



# HEALTHIER MINDS

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

**A Community Approach  
to Supporting Bereavement, Loss  
and Grief**



**Guidance for Educational Establishments**



The Prince & Princess  
of Wales Hospice



# Contents

Introduction to Bereavement, Loss and Grief .....	4
Policy context.....	5
Community Approach .....	5
Background and Rationale .....	6
What is Bereavement?.....	7
Impact of Childhood Bereavement.....	7
How Children and Young People Grieve .....	8
Grief Response by Stage of Development .....	9
Infants (birth to 2 years) .....	9
Preschool-age children (2-5 years old) .....	10
Primary school-age children (six to 12 years) .....	11
Adolescents and Adults.....	12
Children and Young People with Additional Support Needs .....	13
Theories of Bereavement and Loss: The Dual Process Model.....	13
Theories of Bereavement and Loss: Worden’s Tasks of Grieving.....	14
Role of Education Staff in Supporting Bereaved Pupils .....	15
How to Talk about Death and Dying .....	18
Anticipatory Grief.....	19
Supporting the Bereaved Child or Young Person on Returning to Education .....	20
Ways for Children and Young People to Remember .....	23
As Time Passes .....	24
Suicide and Sudden Death .....	25
Appendix 1 Further Information and Support .....	26
Understanding the Theory: The Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement.....	26
The Whirlpool of Grief .....	27
Further Reading .....	28
Websites for Educational Establishments.....	29
Where to Find Help.....	30
Appendix 2 Early Learning and Childcare.....	35
Example of Good Practice in an East Renfrewshire Early Learning and Childcare Centre .....	35
Introducing the Themes of Loss and Death in an Early Learning and Childcare Setting .....	37
Suggested Resources: Preschool.....	40

Appendix 3	Primary School .....	42
	Example of Good Practice in an East Renfrewshire Primary School.....	42
	Introducing the Themes of Loss and Death in a Primary School Setting.....	44
	Suggested Resources: Primary.....	50
Appendix 4	Secondary School .....	55
	Example of Good Practice in an East Renfrewshire Secondary School .....	55
	Exploring the Themes of Loss and Death in a Secondary School Setting .....	57
	Suggested Resources: Secondary.....	61
Appendix 5	Additional Support Needs - Resources .....	64
Appendix 6	Developing a Strategy for Supporting Bereaved Children and Young People.....	66
Appendix 7	Responding to a Bereavement in the School Community.....	70
	Acknowledgements.....	71



## Introduction to Bereavement, Loss and Grief








Loss is a common occurrence which affects individuals in very different ways. The impact of loss can be far reaching and devastating. We may experience loss of a home and community through moving house; loss of social contacts through changing jobs; loss of familiar family life through parental breakup or birth of a sibling; or loss of possessions through theft. Loss is most often considered to be a negative or painful process and one which requires time, space and the support of others to aid recovery. This is especially true for loss suffered through death. Regardless of age, the experience of bereavement is significant and can be life changing.

**A community approach to supporting bereavement acknowledges that it is the combined effort of individuals and local services that creates the building blocks for recovery and positive emotional health and wellbeing following bereavement or loss.**

This resource is designed to help education staff feel more confident and knowledgeable when supporting a child, young person, family member or member of staff who is experiencing loss through bereavement.

In this resource you will find information on:

-  children and young people's understanding of death and bereavement
-  the impact of loss and bereavement on behaviour and emotional development
-  ways in which themes of loss, bereavement and change can be introduced into the curriculum to enable children, young people and staff to explore experiences and feelings and develop healthy coping strategies
-  useful resources, websites and information about local support organisations
-  advice on developing a School Bereavement Policy in order to more fully prepare for unexpected and tragic events

## Policy context






Nurturing and supporting the health and wellbeing of children and young people are key components of national and local statutory and policy documents including ***The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009*** and ***Curriculum for Excellence***.

In East Renfrewshire Council the Education Department's vision statement ***Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences*** clearly links to the ***Single Outcome Agreement*** which prioritises the health and wellbeing of all children within its commitment to improving outcomes for all learners. Providing effective support to children and young people who have experienced bereavement and loss is an important element of this vision.





***Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)*** places multi-agency collaboration at the heart of effective planning for promoting the emotional wellbeing of all children and young people. In a community approach everyone has a collective role to play in supporting those who have experienced bereavement and loss.

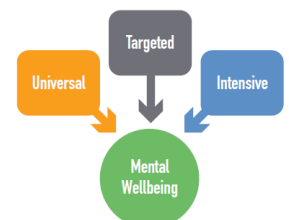
## Community Approach

Our educational establishments can provide:

-  a caring and nurturing environment which supports all children including those who are experiencing bereavement and loss
-  curricular opportunities for all children to develop their life long resilience in the face of adversity and loss
-  policy and procedures for supporting pupils, family members and staff members through, and beyond, periods of bereavement and loss
-  ongoing training and support for staff members
-  information and advice to bereaved family members of our pupils

Our partner agencies can provide:

-  ongoing training for school staff in supporting bereaved families
-  up to date information on local and national support services
-  information signposts where further support is required
-  additional direct support to families where appropriate



**A community approach aims to provide support in a preventive and tiered way which is responsive to the individual and their unique experience of loss and bereavement.**

## Background and Rationale

A recent study of the prevalence of childhood bereavement in Scotland revealed that over half (50.8%) of all children will have experienced the death of a close family member by the age of 8 and almost two thirds of children (62%) will have experienced a close family bereavement by the age of 10 (Paul and Vaswani, 2020). This is, however, an underestimate of the true extent of childhood bereavement.

### What else do we know about childhood bereavement?

In 2015 an estimated 23,600 parents died in the UK, leaving around 41,000 dependent children aged 0-17. That's 112 newly bereaved children every day.

*Childhood Bereavement Network*

It is estimated that there are around 26,000 school age children in Scotland who have been bereaved of a parent or sibling at some point in their childhood. In 2014, around 2,390 parents died in Scotland, leaving around 3,920 dependent children.

*NHS Education for Scotland*

At any one time, 70% of primary schools have a recently bereaved child on their roll.

*Holland, 1993*

78% of 11-16 year olds reported that they had been bereaved of a close relative or friend.

*Harrison and Harrington, 2001*

Children from lower socio economic status families are significantly more likely to experience the death of a parent or sibling

*Paul and Vaswani, 2020*

"I felt really angry... at no one in particular, just angry"

S6 Pupil








## What is Bereavement?

The term 'bereavement' refers to the process of grieving and mourning and is associated with a deep sense of loss and sadness. While it is a natural process the emotions can be overwhelming. A leading childhood bereavement charity **Winston's Wish** reports that children often feel isolated when they are grieving and may feel that nobody understands their feelings. Everyone's experience of bereavement will be unique, however, certain reactions are common to children as well as adults. Specifically, children and young people may experience a great number of emotions, including **sadness, anger, anxiety, guilt, fear, denial, disbelief and confusion**. Most children and young people will **not** require professional help or a 'bereavement expert'; rather, more important is the **care and understanding of familiar and trusted adults**. Family members, friends and trusted adults including education staff are well placed to provide such support and **by simply caring, listening and helping children and young people to carry on with their usual daily activities, the negative impact of bereavement can be reduced**.



## Impact of Childhood Bereavement

Bereavement can have a significant impact on a young person's health and wellbeing. The following risks to development have been identified:

-  reduced self-esteem: two years following the death of a parent, self-esteem is significantly lower in comparison to peers. (Silverman & Worden, 1992)
-  reduced academic achievement (Van Eerdewegh et al, 1985)
-  increased risk of offending behaviour (Liddle & Solanki, 2000)
-  increased incidence of teenage pregnancy (Young 1994)
-  increased risk of developing psychological distress & adult depression (Weller et al, 1991; Black & Young, 1995; Berman et al, 1998)

In addition, in the short term, children and young people are vulnerable to reduced engagement and concentration at school. They may display a change in behaviour such as poor attendance, risk-taking behaviour, mood swings, becoming withdrawn, bullying behaviour or illness (Child Bereavement UK).

These risks are not inevitable and can be significantly reduced through adopting simple and sensitive, preventive and responsive support strategies in school.



## How Children and Young People Grieve

Grief affects everyone differently, however, the developmental age of a child or young person will have a direct impact on their understanding of death. This will, to a large extent, predict their response to death in addition to the following factors:

- the relationship of the child or young person to the person who has died
- the behaviour of adults around them
- the child's or young person's personality
- any additional support needs the child or young person might have
- the child's or young person's level of communication
- the child's or young person's previous experience of death

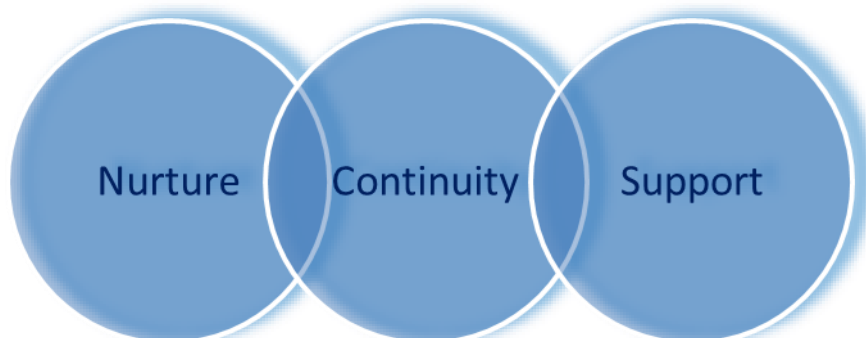
*Black (1993)*

Grief in children and young people will present differently to that of adults. Most children and young people do not experience the sustained intense emotion experienced by adults. They may show their sadness only occasionally and for brief periods, or may complain of physical discomfort, such as having a sore stomach or head, rather than expressing sadness. The grief comes and goes, and may be triggered by life events, anniversaries or world events regardless of the amount of time that has passed.



Grief in childhood is often referred to as 'puddle jumping' as children often go between brief periods of intense emotion and familiar everyday activities. **This is a normal reaction to a bereavement in a child or young person.**

Most children and young people manage the task of mourning in a healthy way and only a minority are at risk of developing high levels of emotional and behavioural problems (Haine et al., 2008). Similarly, most bereaved children do not need specialist bereavement support (Dowdney, 2000) as long as the adults around the children provide:





## Grief Response by Stage of Development








Understanding of death and responses to bereavement and loss will differ depending on the child or young person's developmental stage. It is necessary to consider the child or young person's **developmental stage rather than chronological age** when considering how the child or young person might react to a loss and the most appropriate form of support. This section explains what to expect at each stage and what supports should be considered. It is important to remember that children and young people do not move abruptly from one stage of development to the next and the characteristics from each stage may overlap.

### Infants (birth to 2 years)

At this stage of development children are not able to understand death, but will experience the **loss as a separation** from someone to whom they may have an attachment. Due to limited ability to communicate verbally, children may express this loss in other ways, such as becoming withdrawn or crying more frequently. The emotional state of people around them may also have an adverse effect, and **normality and routine are very important**.

#### **Key Points**

##### **Children from birth to 2 years:**









-  have no understanding of death
-  are aware of separation and will grieve the absence of a parent or carer
-  may respond with increased crying, decreased responsiveness, and changes in eating or sleeping
-  may keep looking or asking for a missing parent or carer and wait for him or her to return
-  are most affected by the sadness of surviving family members

## Preschool-age children (2-5 years old)

At this stage of development children believe that **death is reversible or temporary**. They may also be convinced that it was something that they said or did which caused the person to die. Abstract concepts are not easily grasped, and so it is important that the child is spoken to in very **concrete terms**. In order to make sense of what has happened children at this age may often ask the same questions over and over again.

### **Key Points**

#### **Children from 2 - 5 years:**

-  are curious about death and believe death is temporary or reversible
-  are naturally egocentric and see themselves as the cause of events around them so may feel responsible for the death
-  may see death as the person is sleeping
-  understand the world as a mix of reality and fantasy
-  may think that they can make the deceased come back if they are good enough
-  will worry about who will take care of them and about being abandoned
-  are still greatly affected by the sadness of surviving family members
-  cannot put their feelings into words and instead react to loss through behaviours such as irritability, aggression, physical symptoms, difficulty sleeping, or regression (such as bed-wetting or thumb-sucking)

“She kept asking if Papa would be back for her birthday.”

Parent of a 3 year old

## Primary school-age children (six to 12 years)



Children begin to develop the understanding that death is irreversible and something that happens eventually to all living things. Death may be regarded as something that is a bit 'spooky', and they may display what seems to be an unhealthy curiosity in the more morbid aspects of the death. Children at this age may complain of headaches, a sore tummy or other ailments. These are referred to as 'somatic' complaints and are generally physical manifestations of emotional pain. Behaviour may change, but it is important to encourage children at this age to express their feelings and understand that what they are feeling is perfectly natural.

