

# Apart of Me – Evaluation Report

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## **Introduction and Methodology**

### ***Introduction***

This document provides the detailed findings from an independent research study commissioned by Bounce Works to conduct an evaluation of the Apart of Me app.

Apart of Me is a game that is designed to help young people aged 11-18 years old, and their families, cope with life-limiting illness, death and grief. You can find out more about the game at <https://bounce.works/apartofme/>

### ***Research Objectives***

The research objectives for this project were:

- To understand overall attitudes and perceptions towards the Apart of Me game
- To get detailed feedback on each of the specific elements of the game
- To explore if and how the Apart of Me game helps users to manage their emotions
- To provide recommendations for how the game might be improved or developed to better meet the needs of the target audience

### ***Methodology and Sample***

Given that the project required an in depth understanding of how the app is being used and perceived by young people, and questioning around some sensitive issues to understand the impact of the game, it was decided that in-depth qualitative interviews would be the most appropriate methodology.

We conducted 9 x 1-hour interviews with young people aged between 10 and 17 years old. The interviews took place either over Skype or face-to-face. We had additional feedback via email from our youngest participant. Participants were recruited via free-find methods (social media, personal contacts and professional recruitment).

The table below provides further detail of the sample:

<b>Depth</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Details of Bereavement</b>	<b>Time since Bereavement</b>	<b>Location</b>
1	10 years	Female	Sister (stillborn)	Unknown	Somerset
2	11 years	Female	Cousin (murder), Uncle (sudden death)	Under 2 years	Essex
3	13 years	Male	Father (cancer), close family friend (cancer)	Under 2 years	London
4	14 years	Male	Father (cancer)	Under 2 years	Scotland
5	14 years	Male	Mum (cancer)	13 months	Kent
6	14 years	Female	Mum (cancer)	13 months	Kent
7	14 years	Female	3 x grandparents	Under 2 years	London
8	16 years	Female	Dad (sudden death)	18 months	London
9	16 years	Female	Sister (suicide)	2 years	London
10	17 years	Male	Dad (cancer)	3 years	Dorset

Fieldwork took place between May – July 2019. All interviews were conducted by Selena King, an experienced qualitative researcher with over 20 years' experience.

## Main Findings

### Overall Response

Overall, there was a very positive response towards the game and many said that the game had helped them to feel better about their situation; nearly all said they would recommend it to other young people who had lost a loved one:

*“I would recommend it... when you’re a kid and you lose a parent there aren’t many people around you who understand what you’re going through. It’s really helped me.” (Female, 14 years, cancer, 13 months)*

*“It helps you understand how you’re feeling. Say you’re feeling lonely, it tells you why you’re feeling that way, not just that you’re feeling it” (Male, 14 years, cancer, under 2 years)*

*“Yes, I would recommend it, it’s really good, it’s really flexible and it’s always with you so you’ve got help whenever you need it.” (Male, 14 years, cancer, under 2 years)*

The concept and objectives of Apart of Me are generally well understood i.e. that it is a resource to help with grief following a bereavement, which is delivered in a game format, and this is seen by many as a new, relevant and effective way of providing support around a bereavement:

*“It’s a game that can relieve you of stress and help you with loss.” (Male, 13 years, multiple loss, under 2 years)*

*“It’s for people who have lost a close friend or family member, to help them through it and teach them how to live with it, how to deal with it.” (Male, 14 years, cancer, 13 months)*

*“It’s new and it’s different. You’re not being asked to fill out a worksheet or do therapy... that’s a lot of pressure and not as easy as playing a game.” (Male, 14 years, cancer, under 2 years)*

*“It’s a really nice way of learning how to deal with loss... it’s relaxed and calming and you’re not forced to do anything. You can play it the way you want to... it’s guided but not pressured.” (Male, 17 years, cancer, 3 years)*

### Identifying the Key Target Audience

The research showed differing levels of engagement with the app, determined by two key factors:

1. Age of the young person
2. Time since bereavement

## 1. Age of the young person

Whilst the game has potential to reach young people across the 11-18 yearold age range, it is likely to have most appeal for 13-16 year olds:

