ps

ps research

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Highly Commended
Independent Consultants
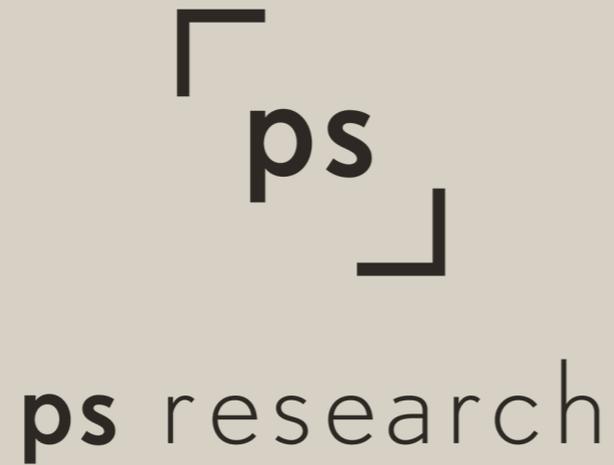
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