### Key Points

#### Children from 6 - 9 years:

- understand that death is final, but see it as something that happens only to other people
- may think of death as a person or a spirit, like a ghost, angel, or a skeleton
- are often interested in the specific details of death and what happens to the body after death
- may experience a range of emotions including guilt, anger, shame, anxiety, sadness
- continue to have difficulty expressing their feelings and may react through behaviours such as school phobia, poor performance in school, aggression, physical symptoms, withdrawal from friends, and regression
- still worry about who will take care of them and will likely experience insecurity, clinginess, and fear of abandonment
- may still worry that they are to blame for the death

#### Children from 10 – 12 years:

- by age 10 children understand that death is universal, unavoidable, and will happen to them
- will experience a range of emotions and will start to worry about their own death
- are likely to ask a lot of questions








## Adolescents and Adults



This is a crucial stage in the development of identity when young people are developing their own ideas about who they are and what is important to them in their lives. They are more aware of their future. **Death may cause them to reflect on the meaning and purpose of life, or they may not want to reflect, and hide their feelings.** As adults our job is to let them know that **we are there if they need to talk, or that we can find someone else to help if necessary.** Although the grieving process at this age is much like adults, teenagers are still developing emotionally. Teenagers are much more aware of the finality of death and will feel the personal impact deeply. Teenagers can reflect on the longer term impact of their loss; that future milestones will not be shared with the person who has died. **Relationships with others are becoming increasingly important, and any loss can lead to feelings of anger or severe distress.** Older children may take on caring roles within the family which can limit the opportunity to grieve. A loss of confidence may result from bereavement and **it is important to support the young person to build resilience and remember the positive aspects of their life.**







### **Key Points**

#### **Adolescents and Adults**

-  have an adult understanding of the concept of death, but do not have the experiences, coping skills or behaviour of an adult
-  may 'act out' in anger or show impulsive or reckless behaviours, such as substance misuse or fighting in school
-  may experience a wide range of emotions, but not know how to handle them or feel comfortable expressing them
-  the reality of death contradicts a teenager's view of himself or herself as invincible, and teenagers may question their faith or their understanding of the world
-  developmental issues of independence and separation from parents can interfere with the ability to receive support from adult family members
-  coping strategies may create tension with family members, as adolescents may cope by spending more time with friends or by withdrawing from the family to be alone
-  boys, particularly in teenage years, are likely to experience academic difficulties in the early months following parental death

## Children and Young People with Additional Support Needs

While a child or young person with Additional Support Needs may require additional consideration and planning as to how to provide the best support, the principles remain the same:

-  provide as much routine and normality as possible
-  be honest and use clear and simple language
-  encourage the child or young person to communicate feelings using the communication style which is appropriate for the child's age, developmental stage, level of understanding and additional support needs
-  use visuals to support the child's understanding of what has happened and to prepare them for ceremonies such as funerals or memorials
-  communicate closely with parents/carers to ensure a consistent response
-  observe closely for changes to behaviour which may be an expression of their confusion and loss



Children with additional support needs may become very anxious by any changes to their routine, family or school life which can affect behaviour. **Prepare the child for things that might be different.** Be clear about routine changes such as who will collect the child from school.

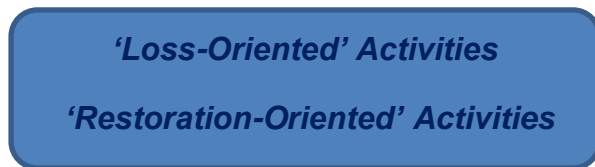
**Be careful about the language you use**, especially if the child is literal in their understanding and interpretation. For example, if you describe death as "like going to sleep" you may make the child or young person terrified of going to sleep at night. The child or young person may not understand the concept of death and instead will require the personal impact to be explicitly stated e.g. **"you will not see Grandma again"**.

A child or young person with an additional support need may not respond at all to a death even of someone very close or **may focus on very practical issues** such as who will make their dinner or take them to swimming lessons. This can be hard for others to hear and accept but is a reflection of the child's understanding of death (Coehler, 2016). Alternatively a child or young person's response may be delayed and behaviour change may not present for weeks or months after the death.

## Theories of Bereavement and Loss: The Dual Process Model

Stroebe, M. & Schut, H. (1999)

The Dual Process Model describes the different coping styles adopted by bereaved people. Specifically the model identifies activities within 2 broad coping styles:



LGfL

**Loss-orientation** refers to a coping style which focuses on the experience of loss itself. The focus for the bereaved person is the nature of the relationship with the deceased and the expression of emotion and grief.

**Restoration-Orientation** refers to the more practical adjustments that must be made as a result of the loss. For children this may include a change in childcare arrangements, new responsibilities within the house or bigger adjustments such as a house move. However, it also includes continuing with everyday activities and routines such as school, playing with friends and hobbies.

The model views bereavement as a flexible, dynamic process with coping strategies switching between the 2 styles. While loss orientation is largely dominant early on and restoration orientation dominates as time passes, both styles will continue to feature to varying degrees. **The oscillation between the 2 styles is normal and necessary for longer term physical and emotional wellbeing.** Grieving children often move between periods of intense emotional distress and normal, everyday activities and as such demonstrate this model well.

### How does this help me to support a child experiencing a bereavement?

Remember this oscillation or 'puddle jumping' is a normal and healthy part of grieving

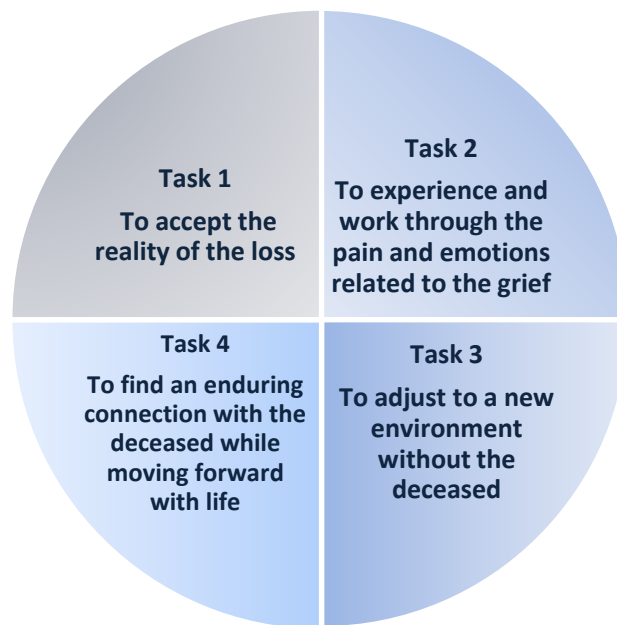
Provide opportunities for the child to express their grief (loss-orientation) and to engage in normal, everyday activities (restoration-orientation)

Follow the child's lead – this may mean listening to them, cuddling them, being silly with them or reassuring them that it's ok to not be sad all the time

## Theories of Bereavement and Loss: Worden's Tasks of Grieving

Worden (2009)

Worden identified 4 tasks which must be accomplished during the process of grieving. It is a dynamic and flexible model. It is not linear and there is no set order to when tasks are experienced or set time for how long they will take. It is possible to move backwards and forwards between the tasks and to revisit tasks as time passes.



### How does this help me to support a child experiencing a bereavement?

Use your knowledge of how children experience and understand death at different stages to communicate openly and honestly with them using clear language

Encourage the family to include the child in funerals and memorials

Provide opportunities for the child to share their feelings

Encourage the child to find ways to remember the deceased

Remind the child it is ok to play and do everyday activities and to not always think about the person

Be aware of the likelihood of transitions and anniversaries triggering strong emotions



## Role of Education Staff in Supporting Bereaved Pupils

A child's school often provides a safe place to discuss, grieve and explore feelings of loss but staff may be reluctant to engage in these conversations due to a lack of confidence. They may be concerned about making the situation worse or saying the wrong thing.

Child Bereavement UK suggest the following principles should be embedded to aid the thinking of staff when supporting bereaved pupils:



### Normality

For the majority of children or young people suffering a significant change in their life, the routines of school life can provide a sense of normality. The familiarity of attending school or nursery with familiar people offers a sense of security and continuity. Maintain routines and timetable but allow for flexibility.

### Relief from Grief

For children and young people, school or nursery can provide relief from a tense and emotionally charged atmosphere at home. They may feel overwhelmed by the grief expressed by family members. There may be a constant stream of visitors expressing their own grief. Children and young people can find this difficult to deal with.

### An Outlet for Grief

When a parent or sibling has died, children and young people can try to protect their surviving parent by hiding their own grief and pretending to cope. School is often seen as somewhere safe to express this grief.

### A Listening Ear

Family members struggling to deal with their own grief can find it difficult to support their child's grief. For a child who wishes to, school staff can provide an opportunity to talk about what has happened with a familiar and trusted adult in relative peace and calm.

## Nurture and Connection

Young people often worry about the health of other close adults, friends and also their own mortality after a bereavement. A close attachment with at least one adult will reduce the impact of a loss or bereavement. It is normal for young people to have a more adult understanding and feelings around loss and death but not necessarily the emotional maturity or coping skills to manage strong feelings so the support of a close adult who can listen, validate, normalise, reassure and offer physical comfort is important.

## The Opportunity to be a Child or Young Person

Children often take on more adult responsibilities in the house so school offers the chance to play, laugh, sing and generally just be a child without feeling guilty. Play is widely understood to help children to express, understand and process emotions and is, therefore, a vital activity for bereaved children to help them cope with loss (Saracho and Spodek, 1995).



## Home-School Communication

Systems should be in place to keep in contact with home. Discuss plans for returning to school and keep in touch about progress and supports as grieving children can present differently across settings. Good communication will ensure a more realistic picture of how the child is coping is shared and planned for. Discuss with the parents/carers what the child knows about the death so that you are both providing consistent information and answers to the child's questions.

## Supporting Parents

Parents will often seek support and reassurance from school staff in terms of how their child is managing, but they may also seek support for their own grief. In these situations accept that you cannot fix the situation or make the person feel better but you can listen. Reassure parents that it is normal for their child to experience a full range of emotions, to regress in some behaviours, to ask a lot of questions and at other times behave as if nothing has happened.

**The Day Becca Died** is a short clip which can help parents supporting a bereaved child.

## Resources

It may be useful to have a selection of resources on the subject in the school or nursery. Books, poems, pictures and websites are an effective way to gently introduce the concept of death, use as a starter for discussions and encourage children to express their own emotions. See the appendices for resources appropriate to your setting.

## Developing Resilience

Create opportunities to discuss issues surrounding loss, bereavement and grief before a death happens. While it is not possible to fully prepare young people for death or fully protect them from the impact of a bereavement, promoting skills in resilience and teaching coping strategies will mitigate against the more long lasting and negative outcomes. See the appendices for lesson plans appropriate to your setting.

## Taking Care of Yourself

Talking to a child about loss or the death of someone close may be one of the hardest things a teacher will ever have to do. It may produce painful emotions and memories and SMTs must ensure there are formal and informal systems in place to support staff who are providing this support to children and families.

## Administrative Considerations

Ensure the names and contact details of the deceased person are removed to avoid any accidental correspondence. Special events for example, birthdays, Christmas, Mother's and Father's Day may be particularly difficult so it is important staff are made aware of the loss even many years after. Pass on information at times of transition to ensure future staff members are aware of the circumstances and can provide further supports as necessary.

*"It helped to just be normal for a bit"*



*PG Pupil*

## How to Talk about Death and Dying

**Often we don't know what to say to someone who has been bereaved**, we worry we will say the wrong thing or make the person feel worse. As a result we may avoid talking about the death at all. However, it is important that we do acknowledge the death and that we encourage those who are grieving to express their feelings and talk about the person who has died. Talking to the person about their grief shows you care and is more likely to nurture a trusting and open relationship which is crucial to helping the bereaved person through this difficult time.

### **Keep it Simple and use clear language**

Use clear words such as 'dead', 'death' and 'dying'. Avoid ambiguous terms or euphemisms such as 'he has gone to sleep' or 'we've lost your grandma'. These terms, while clear to adults, can be confusing and scary for children.

*'I was sorry to hear that your gran died. I'm here if you want to talk.'*

### **Be honest**

Children ask a lot of questions particularly when they have experienced a bereavement. Don't feel you have to answer all of their questions. It is ok to admit you don't know. This is particularly true when it comes to beliefs about what happens to someone when they die.

*'I wish I could answer that for you but I don't know.'*

*'People believe different things about what happen to someone after they die. What do you believe?'*

### **Share your Feelings**

Children learn how to express themselves and cope with challenges by watching the adults around them. Be open and honest about your own feelings.

*'I'm really sad about the death of Mrs H. She was a good friend and I miss her.'*

### **Avoid making Assumptions but Normalise Feelings**

*'Some of you may be feeling sad or worried or you may have no feelings at all. It's perfectly normal and ok to have any of these feelings.'* (when talking to a group about a death)

*'It's ok to not feel sad all the time and it doesn't mean he wasn't important to you or that you've forgotten about him. It's normal and good to take some time away from feeling sad'*

## Anticipatory Grief









In some cases grief can be felt **before the death has even occurred**. **Anticipatory Grief refers to the emotions and feelings experienced when a death is imminent or anticipated**. Anticipatory Grief can begin as soon as death becomes a likelihood such as in the case of a terminal illness. It shares many symptoms of regular grief - **sadness, anger, isolation**. But the awareness of the looming death may also bring **anxiety, restlessness and hopelessness**.