- **<13 years**, then the concept of the game can be hard to grasp cognitively
  - Focus tends to be more on the gameplay, the environment and ‘levelling up’, as opposed to the content
  - This means they can skip through the content and miss the emotional check ins, the prompts and reminders, and what they need to do to level up
  - Without a better grasp of what the game is trying to achieve, the game can sometimes feel slow and confusing and so interest can dwindle
  - Also, at the pre-teen ages, children are much less likely to have freedom of access to technology to be able to play the game as and when they need to
  - All that being said, simple exposure to the Apart of Me environment still appears have benefits

*“I’m not really using it for emotions because I just want to go and explore, but I can’t really do it anymore because I can’t find any new things” (female, 11 years, multiple loss, under 2 years)*

*“I listened to one story but then I just wanted to go and travel [around the game]” (female, 11 years, multiple loss, under 2 years)*

*“I mainly just like walking around, you feel free and you can do what you want.” (Male, 13 years, multiple loss, under 2 years)*

*“It’s on my Mum’s phone so I can only play it when she’s not using it.” (Female, 11 years, multiple loss, under 2 years)*

- **13-16 years**, both the gameplay and the content are pitched at the right level
  - At this age they have the cognitive ability to grasp the concept of the game
  - They are fully able to engage with the content, understand what is required of them and what they need to do to progress
  - They realise it’s not a conventional ‘game’ but really appreciate this format as a way of delivering support

*“It allows you to get help in a creative way, you can take as long as you want and there’s no pressure to use it, but it’s always there if you need it” (Male, 14 years, cancer, under 2 years)*

- **>16 years**, the gameplay can feel childish and the content a little patronising
  - At this age, they are starting to assert themselves as adults and are actively seeking out more grown-up approaches in all aspects of life

*“It’s aimed at people younger than me, 12 to 13-year-olds... they’re more into this kind of fantasy” (Male, 17 years, cancer, 3 years)*

*“I think I’m a bit old for it, the language is a bit patronising, this is more for younger kids. I want something a bit more straight up.” (Female, 16 years, suicide, 2 years)*

- Interestingly, some of the adults encountered during this study reported to have found the app personally useful and supportive in terms of managing their own grief, showing that Apart of Me is a tool that can have much broader appeal
  - *“I’ve been using it too and it’s really relaxing. I think it’s helped me just as much as it’s helped her” (Mum of 16-year-old female, sudden death under 2 years)*

## 2. Time since bereavement

Although there is always potential for wider scope, Apart of Me is likely to most benefit young people who have been bereaved between 6-24 months.

Whilst we didn’t speak to anyone who had been bereaved for less than 12 months, our participants were able to reflect on how they felt in the immediate time after bereavement

- They said they were still in shock and that feelings would have been too raw for them to be able to engage with this kind of content

*“I wouldn’t recommend it to someone who had just been bereaved, you need time to accept what’s happened first.” (Female, 14 years, cancer, 13 months)*

*“I don’t think it would be helpful immediately after [a loss]. You need to get back to normal and in the months afterwards you’re just not there” (Male, 17 years, cancer, 3 years)*

*“There needs to be time between a person dying and you playing the game. It’s been a year or so now and I’m still upset and everything but you’ve had enough time to think about what’s happened and laugh over things and not just think about the most upsetting moments.” (Female, 16 years, sudden death, 18 months)*

Those who had been bereaved for longer than 2 years felt that they no longer needed this kind of support

*“My sister died 2 years ago now and it starts to fade a bit... I think this would have been really helpful if I’d had it nearer to the time, I don’t need this kind of support so much now.” (Female, 16 years, suicide, 2 years)*

*“I don’t think it really helped me... my dad died over 2 years ago now” (Male, 17 years, cancer, 3 years)*

## **Response to the Gameplay**

The gaming format is working well to create good engagement with the content:

- Participants enjoyed finding and collecting the rocks, fireflies and bottles, and the search for new items creates a hook that keeps them coming back
- This gaming mechanic enables a 'slow release' of content, which means that young users never feel overwhelmed and this creates a higher likelihood of them engaging with and digesting all of the different elements
- The gaming environment itself was liked and young people appreciate the colours and the sounds, and enjoy exploring the island and meeting the different characters
- The slow pace of the game was felt to be appropriate and simply being in the game environment was often enough to bring about a feeling of relaxed calm