The child or young person may not be directly experiencing the loss of the person at this time but there may be resulting loss and change with regards to their lifestyle, care arrangements, everyday activities and connectedness with others. They may also be observing the deteriorating health, and be directly involved in the increased care needs of a loved one which can be exhausting both emotionally and physically. Other feelings such as **resentment towards the dying person and relief when the death eventually comes are common** and completely normal but are confusing for a child or young person and can lead to feelings of guilt and shame.

For some people anticipatory grief can reduce the symptoms of grief after a death but this is not universal or predictable. Therefore, no assumptions can be made about the reaction of a pupil following an anticipated death.

Behaviours and feelings will most likely follow the same developmental stages highlighted in the 'Grief Response by Development Stage' section.

### **Pupils will need support to:**

-  understand and accept that anticipatory grief is normal as are the often confusing feelings that accompany it
-  express their feelings using any medium they prefer (talking, art, writing etc.)
-  stay connected with others. This may be difficult for logistical reasons (hospital visits, extra care responsibilities) so school or nursery might be the only place social relationships can be nurtured
-  connect with local services such as support groups (e.g. Young Carers) providing the young person to connect with others in a similar position
-  focus on the support and love they are providing for their loved one and the opportunities they have to make the last phase of this person's life positive and fulfilling
-  take care of themselves

**[Click here for more information and resources for supporting those affected by anticipatory grief.](#)**

## Supporting the Bereaved Child or Young Person on Returning to Education

Before the child or young person returns to school or nursery, the Headteacher or class teacher should explain what has happened to peers/year group as appropriate. This should be discussed in advance with the child's parents or carers where possible. A suitable person should also be identified to meet with the child on his or her return to school or nursery to acknowledge what has happened. This could be the class teacher, pupil support teacher, key worker or year head.

### **Remember:**

**Answer questions as honestly as you can.**

**Use clear language such as 'dead' 'death' 'dying' and avoid euphemisms such as 'passed away' or 'gone to sleep'.**

It is important to acknowledge the death

**"I was very sorry to hear about the death of your....."**

Crucial to supporting a child returning to school after bereavement is establishing as normal a routine as possible. However, the following additional supports may be considered and planned in collaboration with the child or young person and parents or carers:

### **Planning Additional Support**

The additional support that a child will need in school will vary and should be discussed with the parents/carers and, where possible, with the child. Some children will prefer to have no adaptations made and will wish to return to their normal routine. This, however, may change over time so staff should be alert and responsive to any indications, however subtle, that the child is struggling. The following supports should be considered:

- Discuss with the family and if possible the child what information they want shared with children in the class/school, how they want this to be shared and how comfortable the child is discussing the loss with others.
- Break cards - young people often feel embarrassed about showing their emotions and do not want to cry in front of their peers, by offering time away from the class, the child may feel more comfortable to express

their grief.

- Access to a consistent, quiet space with preferred, comforting activities when a break is required.
- Regular check-ins and support from an identified member of staff – this could take a variety of forms and should be directed by the needs and wishes of the child or young person.
- Transition objects – a child who is concerned about the safety of surviving family members may benefit from bringing a special object from home such as a drawing, message or photograph.
- Clarity of routines and schedules – individual timetables, preparing for transitions, visual timers and clarifying finish times can help to reduce stress.
- Explaining loss – depending on the child's age and ability he/she may need additional support to understand the loss using social stories, story books, video clips (see appendices for stage appropriate resources)
- Adapted timetable – the child may benefit from planned breaks on a temporary basis.
- Modified expectations regarding academic progress – a child who has experienced loss may also struggle with focus and attention, motivation and energy all of which could affect their presentation at school. This may not be apparent straight away.
- Reduced homework – home life may be more chaotic or disrupted than usual so reducing pressure on completing homework temporarily can relieve a potential source of stress.
- Peer support from a friend or an older pupil to reduce social isolation. This would need to be carefully planned, agreed in advance by all parties and support considered for the peer supporter.
- Child Focused Assessment – as with any additional support need, what the child requires following a loss will depend on ongoing contextualised assessment of how the child presents and close collaboration with those who know the child best.

*"I didn't always know what I was feeling and this was confusing"*








*S2 pupil*





Remember to practice Active Listening:

### Do's

-  Find a private space to talk
-  Present an open body stance and non-verbal signals to demonstrate you are listening
-  Listen in an accepting, non-judgemental way
-  Echo and reflect back what has been said
-  Tolerate silences
-  Offer reassurances about the normality of grief reactions
-  Encourage parents to talk to their children about the death

“I’m so sorry to hear about the death of your mum”



“It must have been so hard for you”

“I can imagine what a shock it would have been”

“It sounds like you have had trouble sleeping since it happened”

“It’s normal for (your child) to still look for her grandpa. It might help if you can all talk about him when you’re ready”

### Avoid

-  Offering advice or solutions unless specifically asked for
-  Using comments like “I know how you are feeling” (even if you have experienced a similar loss)

*“People avoided me because they didn’t know what to say. But they didn’t need to say anything just listen”*







*P7 Pupil*

## Ways for Children and Young People to Remember

Finding ways to remember isn't only important after a death. Any loss for example moving house, parents separating or a friend moving away can be helped by finding creative ways to remember and cherish.

### Memory Book, Box or Jar

Use a book, box or jar as a record and reminder. It could also be used more generally to highlight significant moments. The child might choose mementos which show:

-  happy events or occasions
-  messages and memories
-  photographs
-  possessions

This record can then be used to demonstrate the role of the person had in the child's life. This role will also be seen in a more general context of life progression as items can be added over time.

### Planting Trees or Plants

Planting a tree or plant can be a good way of remembering the person who has died and provides a focal point for commemorating the life and death of the person.

### Be Creative – artwork, photography, crafts, baking, poetry, songs, writing, letters

Making something in memory of someone special or making it for that person helps us to feel connected to them and provides the bereaved person with something to treasure in the future. Everyone will find comfort in different mediums so explore which ones suit the child best.

### Diary

Putting thoughts and feelings into words can be a therapeutic way of releasing some of the pain of the loss. It can be helpful to look back on.

### Online Memorials








Create an online space for people to come together to share memories, photos and stories e.g. on Facebook or specialist sites such as Much Loved.

<https://www.muchloved.com/>

## As Time Passes

For the majority of children and young people, over time the loss becomes gradually easier to deal with but grief can come and go and can be triggered many weeks, months and years after the death of a loved one. **It is not helpful to assume a child or young person will be fine because a significant amount of time has passed.** Remember that they will be grieving for life and the loss will always be with them.

### *Things to consider*

-  be prepared to listen regardless of the amount of time that has passed
-  give bereaved pupils time - it may be many months before they can fully cope with the demands of school life
-  consider alternative support options for example Seasons for Growth, a referral to youth counselling or Educational Psychology or signpost to specialist bereavement organisations (see Appendix)
-  be aware of important dates such as the anniversary of the death, Mother's/ Father's Day, birthdays and Christmas and times of transition
-  be sensitive to the child or young person's response to certain class activities e.g. Mother's/ Father's Day, reading lists or more general topics about death
-  be sensitive to the child or young person's response to any other deaths or critical incidents in the school or community
-  **pass on information at times of transition to ensure future staff members are aware of the circumstances and can provide further supports as necessary**



## Suicide and Sudden Death

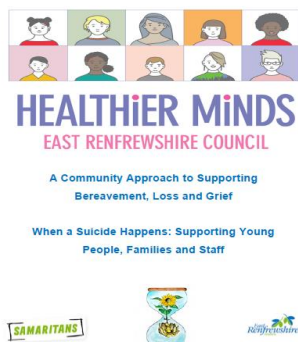
Sudden and unexpected losses are much more difficult for both children and adults to deal with. **They produce a perceived threat to the child's sense of security or personal safety as well as providing no time to think, review and adjust prior to the event.** In addition, the difficulty that many adults have in coping with suicide and sudden death means the child may not have the emotional support of carers and family members. While the death of a loved one does not always result in trauma, experience of suicide or sudden death can increase the risk of the child being traumatised.

It is important for staff to be mindful of their own beliefs about suicide and how that may affect the way they respond to a child bereaved through suicide. The taboo around suicide can make it more difficult to talk about.

The opportunity to say goodbye is lost in sudden deaths and it is important that the child is **offered the opportunity to say goodbye** in other, more symbolic ways such as through writing a letter or poem.

### ***Key Points in supporting a child bereaved by suicide or sudden death***

- Blame – a child may feel responsible for the death and will require reassurance that this is not the case
- Honesty – be as honest as you can in your responses to the child's questions
- Talk – be available to allow the child talk whenever he/she is ready
- Coping Strategies – children who have previously developed helpful coping strategies for dealing with difficult situations will be better equipped to cope so make this a part of a child's everyday educational experience



**For more information about supporting those affected by suicide please refer to the East Renfrewshire Guidance:**

**[When a Suicide Happens: Supporting Young People, Families and Staff](#)**

## Appendix 1 Further Information and Support

### Understanding the Theory: The Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement

*Stroebe, M. & Schut, H. (1999)*

The Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement is a taxonomy to describe the different ways that people come to terms with a death. The model identifies 2 coping styles adopted by bereaved people:

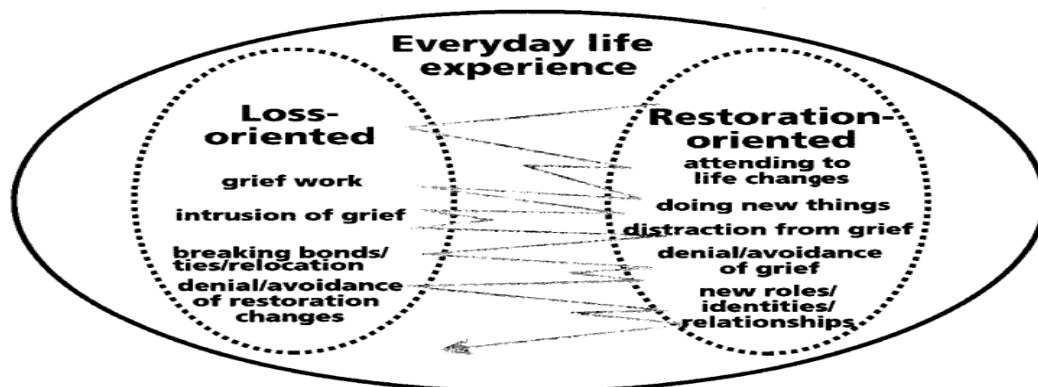
#### ***'loss-oriented' and 'restoration-oriented' coping***

**Loss-orientation** refers to a coping style which focuses on the experience of loss itself. The focus for the bereaved person here is the nature of the relationship and attachment, the expression of emotion and grief.

**Restoration-Orientation** refers to the more practical adjustments that must be made as a result of the loss. This may include taking over financial responsibilities, raising children alone, reorganisation of certain aspects of life. These tasks of restoration will be accompanied by their own emotional responses of anxiety, loneliness but also pride and relief.

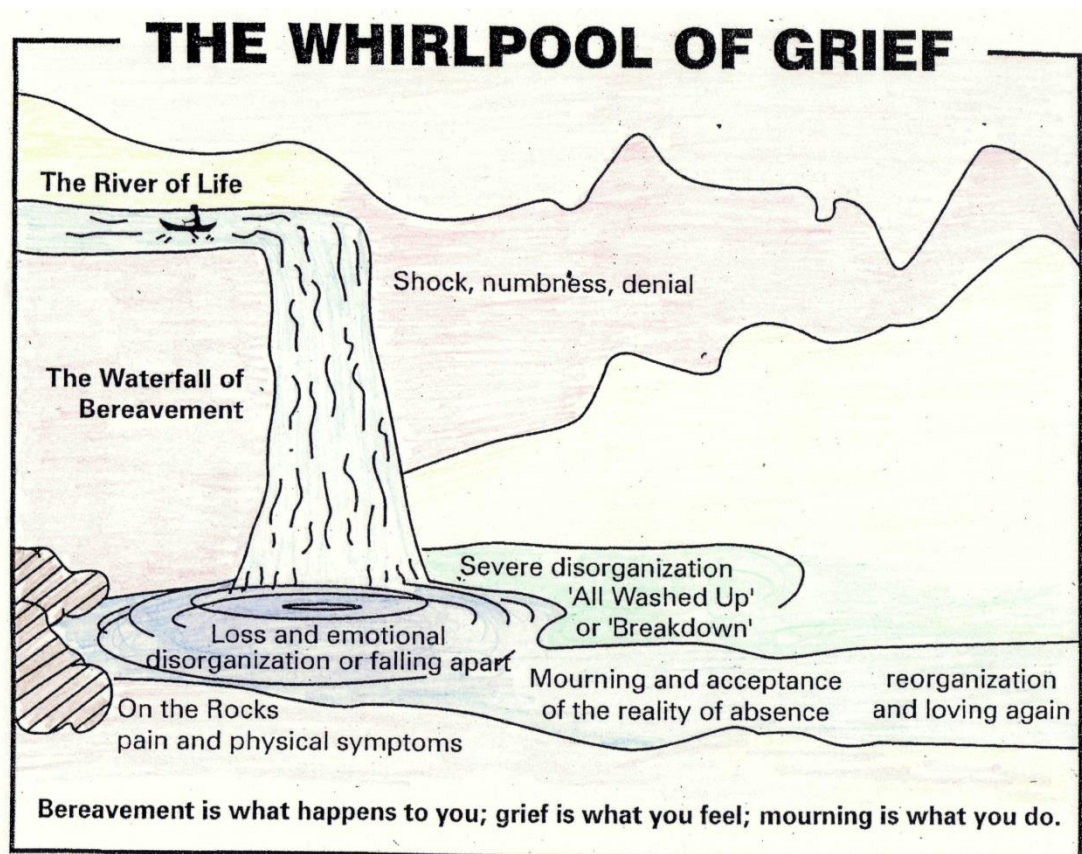
It differs to other models in that it does not propose a staged approach to grief but rather sees bereavement as a more flexible, dynamic process which can switch between the 2 styles. While loss orientation is largely dominant early on and restoration orientation dominates after time passes, both styles will continue to feature to varying degrees. The alternation between loss and restoration-oriented coping is referred to as oscillation: at times the bereaved will be confronted by their loss while at other times they will avoid the loss or seek distraction. This oscillation is necessary for long term mental and physical wellbeing. It appears that females tend to be more loss-oriented and males tend to be more restoration-oriented in their coping styles.

*Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement*



**FIGURE 1** A dual process model of coping with bereavement.

**The Whirlpool of Grief**  
*Wilson (1993)*



The river of life represents life before bereavement. The waterfall represents the shocking experience of loss where we can be overwhelmed by the intensity of emotion. The whirlpool at the bottom illustrates the subsequent emotional upheaval and disorganisation which can encompass a variety of emotions, physical and psychological reactions. 'All Washed Up' refers to being stuck in the grief whether through not grieving at all or feeling overwhelmed and debilitated by the emotion. At some point the waters calm again gradually. There is no set time within which this will happen but acceptance of the new reality without the loved one begins the process of looking to the future while holding on to the memories.



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## Websites for Educational Establishments

### *Preparing for and Responding to a Bereavement*

#### **Child Bereavement UK**

<http://childbereavementuk.org/for-schools/>

Includes a wealth of information, advice, training resources and lesson plans

#### **Childhood Bereavement Network**

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/help-around-a-death/what-you-can-do/for-schools-professionals.aspx>

Access information related to training, auditing your school's approach and curriculum development

#### **Winston's Wish**

<https://www.winstonswish.org/supporting-you/support-for-schools/>

Extensive information and resource related to supporting bereaved children and young people and how to prepare for the worst.

#### **Cruse Bereavement Care**

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/for-schools>

How to respond to a death and create a whole school bereavement policy

### *Supporting and Promoting Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing*

#### **Samaritans**

<https://www.samaritans.org/scotland/how-we-can-help/schools/deal/>

Free resource for teachers and other educational professionals to help develop resilience in young people

#### **Mentally Healthy Schools**

<https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/resources/>

Website for primary schools, offering school staff information, advice and practical resources to better understand and promote pupils' mental health and wellbeing.

#### **Place2Be**

<https://www.place2be.org.uk/our-services/services-for-schools/mental-health-resources-for-schools/>

Information and resources to support mental health and bereavement


## Where to Find Help

### Confidential Help

#### Childline Scotland

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)


0800 11 11

 Free, confidential telephone helpline and online support for children and young people available 24 hours

#### Breathing Space

<https://breathingspace.scot/>

0800 83 85 87

 Free, confidential telephone helpline for those experiencing low mood or depression available Monday to Thursday 6pm – 2am and Friday to Monday 6pm – 6am

#### Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM)

[www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net)

0800 58 58 58

 Free, confidential helpline and online support for **males of any age** who are in crisis

#### Samaritans

[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

[jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

116 123

 Free, confidential telephone helpline and email support for those in crisis or need to talk available 24 hours

#### Crisis Counselling

<http://www.crisiscounselling.co.uk/>

[info@crisiscounselling.co.uk](mailto:info@crisiscounselling.co.uk)

0141 812 8474



Self-refer for confidential counselling sessions (small fee for self referrals)

## Young Minds Crisis Messenger

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/get-urgent-help/youngminds-crisis-messenger/>

### TEXT YM to 85258

free, 24/7 crisis support across the UK  
aiming to connect every texter to a trained volunteer in less than 5 minutes to provide support via text in a crisis

## Preparing for and Following a Bereavement

### Child Bereavement UK

[www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)

[support@childbereavementuk.org](mailto:support@childbereavementuk.org)

0800 028 8840

Confidential information and support line for families and professionals when a child has died and when a child is bereaved  
Counselling and Bereavement Support  
Web discussion for families and for professionals  
Message boards and forums  
Resources, information and training courses  
Child Bereavement App – Grief Support for Young People

### Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland

<http://www.crusescotland.org.uk>

[support@crusescotland.org.uk](mailto:support@crusescotland.org.uk)

0845 600 2227

Telephone helpline, webchat and face to face support  
Support Groups **including Step by Step Group in Fife**  
Support for children and young people - for online help we suggest **The Little Website**  
Resources, information and training courses






## Hope Again (Youth website of Cruse Bereavement Care)

<http://hopeagain.org.uk/>

[helpline@cruse.org.uk](mailto:helpline@cruse.org.uk)

0808 808 1677

[hopeagain@cruse.org.uk](mailto:hopeagain@cruse.org.uk)

-  Free telephone and email support for bereaved young people available Monday to Friday 9.30am – 5.00pm
-  Individual and group support
-  Resources, information and training courses



## Richmond's Hope

[www.richmondshope.org.uk](http://www.richmondshope.org.uk)

[glasgow@richmondshope.org.uk](mailto:glasgow@richmondshope.org.uk)

0141 230 6123

-  Individual and group support for bereaved children & young people from 4-18 years and their families
-  Telephone Support & Advice
-  Information, training and resources

## Winston's Wish

[www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)



[ask@winstonswish.org](mailto:ask@winstonswish.org)

08088 020 021

-  Telephone helpline, email and online support or anyone supporting a grieving child
-  Information, training and resources

## Much Loved

<https://www.muchloved.com/>

-  Create an online tribute to remember and celebrate someone special and option to fundraise in their memory
-  Chat online to a specially trained bereavement counsellor



## For Those Affected by a Life Limiting or Life Shortening Illness

### **Prince and Princess of Wales Hospice**

<https://www.princeandprincessofwaleshospice.org.uk/>

[info@ppwh.org.uk](mailto:info@ppwh.org.uk)

0141 429 5599

-  Family Support Service offering support to anyone living with the impact of a life limiting, or life shortening illness through counselling and befriending
-  Butterfly Service for children and young people

### **ACCORD Hospice**

<https://www.accordhospice.org.uk/>

0141 581 2014



-  Bereavement support groups and 1-1 counselling for those affected by a life limiting illness

## Preparing For and Following a Suicide

### **Beautiful Inside and Out Scio**

[beautifulinsideandoutscio@gmail.com](mailto:beautifulinsideandoutscio@gmail.com)

07984 328808



-  Scottish charity which supports bereaved parents and siblings of suicide victims
-  Facebook page advertises group events (search Beautiful Inside and Out – SCIO)

### **PAPYRUS – Prevention of Young Suicide**

<https://papyrus-uk.org/>

[pat@papyrus-uk.org](mailto:pat@papyrus-uk.org)

0800 068 41 41

-  Free and confidential help and advice to young people and anyone worried about a young person
-  Information, resources, training and awareness raising





## **Petal – People Experiencing Trauma and Loss**

[www.petalsupport.com](http://www.petalsupport.com)

[info@petalsupport.com](mailto:info@petalsupport.com)

01698 324 502

-  Telephone and face to face counselling and support for families and friends of murder and suicide victims including support for children and young people
-  Drop-in centre in Hamilton and Outreach programmes in Glasgow and Edinburgh

## **Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (SOBS)**

<https://uksobs.org>

[email.support@uksobs.org](mailto:email.support@uksobs.org)

0300 111 5065

-  Providing group support to adults (18+) who are bereaved by suicide



This is also available as a leaflet and can be accessed electronically

For those with an East Renfrewshire Glow Account:

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/er/meetinglearnerneeds/support-for-health-and-wellbeing/support-for-bereavement-and-loss/>

or via the East Renfrewshire Educational Psychology Website:

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/er/PsychologicalService/>

## Appendix 2      Early Learning and Childcare

### Example of Good Practice in an East Renfrewshire Early Learning and Childcare Centre

#### Emma's Story

The following illustrates the response of an Early Learning and Childcare Centre to the death of a preschool child's (Emma) baby brother. It highlights some of the stages and issues that may prove helpful in managing the impact of the death on your community or preschool setting.

Emma was excited to become a big sister. Sadly, however, hours after his birth baby Joseph was diagnosed with Edward's syndrome and he was not expected to survive. Emma was told her baby brother was very ill. The family were as honest as they could be with Emma and the rest of their older children.

#### *Immediately following the death*

- The school was informed on the day after the death of Emma's baby brother. During the phone call to the nursery Emma's mum talked openly about baby's death and offered staff the opportunity to visit Emma at the family home as she wouldn't be returning to nursery until after the funeral.
- The Head teacher informed Emma's key worker about the death of baby Joseph and offered her the opportunity to visit the family home. An arrangement was made to visit the next day.
- The Head Teacher informed the rest of the staff in small groups.
- Nursery children were not informed at this point. It was agreed by the Head teacher and Emma's parents that it was not appropriate for all the children to know about the death.
- Staff were reminded of other children in the school who have been previously bereaved and may require additional support
- Emma's keyworker and a senior Child Development Officer visited Emma at her home the next day and took with them photographs of the children in Emma's group and some paper, pencils and a jigsaw.
- The same staff members attended the funeral.

#### *Medium Term - before Emma's return to nursery*

- The Head teacher stayed in touch with the family to discuss how to plan Emma's return to nursery. They decided that staff would follow Emma's lead, listening and offering support when required. If the other children asked questions, staff would



be sensitive and let the parents of these children know that Emma had been speaking about the death of her baby brother.

- Staff members were encouraged to support Emma if she wished to talk about the death of her brother. Staff members were offered support in responding to Emma's expressions of grief
- The Senior Management Team ensured all staff felt confident that they could sensitively support Emma and other children if they heard Emma talking about her baby brother.
- The staff prepared the nursery for Emma's return with a variety of story books that cover bereavement, jigsaws that features families and babies, dolls house and puppets. Although Emma is an articulate child it was agreed with her parents that some expressive resources such as art or drama would be suitable if she didn't want or feel comfortable enough to talk about the death of Joseph.

### ***Medium term - when Emma returns to school***






- The Head teacher and Emma's key worker welcomed Emma at the door as she arrived with her mum. Emma settled quickly and mum was able to leave.
- Throughout the morning, staff monitored Emma from a distance not imposing on her space but were available to support her when needed.
- On a few occasions Emma talked about Joseph to her peers and often draw pictures of her whole family and baby Joseph. Staff would engage in the conversation when required but mostly just observed.
- Emma chose to share her grief with a small number of friends and staff spoke to these parents individually about the death of Emma's brother and how important it was for her to share with her friends. Most parents were in agreement with it and most already knew what had happened as the families were friends.
- Emma remained settled at nursery and the nursery staff maintained close communication links with Emma's parents to ensure any issues could be discussed and resolved quickly.

### ***Longer term***

- During transition to Primary School, information relating to Emma's bereavement was included in paper work and in professional dialogue with the Primary School staff.

## Introducing the Themes of Loss and Death in an Early Learning and Childcare Setting

**Aims: To enable children to explore their natural interest in ageing, death and dying.**








-  become more aware of the permanence of death
-  become aware of some of the language associated with death and dying
-  become more familiar with the concept of loss and change
-  develop some strategies for coping when sad things happen
-  appreciate the importance of remembering happy times with dead people or pets

### Thinking about Change

#### ***Resources***

-  2 puppets or cuddly toys

#### ***Activities***

-  Act out a scenario where something has changed for the puppet or toy e.g. friend has moved away, moved house, moved nursery
-  Ask the children to predict how the puppet might feel about the change
-  Ask the children if anything has changed for them, how they felt, who helped them? What helped?
-  If the children are unsure, use the other puppet to make suggestions
-  Model responses by using your own experience of change
-  Encourage the children to think of ways to help the puppet remember the way things were e.g. draw a picture, make a memories jar
-  Finish with a focus on things we can do when sad things happen to make us feel better

## Thinking about Loss

### Resources

- 🕒 2 puppets or cuddly toys
- 🕒 [Berenstain Bears clip about loss](#) – watch from 11:35 The Baby Chipmunk (roughly 10 mins long)

### Activities

- 🕒 Act out a scenario where one of the puppets or toys has lost something – a toy, a favourite jumper etc
- 🕒 Ask the children to predict how the puppet might feel about losing the item
- 🕒 Ask the children if they have ever lost something and how they felt, who helped them? What helped?
- 🕒 If the children are unsure use the other puppet to make suggestions
- 🕒 Model responses by using your own experience of loss
- 🕒 Encourage the children to think of ways to help the puppet remember the toy e.g. draw a picture of it, make a memories jar
- 🕒 Try to finish with a focus on things we can do when sad things happen to make us feel better

## Thinking About Emotions

### Resources



- 🕒 Any non-fiction book (see recommendations)

### Activities









- 🕒 Read the book and as you read, discuss the events of the book and ask the children to predict how the characters might feel, and what helped them
- 🕒 Ask the children if they've ever felt sad (modelling own experience where appropriate), what happened, who or what helped them. If any child talks about a personal experience of death, be responsive and validate feelings of sadness and gently encourage them to talk about happy memories.