*"It's relaxing and calming... it's low effort and you don't have to concentrate too much. It's very peaceful." (Female, 14 years, cancer, 13 months)*

*"It's calm, soothing and relaxing, it lets you go at your own pace." (Female, 14 years, multiple loss, under 2 years)*

*"Just playing it is really relaxing anyway, just wandering about not doing anything in particular you can hear the sound of the waves and the birds, they're relaxing noises so even if you don't want to do anything particular while you're in there you can just have the phone on and listen to the noises." (Female, 16 years, sudden death, 18 months)*

Most of the young people understood that they were working towards Guide level but they weren't always clear what was required to reach that level

- However, this was not an issue - for most young people, the levelling up aspect of the game was simply an enjoyable way of engaging with the different elements
- Levelling up was not a key motivation to interact with the app, which suggests that there is a good balance between gaming and support elements

*"When I first went on it I wanted to try and unlock things but then I realised it didn't work like that." (Female, 16 years, suicide, 2 years)*

*"You're not playing it as a competitive game, there's not a win factor... you play it when you want or need to. It's like you play PlayStation when there's nothing else to do, but you play this when you need to." (Male, 14 years, cancer, 13 months)*

*"I use it when I need to and if I level up that's just a bonus." (Male, 14 years, cancer, under 2 years)*

*"It's not about completing the game, you don't just get over your grief." (Female, 14 years, multiple loss, under 2 years)*

The game itself was generally felt to be easy to understand and most participants understood that they needed to visit different locations and collect items to unlock different



content. However, once a task is completed, it's not always clear what to do next, which can leave people wandering around feeling a bit lost and unsure

- This was more problematic amongst the younger ages, who were more likely to get bored quickly
- However, even people from the key target age range said they sometimes found the game a bit tedious and would prefer a bit more structure

*"It needs to be bigger and harder to explore, it's too slow and there's no way to run."* (Male, 13 years, multiple loss, under 2 years)

*"It's not always clear what you need to do so it leaves you hanging a bit. I think it could do with a bit more structure... it's nice that you don't always have to do stuff but it would be good to have some guidance."* (Female, 14 years, cancer, 13 months)

*"You spend a lot of time wandering around without a task, which is a bit confusing. It tells you to do a task and you do it and then nothing. I would prefer a bit more structure... it didn't put me off but I felt confused."* (Female, 14 years, multiple loss, under 2 years)

*"Sometimes it can feel a bit tedious running around trying to find the different bottles, butterflies and rocks and stuff. It doesn't give you a general direction of where to find stuff so you can be wandering around for ages... but I guess there has to be a balance... if they told you where it was then you'd be boom, boom, boom, boom and you've done it all."* (Male, 14 years, cancer, under 2 years)

On the whole, the app strikes a good balance between the game being challenging enough to create engagement without making it so difficult that people can't access the resources

- However, there were some calls for a few more gaming elements to maintain interest and attention

*"The world was a bit small and it feels repetitive... I would like to see it expanded... give people more to do. It needs a bit more to make it usable over a longer period of time."* (Male, 17 years, cancer, 3 years)

*"I've got to Guide and so there's no more quests or things to do. I'm still using it but not as frequently. I go on mainly for the Rockpool or if I need to calm down"* (Female, 16 years, sudden death, 18 months)

*"There's not enough to do once you've unlocked everything, then it's just going to the Rockpool and you get bored. There needs to be more of a reason to play. Maybe release the resources quite quickly but give people reasons to keep coming back and using it."* (Female, 16 years, suicide, 2 years)

**Key summary and recommendations for the gameplay:**

- Currently there is a good balance between the gameplay and content elements, and a high level of engagement with both

- Whilst there are calls for increased gameplay elements to help further increase engagement and extend the longevity of the game, care should be taken to not tip the balance and overshadow the resources and content
- It would be interesting to understand if and how young people continue to use the app after they have reached Guide level i.e. do they still continue to use it as a resource as and when they need it, or is it forgotten about
- Are there other rewards or ways i.e. in real life or on social media etc. to engage and support Guide level users once they have completed all the tasks?