## Thinking About Death

### Resources

-  A collection of flowers (part of the activity can be for children to find and pick flowers)
-  A collection of objects from the natural world which were once alive, for example, seashells, dried flowers, seed pods, dried roots, bark, drift wood, dead leaves, small dead insects.

### Activities

-  Invite the children to pick up the objects, explore patterns, textures, colours, sounds.
-  Ask children about their understanding of flowers – flower names, colours, favourite colours, why bees like flowers, seasons associated with different flowers.
-  Ask children to predict what will happen to the flower once it has been picked and why. What does the flower need to stay alive? Can it come back to life?
-  How does the idea of the flower dying make the children feel?
-  Monitor the flower and watch how it changes over time – take photos or draw the different stages.
-  Encourage the children to use the words die, change.
-  Ask the children to think of ways to remember the flowers (dried flower collages, photographs, drawings)
-  Introduce the idea of the life cycle and that all living things die – look at other dead things – e.g. insects, leaves.

## Suggested Resources: Preschool

<b>Lesson Plans, Ideas and Activities</b>	
<p><b>Film Clip</b> <b><i>The Day Becca Died</i></b></p>	<p>Short clip from Bereavement UK and CBeebies from the perspective of a family. Useful for anyone speaking to young children about death.</p>
<p><b><i>Elephant's Tea Party</i></b></p> <p>Child Bereavement UK</p>	<p>Lesson plans for equipping all children, whether bereaved or not, with the tools to help them cope with loss and bereavement, now or in later life</p> <p><a href="https://www.childbereavementuk.org/pages/category/elephants-tea-party">https://www.childbereavementuk.org/pages/category/elephants-tea-party</a></p>
<b>DVDS</b>	
<p><b><i>Not Too Young to Grieve</i></b></p> <p>Leeds Animation Workshop</p>	<p>Designed to help parents and carers support children under 5 who have been bereaved. Suitable for viewing by parents with their children or in educational settings. Free downloadable training material also available. Running Time – 14 minutes</p> <p><a href="https://www.leedsanimation.org.uk/films/">https://www.leedsanimation.org.uk/films/</a></p>
<p><b><i>Grief in the Family</i></b></p> <p>Leeds Animation Workshop</p>	<p>Looks at the ways children and young people respond to grief, and what the adults around them can do to help. It gives parents and carers an insight into the process of grieving, its physical and emotional effects, and the needs of children and young people. The video shows families from a wide range of backgrounds dealing with bereavement. It offers practical advice to parents who need to learn how to find support for themselves, while helping their children to express their feelings and handle confusing emotions. Stressing the importance of listening to children and answering their questions honestly, it encourages the development of communication and a supportive family environment. The pack is designed as a resource for those working with families and bereaved children. It raises awareness and facilitates discussion in parenting education classes, training courses or schools. It is also suitable for viewing at home by parents, carers, and children.</p> <p><a href="https://www.leedsanimation.org.uk/films/">https://www.leedsanimation.org.uk/films/</a></p>
<b>Fiction and Non-Fiction Books for Young Children</b>	
<p><b><i>I Miss You: A First Look at Death</i></b> Pat Thomas Amazon ISBN 0750260823</p>	<p><b>Non-Fiction</b> This reassuring picture book explores the difficult issue of death for young children. Children's feelings and questions about this sensitive subject are looked at in a simple but realistic way. This book helps them to understand their loss and come to terms with it.</p>
<p><b><i>Missing Mummy</i></b>  Rebecca Cobb Amazon ISBN 978-0230749511</p>	<p>Deals with the loss of a parent from a child's point of view. Perfectly pitched text and evocative artwork explore the many emotions a bereaved child may experience, from anger to guilt and from sadness to bewilderment. And importantly, the book also focuses on the positive - the recognition that the child is still part</p>

	of a family, and that his memories of his mother are to be treasured.
<p><b>Grandad's Island</b>  <b>Benji Davies</b>  <b>Amazon ISBN 978-1471119958</b></p>	At the bottom of Syd's garden is Grandad's house. Syd can let himself in any time he likes. But one day when Syd comes to call, Grandad is in the attic, where he ushers Syd through a door, and the two of them journey to a wild, beautiful island awash in colour where Grandad decides he will remain. So Syd hugs Grandad one last time and sets sail for home. Sure to provide comfort to young children struggling to understand loss.
<p><b>Always and Forever</b>  Alan Durant  Amazon ISBN 978-0552567657</p>	When Fox dies the rest of his family are absolutely distraught. How will Mole, Otter and Hare go on without their beloved friend? But, months later, Squirrel reminds them all of how funny Fox used to be, and they realise that Fox is still there in their hearts and memories.
<p><b>Badger's Parting Gifts</b>  Susan Varley  Amazon ISBN 978-1849395144</p>	Badger is so old that he knows he must soon die, so he does his best to prepare his friends. When he finally passes away, they are grief-stricken, but one by one they remember the special things he taught them during his life. By sharing their memories, they realise that although Badger is no longer with them physically, he lives on through his friends.
<p><b>The Paper Dolls</b>  Julia Donaldson  Amazon ISBN 978-1447220145</p>	A string of paper dolls go on a fantastical adventure through the house and out into the garden but then a very real pair of scissors threatens. A lovely, illustrated book which helps children to understand loss and consider the importance of memories.
<p><b>Fred</b>  Posy Simmonds  Amazon ISBN 978-1783440290</p>	Fred's owners, Sophie and Nick, think he is the laziest cat in the world, but who knows what goes on after dark? It's only after their beloved pet dies, that they discover he has been leading an exciting double life.
<p><b>The Tenth Good Thing About Barney</b>  Judith Viorst  Amazon ISBN 978-0689712036</p>	When Barney's cat died his mother suggested having a funeral and that Barney should think of 10 good things about Barney. But the small boy can only think of nine. Later, while talking with his father he discovers the tenth-- and begins to understand.

## Appendix 3      Primary School

### Example of Good Practice in an East Renfrewshire Primary School

#### John and Chris's Story

The following illustrates the response of school staff to the death of a staff member who also had 2 grandchildren (John and Chris) at the school.

#### *Immediately following the news of the death*

- Condolences were sent to the family on behalf of the whole school staff team
- All staff were informed prior to coming into school
- The Head teacher informs pupils by visiting each class to explain the staff member had died specifically using the word 'died' even with the youngest pupils
- A letter was sent to all parents
- The Quality Improvement Officer and Educational Psychologist for the school visited to offer support and guidance to the Senior Management Team around providing support and information to pupils, staff and families. It was agreed staff who are familiar to the children were best placed to offer support where necessary.

#### *In the following days*

- As many staff as possible attended the funeral
- The Head teacher kept in touch with John and Chris' parents to offer support and discuss their return to school

#### *Medium Term - On the pupils' return to school*

- John and Chris were offered a phased return to school
- Before returning to class, John and Chris discussed with their class teacher who they would like to speak to if they felt they needed to talk. They were advised that they could leave the class at any time
- A PSA and class teacher spent time ensuring the pupils were ok and their needs were being met on a day to day basis
- A familiar routine was maintained as far as possible
- The pupils were encouraged to focus on positive memories of their grandfather

#### *Longer Term*

- A Memorial Service was held at the school organised by pupils from the Eco Committee
- A bench was placed in the playground in memory of the staff member
  - Staff remained mindful of the day to day needs of the pupils particularly around certain times of year and anniversaries








- During transition to Secondary School, information relating to John and Chris' bereavement was shared.

## Introducing the Themes of Loss and Death in a Primary School Setting

### Early Level / First Level

**Aims: To enable children to explore their natural interest in ageing, death and dying.**








-  become more aware of the permanence of death.
-  become more familiar with words associated with death and dying.
-  become more familiar with the concept of loss and change
-  develop some strategies for coping when sad things happen.
-  appreciate the importance of remembering happy times with dead people or pets.

### Thinking About Change

#### **Resources**



-  2 puppets or cuddly toys

#### **Activities**








-  Act out a scenario where something has changed for the puppet or toy e.g. friend has moved away, moved house, moved nursery
-  Ask the children to predict how the puppet might feel about the change
-  Ask the children if anything has changed for them, how they felt, who helped them? What helped?
-  If the children are unsure, use the other puppet to make suggestions
-  Model responses by using your own experience of change
-  Encourage the children to think of ways to help the puppet remember the way things were e.g. draw a picture, make a memories jar
-  Finish with a focus on things we can do when sad things happen to make us feel better

## Thinking About Loss

### Resources

-  2 puppets or cuddly toys
-  [Berenstain Bears clip about loss](#) – watch from 11:35 The Baby Chipmunk (roughly 10 mins long)

### Activities



-  Act out a scenario where one of the puppets or toys has lost something – a toy, a favourite jumper etc
-  Ask the children to predict how the puppet might feel about losing the item
-  Ask the children if they have ever lost something and how they felt, who helped them? What helped?
-  If the children are unsure use the other puppet to make suggestions
-  Model responses by using your own experience of loss
-  Encourage the children to think of ways to help the puppet remember the toy e.g. draw a picture of it, make a memories jar
-  Try to finish with a focus on things we can do when sad things happen to make us feel better

## Thinking About Emotions

### Resources



-  Any non-fiction book (see recommendations)

### Activities









-  Read the book and as you read, discuss the events of the book and ask the children to predict how the characters might feel, and what helped them
-  Ask the children if they've ever felt sad (modelling own experience where appropriate), what happened, who or what helped them. If any child talks about a personal experience of death be responsive and validate feelings of sadness and gently encourage them to talk about happy memories.

## Thinking About Death

### Resources

-  A collection of flowers (part of the activity can be for children to find and pick flowers)
-  A collection of objects from the natural world which were once alive, for example, seashells, dried flowers, seed pods, dried roots, bark, drift wood, dead leaves, small dead insects.

### Activities

-  Invite the children to pick up the objects, explore patterns, textures, colours, sounds.
-  Ask children about their understanding of flowers – flower names, colours, favourite colours, why bees like flowers, seasons associated with different flowers.
-  Ask children to predict what will happen to the flower once it has been picked and why. What does the flower need to stay alive? Can it come back to life?
-  How does the idea of the flower dying make the children feel?
-  Monitor the flower and watch how it changes over time – take photos or draw the different stages.
-  Encourage the children to use the words die, change.
-  Ask the children to think of ways to remember the flowers (dried flower collages, photographs, drawings)
-  Introduce the idea of the life cycle and that all living things die – look at other dead things – e.g. insects, leaves.

## First Level / Second Level

### *My Special People Activity*

Instead of activities focused around Mother's and Father's Day, activities considering who is important in our lives, who looks after us and how, and how families can look different is a more inclusive and sensitive way of encouraging discussion about family diversity, loss and change. Always be mindful of children in your class for whom family could be an upsetting topic and consider preparing them beforehand or discuss what might help the child participate.

#### **Lesson Aims**

To celebrate family and diversity in families

#### **Objectives – Pupils will:**

- think about who is special in their life, who looks after them, their qualities and what they do to look after them
- understand that all families look different
- have fun producing creative ways of representing and thinking about their family
- have a greater awareness that some children find it difficult to discuss their family because of death or separation

Introduce the session by explaining to the children that they are going to think about who at home is special to them. Use your own personal examples to describe or create a picture of this person(s).

Which words would they use to describe him? Why is that person special? What does he/she do for them?

Explain that all families look different – mums/dad, step parents, step siblings, only child, mums/mums, dads/dads, pets.

Explain that there are lots of different reasons for this but in some families it is because of a death or parents separating. Discuss some of the emotions that people might feel if they have lost someone special to them and things that might help them.

Get creative - encourage the children to draw a picture of their family, a family member or pet, write a story or poem, make a thank you card for someone special, make a timetable of their best family day, draw a picture of a memory etc

Try to end this activity with something happy – a nice book about memories (see recommended resources), a favourite book or video clip, physical activity, a game or interactive song. Check in with any child who may be vulnerable around this activity.

## **Creating Memories**

### ***Resources:***

Photos, paper, paints, paper mâché, art materials of your choice

### **Introduction**

Begin by asking the class to think about people, animals, places or things they miss. This may be because someone has died or moved away, because of the COVID 19 pandemic or a holiday destination they haven't been back to. Allow pupils to offer examples but reassure the group they don't need to talk about anything they don't want to. Share your own example first – it might help to have your own visuals; photos to help you share your story. Encourage discussion about some of the emotions people might feel when they think about things they miss – happy, sad, angry and that all emotions are ok.