## **Detailed Response to Specific Elements**

### **The Cave**

The Cave is both popular and impactful in terms of helping young people to manage their feelings of aloneness and isolation that often occur after a significant bereavement. It was often spontaneously mentioned as a particularly supportive element of the app

- The stories were often described as being 'relatable' and 'reassuring', helping people to feel that they are not alone
- Many also liked learning from other people's experiences, gaining advice on how to manage their own situation and feelings

*"They can help you think about what to do next... by seeing what others' have done you can learn from their experiences" (Male, 14 years, cancer, under 2 years)*

*"It's reinforces that you're not alone and you see other people going through exactly the same or similar situations, and they're doing fine, so it tells you that you'll get through it in the end" (Female, 16 years, sudden death, 18 months)*

*"I really enjoyed this part...so useful if you don't know anyone else going through this, which is likely when you're young. Hearing about other people helps to normalise your own experience" (Female, 16 years, suicide, 2 years)*

*"The stories are good because it's about actual stuff that's important... real life stories help you feel less by yourself. It's comforting." (Female, 14 years, multiple loss, under 2 years)*

The way in which each story is broken into different parts was appreciated for allowing them to take things at their own pace and not feel overwhelmed

- It also allows them to go back and listen to parts of a story they find helpful
- For some, listening to a story again was a reason to return to the app

*"I like that it's in chunks, you don't have to listen to it all at once... it might make you upset so it's good to listen to parts of it and then you can go back and listen to the specific bits that helped" (Male, 14 years, cancer, under 2 years)*

*"It's great that you can go back and listen to the meaningful ones again, it's always there to go back to" (Female, 16 years, suicide, 2 years)*

*"I went there [to The Cave] most visits." (Female, 14 years, multiple loss, under 2 years)*

Whilst many of the young people listened to all of the stories, and appreciated hearing about different experiences to their own, they were most interested in the stories that related most to their situation

- It will therefore be important to ensure that a good variety of different types of bereavement, and relationships to the deceased, are represented

- On the whole, there was felt to be good variation, but it was noted by one participant who had lost their Mum, that many of the current stories are from people who have lost their Dad and they were keen for there to be more of a balance

*“I went through them all and found the ones that related most, there was only one or two. It’s important you can relate to them because it makes you feel better, it’s the reassurance that you’re not the only one” (Male, 14 years, cancer, under 2 years)*

*“All of the stories are about the Dad, there are five of them, there’s only one about a Mum” (Male, 14 years, cancer, 13 months)*

*“I didn’t come across any siblings. It’s a very specific relationship and there wasn’t any siblings there” (Female, 16 years, suicide, 2 years)*

#### *Summary and recommendations for the Cave:*

- The Cave is a key supportive element of the app, which creates empathy and helps to offset feelings of loneliness and isolation. Suggestions for development include:
  - Develop a bank of stories which relate to as many situations as possible
  - If possible, match the most relevant stories to the user’s situation (via the information gathered at the start) and introduce them early on, helping them to access those stories that are likely to be most supportive from the start
  - Once a number of stories have been accessed, provide users with a ‘reason to return’ by refreshing the stories so they discover new ones every time they visit
  - Provide a save function so that people can ensure their favourite stories are always accessible

#### **The Rockpool**

The Rockpool was appreciated by many for being a key supportive element of the game:

- Helps them to slow down, calm down and clear or focus their minds
- The sound of water was often felt to be relaxing and soothing
- A couple of them had their favourite meditation, which they were specifically returning to when they needed help to calm down

*“It helps you to calm down and take things in... it’s soothing... I often end up going on there when I need to chill out. It’s not just for when I’m sad... it can help if you’ve just had a difficult day at school or something.” (Male, 14 years, cancer, under 2 years)*

*“It creates a moment where you can calm down and clear your mind. You get into your own space where there’s nothing to disturb you or think about.” (Female, 14 years, multiple loss, under 2 years)*

*“I like the one where it tells you to breathe in kindness and breathe out peace. It’s helpful... it’s life advice... always a good thing to remember.” (Male, 14 years, cancer, under 2 years)*

*"If I'm in a stressed-out situation or I'm angry or upset, you can just go to the Rockpool and it will help you calm down. Sometimes I use it just before bed because when I'm trying to sleep that's when all the thoughts and feelings come back. It just soothes me so I'm able to go back to sleep." (Female, 16 years, sudden death, 18 months)*

There were mixed feelings around the narrator's voice. The majority felt the narrator's voice created a feeling of supportive calm, and this was often spontaneously mentioned. However, the voice didn't appeal to two of the people we spoke to.