### ***Main Activity:***

Encourage the children to create something to remember. This could be a poster, jar, box, story, diary entry, picture, powerpoint, bunting. They might want to bring in things from home - photos, models, poems, objects etc.

### ***Plenary:***

Spend some time looking at each creation encouraging each pupil to share the story of their creation if they want to. Ask the pupils to think about how it felt to create these memories and to share them with others. Discuss how it can be helpful for some people. Discuss other ways that might help people who are missing someone or something.

## **What Does Dead Mean?**

### ***Materials Needed:***

Leaves, plants, insects, pictures of live things e.g. animals.

### ***Introduction:***

Ask children what they think the word 'dead' means. It might be helpful to read a story or watch a clip around the subject of death prior to this. See recommended resources.

These animated movie clips all feature the death of a character. They are likely to be familiar to the children but be mindful of children for whom the clips could be upsetting.

[Moana's grandmother dies](#)

[Inside Out Bing Bong dies](#)

[Lion King Mufasa dies](#)

You may like to ask if any of the children have ever had a pet that has died. If so, get them to share their stories... maybe write the name of all the pets that have died up on the board.

### ***Main Activity:***

Display an object, for example an old dead leaf from a plant or a tree. Pass it round and ask children to think of some words that they could use to describe it. Repeat this exercise for some dead insects; again asking children to say how they know it is dead, and what it feels like.

Now bring out a live plant. What are the differences between this and the dead leaf? What do the children notice? After doing this, look at pictures of live animals. Make a list of all the characteristics of something that is alive, and something that is dead. This may also be a good opportunity to bring into discussion different parts of the body such as the heart and the brain. What do they do? How might someone die if there is a problem with these organs?

It is important that children begin to hear that once something or someone is dead, it can't come back to life. Also, that when someone has died, they no longer have any feelings. They may worry that a person who has been buried gets cold, or that if a family member is cremated, it will really hurt them.



## Suggested Resources: Primary

<b>Lesson Plans, Ideas and Activities</b>	
<b>Film Clip</b> <a href="#"><u><i>The Day Becca Died</i></u></a>	Short clip from Bereavement UK and CBeebies from the perspective of a family. Useful for anyone speaking to young children about death.
<b>Elephant's Tea Party</b>  Child Bereavement UK	Lesson plans for equipping all children, whether bereaved or not, with the tools to help them cope with loss and bereavement, now or in later life. <a href="https://www.childbereavementuk.org/pages/category/elephants-tea-party"><u>https://www.childbereavementuk.org/pages/category/elephants-tea-party</u></a>
<b>Mentally Healthy Schools</b>	Website for primary schools, offering school staff information, advice and practical resources to better understand and promote pupils' mental health and wellbeing.  <a href="https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/"><u>https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/</u></a>
<b>Childhood Bereavement – developing the curriculum and pastoral support</b> Job and Francis Amazon ISBN 13: 978 - 1904787143.	Using case studies and drawing on best practice, this resource aims to help those working in schools address bereavement from a pastoral and educational perspective. It provides lesson ideas for how to implement in the curriculum.
<b>Good Grief – Exploring feelings, loss and death with under 11s</b> B Ward Amazon ISBN 13: 978 - 1853023248.	Comprehensive guidance and information for classroom activities
<b>The Resilience Project</b>	Read about a project run in a Scottish primary school to integrate lessons around loss and death into the curriculum. <a href="https://www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk/content/resources/1525951432_The_Resilience_Project.pdf"><u>https://www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk/content/resources/1525951432_The_Resilience_Project.pdf</u></a>
<b>DVDs</b>	
<b>Grief in the Family</b> Leeds Animation Workshop <a href="https://www.leedsanimation.org.uk/films/"><u>https://www.leedsanimation.org.uk/films/</u></a>	Looks at the ways children and young people respond to grief, and what the adults around them can do to help. It gives parents and carers an insight into the process of grieving, its physical and emotional effects, and the needs of children and young people. The pack is designed as a resource for those working with families and bereaved children. It raises awareness and facilitates discussion in parenting education classes, training courses or schools. It is also suitable for viewing at home by parents, carers, and children.
<b>It Will Be Ok</b>  Childhood Bereavement Network	Made by young people, this 15 minute film aims to help others in identifying emotions and behaviour common after a bereavement. It is intended to provide support to other bereaved children and young people by emphasising that they are not alone

<p><a href="https://www.ncb.org.uk/product/220">https://www.ncb.org.uk/product/220</a></p>	<p>and that their feelings are normal. Suitable for bereaved children and young people to use in a supported environment. It is also a useful resource for the practitioners, parents and carers supporting them.</p>
<p><b><i>You'll Always Remember Them...</i></b>  Childhood Bereavement Network  <a href="https://www.ncb.org.uk/product/267">https://www.ncb.org.uk/product/267</a></p>	<p>This 40 minute film features a group of children from a range of backgrounds aged 6-12 who have been bereaved of a parent. The group discusses the impact of bereavement on their lives, the support they received from family, friends, hospitals, bereavement service providers and schools.</p> <p>Can be used as a resource to offer information and support, facilitate training and discussion or develop the understanding of children and young people through the PSHE curriculum in schools.</p>
<h3 style="text-align: center;">Books for Educational Professionals</h3>	
<p><b><i>Then, Now and Always: Supporting Children as They Journey Through Grief: A Guide for Practitioners (Winstons Wish)</i></b>  Julia A Stokes  Amazon ISBN 13: 978 - 0953912353</p>	<p>Most suitable for those with pastoral care responsibilities, this guide for supporting children as they journey through grief includes a section on enabling a school community to respond positively to a death.</p>
<p><b><i>Supporting Children through Grief and Loss: Practical Ideas and Creative Activities for Schools and Carers</i></b>   Anna Jacobs   Amazon ISBN 13: 978-1906531539</p>	<p>Provides advice and helpful suggestions for those supporting children through bereavement and loss. Provides an overview of different behaviours you may encounter in school and how to respond, as well as discussing questions children may ask and how to answer them. Age-appropriate, honest responses along with a toolkit of creative and arts activities to help children examine and understand their emotions, physical feelings and memories.</p>
<p><b><i>A Child's Grief. Supporting a child when someone in their family has died (Winston's Wish)</i></b>  Stubbs and Stokes  Amazon ISBN 978-0955953934</p>	<p>Useful and informative introduction for professionals and carers supporting a child through bereavement. Covers a variety of short and long term issues. Offers practical suggestions and ideas for activities.</p>
<h3 style="text-align: center;">Books for use with Bereaved Children and Young People</h3>	
<p><b><i>Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine: An Activity Book</i></b></p>	<p>This activity book offers invaluable practical and sensitive support for bereaved young children. The</p>

Diana Crossley Amazon ISBN 13: 978 - 1869890582.	book offers a structure and an outlet for the many difficult feelings which inevitably follow when someone dies. It aims to help children make sense of their experience by reflecting on the different aspects of their grief. At the same time, the book manages to find a balance between remembering the person who has died and having fun.
<b><i>Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children</i></b> Mellonie and Ingpen	A book which aims to help parents and teachers explore the subjects of life and death with young children considering beginnings, endings and the life in between. Introduces the concepts through animals, plants and people.
<b><i>What on Earth do you do when Someone Dies?</i></b> Trevor Romain Amazon ISBN 13: 978-1575420554	This book for older children is a factual guide, answering questions such as 'Why do people have to die?', 'is it okay to cry?' and 'what is a funeral/memorial service?' It is written in a straightforward way, with practical tips, advice and information about different faiths and beliefs.
<b><i>Michael Rosen's SAD Book</i></b> Michael Rosen Amazon ISBN 13: 978-1406313161.	This book has large illustrations and small snippets of text. It is wonderfully honest and will appeal to children and adults of all ages. We all have sad stuff, but what makes Michael Rosen most sad is thinking about his son who died. This book is a simple but emotive story. He talks about what sad is and how it affects him and what he does to cope with it.
<b><i>When Someone Very Special Dies</i></b>  Marge Heegard Amazon ISBN 978-0962050206	A practical format for allowing children to understand the concept of death and develop coping skills for life, this book is designed for young readers to illustrate.
<b><i>Finding a Way Through when Someone Close has Died</i></b> Mood and Whittaker Amazon ISBN 978-1853029202	A workbook by young people who have experienced the death of someone close. They offer advice based on their own experiences. The activities encourage young people to express their feelings and responses.
<b><i>Fiction Books</i></b>	
<b><i>The Memory Tree</i></b> Britta Teckentrup Amazon ISBN 978-1408326343	Fox has lived a long and happy life in the forest, but now he is tired. He lies down in his favourite clearing, and falls asleep for ever. Before long, Fox's friends begin to gather in the clearing. One by one, they tell stories of the special moments that they shared with Fox. And so, as they share their memories, a tree begins to grow, becoming bigger and stronger with each memory, sheltering and protecting all the animals in the forest, just as Fox did when he was alive.
<b><i>Grandad's Island</i></b>  <b><i>Benji Davies</i></b>  <b><i>Amazon ISBN 978-1471119958</i></b>	At the bottom of Syd's garden is Grandad's house. Syd can let himself in any time he likes. But one day when Syd comes to call, Grandad is in the attic, where he ushers Syd through a door, and the two of them journey to a wild, beautiful island awash in colour where Grandad decides he will remain. So

	Syd hugs Grandad one last time and sets sail for home. Sure to provide comfort to young children struggling to understand loss.
<p><b><i>The Sad Dragon: A Dragon Book about Grief and Loss</i></b></p> <p>Steven Hermen</p> <p>Amazon ISBN 978-1948040990</p>	Having a pet dragon is very fun! He can sit, roll over, and play. But sometimes, not every story is a happy one. What if your dragon is suffering from a loss of a loved one? What should you do? You teach him about Grief and Loss. You explain death to him, and help him get through this difficult time!
<p><b><i>The Invisible String</i></b></p> <p>Patricia Karst</p> <p>Amazon ISBN 13: 978-0875167343.</p>	A heartwarming story that reassures children that even though they can't always be with a loved one, they're always in each other's hearts. Whenever a child thinks about a family member, the invisible string gives a tug. Explores the issues of loss and separation.
<p><b><i>Missing Mummy</i></b></p> <p>Rebecca Cobb</p> <p>Amazon ISBN 978-0230749511</p>	Deals with the loss of a parent from a child's point of view. Perfectly pitched text and evocative artwork explore the many emotions a bereaved child may experience, from anger to guilt and from sadness to bewilderment. And importantly, the book also focuses on the positive - the recognition that the child is still part of a family, and that his memories of his mother are to be treasured.
<p><b><i>Always and Forever</i></b></p> <p>Alan Durant</p> <p>Amazon ISBN 13: 978-0552548779.</p>	Otter, Mole and Hare miss Fox when he falls ill and dies. They stay at home and don't want to talk about him because it makes them sadder. Then Squirrel visits and reminds them of all the fun times they had together.
<p><b><i>Badger's Parting Gifts</i></b></p> <p>Susan Varley</p> <p>Amazon ISBN 13: 978-0006643173.</p>	Badger is old and knows he is going to die soon. When he does, the other animals think they will be sad forever, but they begin to talk about the memories they have of the things Badger taught them and learn to cope with his death. A lovely picture book that emphasises the importance of holding on to memories.
<p><b><i>Flamingo Dream</i></b></p> <p>Donna Jo Napoli</p> <p>Amazon ISBN 13: 978-0688167967</p>	In this bright and colourful book, a young boy tells the story of his Dad who is seriously ill and dies soon after a trip to Florida to see the place where he grew up. The collage style illustrations capture the things the boy collects to remind him of his Dad. A sensitive but honest book which emphasises the importance of memories.
<p><b><i>Fred</i></b></p> <p>Posy Simmonds</p> <p>Amazon ISBN 978 - 0099264125</p>	Fred's owners, Sophie and Nick, think he is the laziest cat in the world, but who knows what goes on after dark? It's only after their beloved pet dies, that they discover he has been leading an exciting double life.
<p><b><i>Saying Goodbye: A Special Farewell to Mama Nkwelle</i></b></p> <p>Frances Lincoln</p> <p>Amazon ISBN 13: 978-0711217010</p>	This book has large bright colourful photos and follows a little boy, Ikenna describing what happens at the ceremony after his great-grandmother's funeral. It gives ideas of different ways to remember someone and an insight into Nigerian culture. A

	lovely book that could be used in many different situations, including schools
<b><i>The Huge Bag of Worries</i></b> Virginia Ironside Amazon ISBN 978-0340903179	Jenny begins to worry about lots of different things and these worries build up and get out of control. She just can't get rid of them, until she meets the old lady next door who helps her feel better. A lovely story with fun illustrations encourages children to talk about their worries.
<b><i>The Tenth Good Thing about Barney</i></b> Judith Viorst. Amazon ISBN 978-0689712036	A young boy's cat dies and his parents suggest that he could think of ten good things about Barney to tell at the funeral. But he can only think of nine, until he talks to his father about what happens to someone after they have died, and he discovers the tenth. Sensitively deals with death and lets the reader make his or her own decisions about what happens after the funeral
<b><i>The Cat Mummy</i></b> Jacqueline Wilson Amazon ISBN 13: 978-0440864165.	Verity's Mum died the day she was born but she rarely talks about her. Verity doesn't want to upset her Dad or Grandparents. This humorous but sensitive story mainly focuses on Verity's missing cat Mabel but reveals some of the misunderstandings and anxieties children can have about death. It also shows it can be good to be open, honest and to talk about difficult issues
<b><i>Milly's Bug Net</i></b> Jill Janey Amazon ISBN 13: 9780953912346	A short, simple story with black and white pictures, of a young girl whose dad has died. It talks about the ups and downs of family life and how things slowly get easier as time goes
<b><i>Ways to Live Forever</i></b> Sally Nichols Amazon ISBN 13: 978-1407105154	If I grow up," 11-year-old Sam informs readers, "I'm going to be a scientist." He says "if" because he has acute lymphoblastic leukaemia and knows he probably won't. With the encouragement of his tutor, he start to write a bit about himself, then more, until he is using his writing to sort out his death.
<b><i>Luna's Red Hat: An Illustrated Storybook to Help Children Cope with Loss and Suicide (6+)</i></b>  <i>Emmi Smid</i>  Amazon ISBN-13: 978-1849056298	Luna's Mum died one year ago and she still finds it difficult to understand why. She feels that it may have been her fault and worries that her Dad might leave her in the same way. Her Dad talks to her to explain what happened and together they think about all the happy memories they have of Mum.  This beautifully-illustrated storybook is designed as a tool to be read with children aged 6+ who have experienced the loss of a loved one by suicide.



## **Appendix 4          Secondary School**

### **Example of Good Practice in an East Renfrewshire Secondary School**

#### **Craig's Story**

The following illustrates the response of a school to a family dealing with the news and later death of a father with a life limiting illness. It highlights some of the stages and issues that may prove helpful in managing the impact of the death on your community or school setting.

#### ***Immediately following the news of the illness***

- We took the initial lead from the parent who called in. They were understandably struggling with their own emotions but wished to maintain a consistent approach to their child's education. The parent expressed concerns over their child who was already anxious about their school workload. They wished staff to be informed of the family situation so that allowances could be made when things became harder for the family.
- Pupil support passed on the information to relevant teachers making them aware that if they have any concerns or see any changes to allow the pupil out of class or contact pupil support.
- The relevant DHT was also informed of the situation.
- Pupil Support met with the pupil and offered them support and gained a sense of how this news might impact on their emotional wellbeing and academic progress. The pupil was reassured that their mental health and welfare were the main concern and priority.

#### ***Continued support***

- Pupil support continues to liaise with the family on a regular basis and met with the pupil regularly. The pupil had a couple of occasions where they felt overwhelmed with the demands of the year.
- Attendance became affected due to low mood.
- The pupil was discussed at the Joint Support Team and a subsequent referral to the Youth Counselling Service was made.
- A catch up tutorial period within the Support for Learning department was put into place to support the pupil following absences – it was agreed to retain as much subject commitment as possible and this time will come from core PE and PSE. This is a reviewed measure based upon need.

#### ***Immediately following the news of the death***

- Information was taken by the Pupil Support Teacher of the funeral arrangements and condolences given.
- Teachers were informed of death and time expectations of absence.
- Pupil support teacher and DHT attended funeral to represent school.

- Pupil support shared information with other Pupil Support staff in case other pupils were affected– either as friends of the bereaved or because they too have suffered a recent bereavement.

### ***Medium Term – On the pupil’s return to school***

- A meeting was organised with DHT, parent or carer, pupil and pupil support staff to ensure safe and appropriate return to school and to plan for the pupil’s additional support needs.
- Staff were informed of the pupil’s return to school and that they would have a card allowing them to leave class if required.
- Catch up tutorials were arranged and monitored in collaboration with the pupil.
- The pupil’s timetable was reduced from 8 Nat 5’s to 7 and extra time was given to other qualification subjects.
- The pupil’s pupil support teacher continues to be a point of contact and support for the family and pupil.



## Exploring the Themes of Loss and Death in a Secondary School Setting

### Second Level





#### ***My Special People Activity***

Instead of activities focused around Mother's and Father's Day, activities considering who is important in our lives, who looks after us and how, and how families can look different is a more inclusive and sensitive way of encouraging discussion about family diversity, loss and change. Always be mindful of young people in your class for whom family could be an upsetting topic and consider preparing them beforehand or discuss what might help the young person participate.

#### ***Lesson Aims***

To celebrate family and diversity in families

#### ***Objectives – Pupils will:***

-  think about who is special in their life, who looks after them, their qualities and what they do to look after them
-  understand that all families look different
-  have fun producing creative ways of representing and thinking about their family
-  have a greater awareness that some young people find it difficult to discuss their family because of death or separation

Introduce the session by explaining to the young people that they are going to think about who at home is special to them. Use your own personal examples to describe or create a picture of this person(s).

Which words would they use to describe him? Why is that person special? What does he/she do for them?

Explain that all families look different – mums/dad, step parents, step siblings, only young person, mums/mums, dads/dads, pets.

Explain that there are lots of different reasons for this but, in some families, it is because of a death or parents separating. Discuss some of the emotions that people might feel if they have lost someone special to them and things that might help them.

Get creative - encourage the young people to draw a picture of their family, a family member or pet, write a story or poem, make a thank you card for someone special, make a timetable of their best family day, draw a picture of a memory etc

Try to end this activity with something happy – a nice book about memories (see recommended resources), a favourite book or video clip, physical activity, a game or interactive song. Check in with any young person who may be vulnerable around this activity.

## **Creating Memories**

### ***Resources:***

Photos, paper, paints, paper mâché, art materials of your choice

### **Introduction**

Begin by asking the class to think about people, animals, places or things they miss. This may be because someone has died, moved away, because of the COVID 19 pandemic or a holiday destination they haven't been to again. Allow pupils to offer examples but reassure the group they don't need to talk about anything they don't want to. Share your own example first – it might help to have your own visuals; photos to help you share your story. Encourage discussion about some of the emotions people might feel when they think about things they miss – happy, sad, angry and that all emotions are ok.

### ***Main Activity:***

Encourage the young people to create something to remember. This could be a poster, jar, box, story, diary entry, picture, powerpoint, bunting. They might want to bring in things from home - photos, models, poems, objects etc.

### ***Plenary:***

Spend some time looking at each creation encouraging each pupil to share the story of their creation if they want to. Ask the pupils to think about how it felt to create these memories and to share them with others. Discuss how it can be helpful for some people. Discuss other ways that might help people who are missing someone or something.

## What Does Dead Mean?

### ***Materials Needed:***

Leaves, plants, insects, pictures of live things e.g. animals.

### ***Introduction:***

Ask young people what they think the word 'dead' means. It might be helpful to read a story or watch a clip around the subject of death prior to this. See recommended resources.

These animated movie clips all feature the death of a character. They are likely to be familiar to the young people but be mindful of young people for whom the clips could be upsetting.

[Moana's grandmother dies](#)

[Inside Out Bing Bong dies](#)

[Lion King Mufasa dies](#)

[Death of a parent](#) – features teenagers talking about losing a parent

You may like to ask if any of the young people have ever had a pet that has died. If so, get them to share their stories... maybe write the name of all the pets that have died up on the board.

### ***Main Activity:***

Display an object, for example an old dead leaf from a plant or a tree. Pass it round and ask young people to think of some words that they could use to describe it. Repeat this exercise for some dead insects; again asking young people to say how they know it is dead, and what it feels like.

Now bring out a live plant. What are the differences between this and the dead leaf? What do the young people notice? After doing this, look at pictures of live animals. Make a list of all the characteristics of something that is alive, and something that is dead. This may also be a good opportunity to bring into discussion different parts of the body such as the heart and the brain. What do they do? How might someone die if there is a problem with these organs?

It is important that young people begin to hear that once something or someone is dead, they or it can't come back to life. Also, that when someone has died, they no longer have any feelings. They may worry that a person who has been buried gets cold, or that if a family member is cremated, it will really hurt them.






## Third Level

### The Language of Death and Grief



#### ***Aim***

To get pupils used to discussing death in an open way and to explore why our society has difficulty using the "real" words such as death and dying.

Pupils will

-  explore the word 'death' and the many euphemisms used.
-  think about what the word means to themselves and to others.
-  consider why it is difficult to use the 'real' words.
-  consider the origins of these words and phrases.
-  design and produce a condolence card (extension work).

#### ***Resources***

-  A selection of condolence cards and/or death notices from a newspaper.
-  Paper and pens

#### ***The Language of Death***

1. Explore as a group the many words and phrases used rather than the actual words of dead, dying and deceased. Have on display the selection of condolence cards, and/or death notices.
2. Research and note down as many words and phrases
3. Discuss why we have developed such terms and why different words or phrases are preferred over dead, death. Why are they helpful, why might they not be helpful?
4. Allow pupils if they wish to offer their own experiences of death and feelings associated with the death. Validate and normalise their feelings and experiences and that everyone will react differently – there is no single best way to grieve.
5. Discuss the kinds of things people can do when they are grieving which might help.

## **Cultures and Customs**

*Adapted from Winston's Wish*

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### **Resources**

Textbooks, internet access, paper, pens and pencils.

### **Introduction:**

When a death occurs within a school community it may be the first experience of death for many pupils. In multi-ethnic areas it will also highlight the different cultural and religious practices that exist around the world. This may lead to many questions from pupils. Begin by asking pupils to share any experiences they have had of funerals and customs surrounding burial and remembrance. Also ask if they are aware of any other practices around the world.

### **Main Activity:**

Split the class into groups and assign each group to a different religion, culture, custom or country. Ask them to research what followers of that religion/culture/ custom/nationality believe about death, the afterlife and the way in which they conduct a funeral and the grieving period. Information can be presented in a number of ways and presented to the rest of the class.

Pupils should be aware of the various faiths and beliefs held by members of the class and understand how they might help an individual who holds those beliefs.

### **Plenary:**

It is important that students are aware of the many different practices, beliefs and customs that exist around the world, and that they grow to become tolerant of each of them. They should also begin to understand the reasons for these practices and realise how they might aid a grieving family.

## Illness and The Body

*Adapted from Winston's Wish*

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### **Resources:**

Access to internet, large sheets of paper, pens and pencils.

(Further resources optional): Medical dictionary. Models of parts of the body.

### **Introduction:**

This task is especially pertinent after someone within the school has died from an illness. Even increasingly common illnesses still leave us with many questions. Ask the class what they know about the illness: for example, cancer. What causes it? What does a cancer cell actually do?

How does it spread? What treatment is available and how does it work? Is it possible to prevent the illness? Help the students to realise that although we often know what the illness is called we often don't know much more.

### **Main Activity:**

Split the class into groups and task them with putting together a presentation about a certain aspect of the illness. You may wish to give each group areas to cover. For instance: what is Leukaemia? How can it be treated? How could it kill someone? What is being done to prevent it, and by whom? Allow the students to use the internet and medical encyclopaedias to find out the answers to some of these questions. Ask them to report back in groups, presenting their findings. They could present a poster, a leaflet, a PowerPoint presentation, or use models of different parts of the body in order to help them.

### **Plenary:**

Begin the plenary by reminding the pupils of the reason for their research today. It is a tough thing to research a medical condition that was responsible for a death. Ensure that all the pupils are ok; they may have found this session hard. Point out that there is much that we still don't know about the human body, but that doctors and scientists have made huge advances over the years. Affirm that pupils will probably still have many questions that have not been answered today - maybe they will be in the future.

## Suggested Resources: Secondary

<b>Lesson Plans, Ideas and Activities</b>	
<a href="#">Death of a parent</a>	Short clip of young adults discussing their experience of losing a parent.
<p><b><i>Supporting Young People Coping with Grief, Loss and Death</i></b></p> <p>Weymont and Rae Amazon ISBN 13: 9781412913126</p>	A complete 12 session teaching programme designed to be delivered to whole classes or groups of students age 11-18. The aim is to enable them to understand about loss, grief and death but also to promote emotional health and literacy. Information on Loss and Grief, facilitator notes and copiable activities included.
<p><b><i>Childhood Bereavement – Developing the Curriculum and Pastoral Support</i></b></p> <p>Job and Francis Amazon ISBN 13: 978 - 1904787143</p>	Using case studies and drawing on best practice, this resource aims to help those working in schools address bereavement from a pastoral and educational perspective. It provides lesson ideas for how to implement in the curriculum.
<p><b><i>A Teacher’s Handbook of Death</i></b></p> <p>Jackson and Colwell Amazon ISBN 13: 978 - 1843100157.</p>	Offers ideas for including death and bereavement in the curriculum, factual and informative around rituals and processes associated with death and dying.
<b>DVDS</b>	
<p><b><i>Grief in the Family</i></b></p> <p>Leeds Animation Workshop <a href="https://www.leedsanimation.org.uk/films/">https://www.leedsanimation.org.uk/films/</a></p>	Looks at the ways children and young people respond to grief, and what the adults around them can do to help. Offers practical advice to parents who need to learn how to find support for themselves, while helping their children to express their feelings and handle confusing emotions. Designed as a resource for those working with families and bereaved children. It raises awareness and facilitates discussion in parenting education classes, training courses or schools. It is also suitable for viewing at home by parents, carers, and children.
<p><b><i>Teenage Grief</i></b></p> <p>Leeds Animation Workshop <a href="https://www.leedsanimation.org.uk/films/">https://www.leedsanimation.org.uk/films/</a></p>	This animated DVD/video contains six separate episodes about young people from a wide range of backgrounds, facing different kinds of bereavement. The pack aims to help professionals and carers understand the ways young people grieve and how best to support them. It can be used with parents and with groups to raise awareness or start a discussion. There is a free downloadable training package based on this film.
<p><b><i>A death in the lives of...</i></b></p> <p>Childhood Bereavement Network <a href="https://www.ncb.org.uk/product/194">https://www.ncb.org.uk/product/194</a></p>	A group of teenagers discuss the support they needed to help them cope with bereavement. Includes a section about what was, and what was not, helpful at school. Can be used to facilitate training and discussion and is accompanied by a leaflet.