*"It's a smooth voice, inviting, homely, you feel no judgement, none of that. It's reassuring because it sounds like someone trying to help you." (Male, 14 years, cancer, under 2 years)*

*"It's very peaceful and the voice is calming." (Female, 14 years, multiple loss, under 2 years)*

*"I don't like the man's voice in the crystals bit because he sounds unhappy and sad." (Female, 10 years, stillborn sibling)*

*"The voice feels a bit flat and mechanic. Is it a real person? Or is it a computer-generated voice? It's very flat." (Female, 16 years, suicide, 2 years)*

Although the feedback was mainly positive, there were areas for improvement:

- It is not always clear that each of the meditations are slightly different, which can heighten perceptions of the gameplay being a bit slow and monotonous
- Some felt that some of the techniques were too long
- A couple of them struggled to sync their thumb with the screen which created a bit of frustration

*"I would like to see more variation in the exercises" (Female, 14 years, multiple loss, under 2 years)*

*"I got my second crystal and put it in but it seemed to be an identical exercise" (Male, 17 years, cancer, 3 years)*

*"Some of them are quite long. I can't really sit there for ages, I kind of always have to move." (Female, 16 years, sudden death, 18 months)*

*Summary and recommendations for The Rockpool:*

- The Rockpool is a key supportive element of the app, which provides users with an immediately accessible tool they can use to self soothe and calm down. Suggestions for development include:
  - Create more differentiation between the different meditations
  - Consider using a variety of different voices to create broader appeal

## **The Guide's Hut**

All of the participants had visited the Guide's Hut and whilst none felt that they personally needed to use the resources there, they appreciated seeing them available

- Easy to find and clear as to what was being offered
- Reassuring to know where they could go for further help
- Recognised that this might be needed for other young people who are struggling or who don't have wider support

*"It gives you nine different places you can go to for help. Even if you don't click on them you know they're there." (Male, 14 years, cancer, under 2 years)*

*"I saw the board but I didn't go there much. This is for young people who need more support." (Female, 14 years, multiple loss, under 2 years)*

*"It's for people who really need serious support... but it's good they can go straight there and it's there waiting for them. Even for me, if like one day I'm just seriously sad. I can go straight there, I know where to find it." (Female, 16 years, sudden death, 18 months)*

Only two of the participants had discovered the Telescope:

- The 13-year-old was confused as to why the telescope looked out to sea but then he saw mountains – he thought this was a mistake and said it as 'annoying'
- The 16-year-old appreciated it as a tool that she could use in real life to be more present in the moment

*"It's good because I might be at school and I can think, oh yeah I'll use my telescope eyes and look around the room and the people. I don't have to be on the game to take that moment to breathe or whatever." (Female, 16 years, sudden death, 18 months)*

## **The Quests**

The quests are a supportive and interesting element of the app that give young people permission to reflect and communicate with the people around them

- Many appreciated this time to reflect on things outside of the game

The majority of people had done at least a couple of the quests and reported that doing them had helped them feel better

- For those who had been more recently bereaved it was difficult for them think about their loved ones because sad memories dominate
- Therefore, they appreciated the opportunity to think of happier times and/ or to think more deeply about the person they had lost
- Talking to their families about memories of their loved one had helped them to remember happier times and discover new stories that they'd not heard before

- It had also encouraged positive conversation between family members
- Being encouraged to write things down was appreciated for helping them to remember and keep memories for the future

*“The quests really helped me because I could look back at the happy memories instead of the sad memories” (Female, 16 years, sudden death, 18 months)*

*“I really liked that it got you to write things down. It means you can look back... it helps you to remember things.” (Female, 14 years, cancer, 13 months)*

*“They were difficult things to write about but once I did them I felt much better” (Male, 14 years, cancer, under 2 years)*

Although not stated openly there was a sense that for a couple of young people this part of the app had felt a little bit overwhelming i.e. made them feel too upset

- Important that completing the quests is optional, light touch and not an intrinsic part of the game, i.e. does not need to be completed to level up

It is worth noting that the youngest participants had not engaged with the quests. Those who had been bereaved for longer than two years also felt that the quests were likely to be more useful and appropriate for those who had been bereaved more recently

- Can highlight things they have forgotten or can't remember
- Or they felt that they had been through this process already

*“I found it a little bit upsetting because sometimes I couldn't remember and it made me feel, oh gosh, have I just forgotten all of this. It was nice if I could think of something to write down so I know I can go back there and look at it again but I think if you can do them sooner after bereavement then it's more likely that things will be fresher on your memory” (Female, 16 years, suicide, 2 years)*

*“I did it but I feel like I'd been through this process already at an earlier stage” (Male, 17 years, cancer, 3 years)*

#### **Summary and recommendations for The Quests:**

- The quests work well to help young people create more positive connections around their loss, both through memories and through talking to others
- Giving young people an option to store the information they have collected on their quest, in the game, would enable them to access their happier memories when they most need them, acting as a further resource

#### **The Emotional Check In**

The emotional check in struggled to engage the youngest and oldest participants

- The younger participants just wanted to get on with the game
- Older participants felt they were able to make sense of their emotions and so saw this as being aimed at people younger than them

However, it is working well to engage and support the core target audience (13-16 years)

- Helps them to think fully and deeply into the present moment and encourages openness and acceptance for whatever they are feeling
- Creates a space for them to step back from themselves and their situation
- Encourages them to explore their feelings on their own terms, with no judgement and with no pressure
- They found the advice on how to manage their emotions useful and reassuring
- For some, the emotional check in was a reason to return to the app

*“I don’t talk a lot and I don’t tell people how I feel, so this is easy to do. I can find out how I’m feeling and then it gives you a bit of advice... it’s a reason for me to go on it.”*  
(Male, 14 years, cancer, under 2 years)

*“It’s good that you do this every time. It reminds you of how you’re feeling, it reminds you that it’s ok to feel how you feel.”* (Female, 14 years, cancer, 13 months)

*“It’s really useful because you don’t always realise how you’re feeling. It helps you to get to know your feelings better and recognise them. A lot of the time you’re just ignoring them and this makes you think about what you can do to help yourself.”*  
(Female, 14 years, multiple loss, under 2 years)

*“It was really really nice, really useful. It had the usual ones like happy, sad, angry, lonely, but the subcategories had things like joyous, blessed and proud for happy, so it actually made me think “no, what am I feeling?”, it helps you to go deeper.”*  
(Female, 16 years, sudden death, 18 months)

*“It’s great for younger kids... it’s so isolating if you don’t know how you’re feeling and it’s useful to give them insight into how they’re feeling so they can tell others. Everything is so crazy and unreal after... this can give you the words and help you feel more grounded in your own emotion.”* (Female, 16 years, suicide, 2 years)

*Summary and recommendations for the Emotional Check In:*

- A key element of the app, which is working very well in real time to help young people understand and manage their emotions
- No recommendations for further development

## **The Fireflies**

The Fireflies appealed to nearly all the participants in the study

- Finding and catching them creates a challenge, which engages people with the gaming side of the app
- Many young people found the explanations of the different emotions to be informative, useful and interesting
- Catching them one by one gave people time to properly consider and reflect on each one



*"I still can't find the last one and it's really annoying me! But they're really great, there's a good range of different emotions, there's lots of depth of emotion and they're really specific so you have a really wide range to choose from depending on how you feel (Male, 14 years, cancer, under 2 years)*

By offering a 'library of emotions' this element of the app is working well to both educate and support young people around their feelings

- It gives them an overview of all of the different types of emotion they may encounter after the loss of a loved one
- They can use it if they want to explore, identify and manage how they're feeling at any given time
- It provides reassurance that it is ok and normal to be feeling different emotions
- A couple of people mentioned they would like to see more 'positive' emotions represented

*"I really loved the fireflies, it was one of my favourite things. It told you about guilt which is a really common thing that you experience, it told you about them [emotions] in really simple terms so you can reflect and see which ones apply to you. It helps you to think oh yes, I have experienced this, which really helps you to think it's ok to feel these things." (Female, 16 years, suicide, 2 years)*

*"If I'm feeling a little bit down, I go and look up all the fireflies and I'll look through them and I'll be like, oh yeah, that's how I feel and I can click on it and get the advice on how I feel at that time." (Male, 14 years, cancer, under 2 years)*

*"It's hard to explain why they're helpful, they're just helpful and it's not just about grief, it can help you with emotions generally, like if you're stressed or confused." (Male, 14 years, cancer, under 2 years)*

*"In a way it helps you more than the emotional check in because things are described to you." (Female, 16 years, suicide, 2 years)*

*"You do have mixed feelings when you're grieving, you're not always sad and you might end up feeling guilty about feeling happy, so it's good it had happiness in there" (Female, 16 years, suicide, 2 years)*

Some young people felt that this element of the app could go further, both in terms of the range of emotions covered and in terms of the advice it offers on how to manage emotions

- One person felt that most of the emotions were 'negative' ones and he wanted to see some more 'positive' ones represented
- Another found the definitions a bit 'samey' and wanted to see more advice

*"Just telling you about the emotions is not helpful, it needs to tell you how to deal with your emotions more." (Female, 14 years, multiple loss, under 2 years)*

*Summary and key recommendations for the Fireflies:*

- Works well alongside the Emotional Check In to provide an accessible resource on emotions that young people can use to learn about and explore the wide range of emotions that they might experience through their grief process. Suggestions for development include:
  - Match the emotions provided in the emotional check in, so the young people can go and learn about different emotions in their own time
  - Potential to include even more emotions, including some more positive ones, and give more advice on how to manage different emotions

### ***Message in a Bottle***

Those who had managed to unlock this part of the game enjoyed reading about the different perspectives of death across different cultures

- Interesting and educational
- Offers a different perspective
- Adds another dimension to the game, not all about emotions

*“It’s important to learn about different perspectives on loss and grief... you learn something new and you might relate to it.” (Male, 14 years, cancer, under 2 years)*

*“You often only hear one opinion, so it’s good to see a bunch of opinions because you can see which one you relate to the most.” (Female, 14 years, multiple loss, under 2 years)*

*“They’re interesting, I think they’re a nice thing that add to the game and give you more to do... it gives a balance to all of the emotion stuff.” (Female, 16 years, suicide, 2 years)*

*Summary and key recommendations for the Messages in a Bottle:*

- Although not a key support element of the game, the messages add to the gameplay and offer relevant points of interest that help to further engage people in the app
- No recommendations for further development

## Conclusions and recommendations

Overall, Apart of Me is working extremely well to engage and support young people who have recently been bereaved, through both the content and gaming elements of the app

- This is a particularly difficult audience to engage, especially with an app, and so the fact that there has been such strong positive feedback is a significant endorsement

The different elements of the app work well together to create a safe and supportive environment for young people to explore their emotions around grief and there is clear evidence from this study that the app helps young people in a number of different ways:

- Reassures young people that they're not alone in their bereavement
- Helps them to navigate, understand and manage their emotions
- Provides an immediately accessible source of support that actively helps them if they feel anxious or need to calm down
- The Rockpool, the Cave and emotional support elements (the check in and the fireflies) are standing out as being the key elements for support

The app delivery format allows young people to access support on their own terms and in their own time, which means that support can be delivered in real time and at a point of real need

- Provides strong potential to engage young people who struggle with other more conventional forms of support
- Provides good opportunity to engage young people who don't have access to any other kind of support

This study showed that engagement is likely to be strongest amongst 13-16 year olds

- Whilst we suggest that Apart of Me maintains its broad target age of 11-18 year olds, we recommend that 13-16 year olds are the key focus for any development of the game and its content
- We also recommend targeting the game at young people who have been bereaved between 6-24 months, as they are most likely to be open to, and in need of, this kind of support

It was noted that the game is limited in terms of capacity to keep young people engaged after the game has been completed, which may leave young people feeling a gap

- Whilst the gaming elements could be developed to increase longevity, care should be taken not to overshadow or restrict the support elements of the game
- We recommend considering different ways to continue to engage young people once the game has been completed

There are a few key recommendations for further development:

- Develop a bank of stories for the Cave that can be rotated and refreshed each visit
- Ensure that different types of loss are well represented in the stories and, if possible, target them to relevant users early on in their experience
- Create more differentiation between the different meditations at the Rockpool and consider using a variety of different voices to create broader appeal

- Ensure that all the emotions that are offered in the Check In are also covered by the Fireflies so people can explore them more deeply