<p><b><i>It Will Be Ok</i></b></p> <p>Childhood Bereavement Network  <a href="https://www.ncb.org.uk/product/220">https://www.ncb.org.uk/product/220</a></p>	<p>Young people have made this 15 minute film to help others in identifying emotions and behaviour which they may experience after a bereavement. The film aims to provide support to other bereaved children and young people by emphasising that they are not alone and that their feelings are normal. Suitable for bereaved children and young people to use in a supported environment. It is also a useful resource for the practitioners, parents and carers supporting them.</p>
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## **Books for use with Bereaved Children and Young People**

<p><b><i>Finding a Way Through When Someone Close has Died</i></b></p> <p>Mood &amp; Whittaker</p> <p>Amazon  ISBN 978-1853029202.</p>	<p>A workbook by young people who have experienced the death of someone close. They offer advice based on their own experiences. The activities encourage young people to express their feelings and responses.</p>
<p><b><i>Grief Encounter</i></b>  Shelley Gilbert  Amazon ISBN 978-0954843403</p>	<p>A workbook to encourage conversations between adults and bereaved children. Hands on, user friendly, with many ideas to encourage communication and provide support.</p>

## **Fiction Books**

<p><b><i>A Monster Calls</i></b></p> <p>Jim Ness</p> <p>Amazon ISBN 978-1406336511</p>	<p>Book and major film about love, loss and hope. Conor has the same dream every night, ever since his mother first fell ill, ever since she started the treatments that don't quite seem to be working. But tonight is different. Tonight, when he wakes, there's a visitor at his window. It's ancient, elemental, a force of nature. And it wants the most dangerous thing of all from Conor. It wants the truth. Tale of mischief, healing and above all, the courage it takes to survive.</p>
<p><b><i>Flamingo Dream</i></b>  Donna Jo Napoli  Amazon ISBN 13: 978-0688167967</p>	<p>In this bright and colourful book, a young boy tells the story of his Dad who is seriously ill and dies soon after a trip to Florida to see the place where he grew up. A sensitive but honest book which emphasises the importance of memories.</p>
<p><b><i>The Lost Boys Appreciation Society</i></b>  Alan Gibbons  Amazon ISBN 13:978-3425048512</p>	<p>Teenage life is difficult enough for Gary and John, but when their Mum dies in a car accident, things get steadily worse. John struggles to keep the peace as Gary goes off the rails. With exams looming and his Dad going out on dates, things become unbearable for John. A gripping book exploring relationships and how different people react to life events.</p>
<p><b><i>Before I Die</i></b>  Jenny Downham  Amazon ISBN 13:978-1849920452</p>	<p>With only months left to live, 16-yearold Tessa makes a list of things she must experience: sex, petty crime, fame, drugs and true love.</p>

	Downham's wrenching work features a girl desperate for a few thrilling moments before leukaemia takes her away.
<b><i>Two Weeks with the Queen</i></b> Morris Gleitzman Amazon ISBN 13:978-0141303000.	Twelve-year-old Colin, an Australian boy, is sent to stay with relatives in England when his brother becomes ill with cancer. He is determined to find a way of curing his brother, which leads him into all sorts of adventures including trying to visit the Queen! Colin finds a friend in an older man named Ted who helps him express his feelings and understand what he has to do.
<b><i>Vicky Angel</i></b> Jacqueline Wilson Amazon ISBN 13:978-0440865896.	When Jade's best friend Vicky is run over by a car and dies in hospital everyone at home and school starts treating her differently. 'Vicky Angel' then starts following Jade around, distracting her and getting her into trouble. This moving but amusing story illustrates how hard it is to carry on with everyday life after a tragic accident.
<b><i>Ostrich Boys</i></b> Keith Gray Amazon ISBN 13: 9780099456575.	3 friends are about to embark on a remarkable journey. Stealing the urn containing the ashes of their best friend Ross, they set out from Cleethorpes on the east coast to travel the 261 miles to the tiny hamlet of Ross in Dumfries and Galloway. After a depressing and dispiriting funeral they feel taking Ross to Ross will be a fitting memorial for a 15 year-old boy who changed all their lives through his friendship.
<b><i>Ways to Live Forever</i></b> Sally Nichols Amazon ISBN 13: 978-1407105154.	If I grow up," 11-year-old Sam informs readers, "I'm going to be a scientist." He says "if" because he has acute lymphoblastic leukaemia and knows he probably won't. With the encouragement of his tutor, he starts to write a bit about himself, then more, until he is using his writing to sort out his death.

## Appendix 5 Additional Support Needs - Resources

<b>Websites, Books and Resources for Educational Professionals and Parents/Carers</b>	
<a href="http://www.theonlinebookcompany.com/nasbook">www.theonlinebookcompany.com/nasbook</a>	National Autistic Society website developed for the purposes of creating a page to remember loved ones who have died.
<a href="http://www.breakingbadnews.org/">http://www.breakingbadnews.org/</a>	A website (with accompanying book) with guidelines, case studies, and practical tips, for social care and health staff, families and carers, on breaking bad news to people with learning disabilities and/or autism.
<a href="http://pamis.org.uk/resources/bereavement-and-loss/">http://pamis.org.uk/resources/bereavement-and-loss/</a>	PAMIS Bereavement and Loss Learning Resource Pack for those supporting bereaved people with profound and multiple Learning disabilities and their parents and carers.
<p><b><i>How People with Autism Grieve and How to Help: An Insider Handbook</i></b></p> <p>Deborah Lipsky</p> <p>Amazon ISBN 978-1849059541</p>	<p>The book is an honest, first-hand account of how people with autism deal with the loss of someone in their life. The book explores how people with autism process and come to terms with their feelings of grief, and offers practical and detailed advice.</p>
<p><b><i>Supporting children and young people with autism spectrum disorder through bereavement</i></b></p> <p>Katie Koehler</p> <p>Journal Article Bereavement Care Volume 35 (3) Winter 2016 pp94-101</p>	<p>Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) may react to a bereavement in different ways to neurotypical children. This article explores some of the underlying perceptual and processing difficulties observed in children with ASD that may affect their understanding of death and their reaction to a bereavement. But children with ASD, like any others, need their grief both recognised and understood, and will need opportunities to express how they feel. The article gives some suggestions which may help children with ASD, and includes a list of helpful resources.</p>

## Books for Use with Bereaved Children and Young People

<p><b><i>Supporting People with Disabilities Coping with Grief and Loss</i></b></p> <p>Hrepsime Gulbenkoglul</p> <p>Scope Ltd</p>	<p>Information leaflet which illustrates the use of pictures to explain death and bereavement to a person with additional support needs. A further section provides information and advice for people who support people with additional support needs. Free to download</p> <p><a href="http://www.easyhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/SUPPORTING%20PEOPLE%20WITH%20DISABILITIES%20COPING%20WITH%20GRIEF%20AND%20LOSS.pdf">http://www.easyhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/SUPPORTING%20PEOPLE%20WITH%20DISABILITIES%20COPING%20WITH%20GRIEF%20AND%20LOSS.pdf</a></p>
<p><b><i>When Mum Died When Dad Died When Somebody Dies</i></b></p> <p>Hollins, Dowling and Blackman</p>	<p>Simple pictures are used for a more direct approach to death which may be more suitable for children and young people with additional support needs. Guidance is given on how to answer any questions plus information on other resources available.</p> <p>London: Books Beyond Words. <a href="https://booksbeyondwords.co.uk/bookshop/">https://booksbeyondwords.co.uk/bookshop/</a></p>
<p><b><i>Understanding Death and Illness and what they Tell us About Life: An Interactive Guide for Individuals with Autism and Asperger's and their Loved Ones</i></b></p> <p>Catherine Flaherty</p> <p>Amazon ISBN 978-1932565560</p>	<p>Comprehensive treatment of death focusing on things most likely to concern those with ASD presented in the clear, straightforward, and concrete manner that is most likely to help those on the spectrum, as well as the professionals, family members, or friends that are concerned about them. Readers of this book will learn a lot about death, themselves, and how to help people with ASD to better understand and cope with it.</p>
<p><b><i>Finding Your Own Way to Grieve: A Creative Activity Workbook for Kids and Teens on the Autism Spectrum</i></b></p> <p>Karla Helbert</p> <p>Amazon ISBN 978-1849059220</p>	<p>Supports children and young people to express their loss as they work through the book by themselves or with the support of a family member or professional... With illustrations throughout, her book offers a variety of coping skills and exercises, including writing, art and craft, cooking, movement, relaxation and remembrance activities.</p>

## Appendix 6 Developing a Strategy for Supporting Bereaved Children and Young People

### Guidance for Schools










*Adapted from Winston's Wish*


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The following guidance is intended to assist your educational establishment in developing a strategy to respond to a death in the school community.









#### (A) Informing Staff





Adults and children benefit from being kept informed of a death. Rumour and gossip can be very damaging and can lead to both young and old developing the attitude that the death is not a topic to talk about. Children and young people have a healthy curiosity and if they are not informed of the circumstances or feel they are unable to ask questions, their normal grief process can be obstructed.

-  Arrange a staff meeting as soon as practicable. Identify absent staff.
-  Tell the story of what happened leading up to the death.
-  Give a factual explanation of how the death occurred.
-  Be prepared for obvious upset and feeling of anger/guilt. People may connect the incident to their own personal experience of bereavement, so feelings about past bereavements may need to be discussed. This is perfectly natural.
-  To enable absent staff to feel part of a caring team, arrangements should be made to inform them over the telephone if a personal visit is impractical. Consider the relationship between the absent colleague and deceased.
-  For a death that may attract media coverage staff are advised not to communicate with the press. East Renfrewshire Council will take responsibility for all communication with the media.
-  With death in traumatic circumstances such as suicide or murder, consider requesting bereavement support services - Winston's Wish, Cruse and the Educational Psychology Service (if psychological de-briefing is thought necessary).
-  Arrange staff condolences with collaborative agreement if felt appropriate.
-  Nominate staff to prepare a letter to parents and carers

 Arrange a staff meeting for the end of the working day and invite each person to recount his or her feelings and to describe what was good and bad about the day. Staff who will be alone that night could be identified and arrangements made for colleagues to contact them by phone.

## Informing Children and Young People

-  Inform children and young people as soon as possible. Information travels much faster now via social media so many will arrive at the school already informed but with conflicting information.
-  Identify those children who had a long-term and/or close relationship with the deceased or child of the deceased to be told together as a separate group. Where possible inform all the pupils in the smallest group practicable. Class or tutor groups are ideal.
-  Experience has shown that it is more beneficial if all pupils are informed. It is always a shock when a death occurs even if it may have been anticipated.
-  Provide staff with guidelines on how to inform children. For example:
  - (i). “I’ve got some really sad news to tell you today that might upset you. I know most of you will have heard of cancer, and know that sometimes people with cancer get better, but other times people die from it. Mrs Smith, John’s mum has been ill with cancer for a long time. I have to tell you that Mrs Smith died yesterday in hospital”.**
  - (ii). “Sometimes people have accidents at work, at home, at school or on the road. People may be hurt or injured in the accident and they may have to go to hospital for treatment. Sadly, there are some accidents that cause people to die. I have some really sad news to tell you that might upset you. Yesterday Laura’s dad was in an accident and he was so badly injured that he died”.**
-  Children and young people will appreciate time to verbalise their feelings and fears. Allow space for “If only’s ....” to be acknowledged.
-  Discussion - allow pupils to share their own experiences of death, e.g. “When my pet/my Gran died”, etc.
-  Be honest about your own feelings and experiences, and talk honestly about the relationship that you had with the person.
-  Answer pupil’s questions factually. Avoid using euphemisms like ‘passed away’, or ‘lost’ etc. Use the words dead, died and death to avoid confusion for children.

-  Be prepared for children to say or do the unexpected, experience has shown some responses or apparent lack of response may be upsetting for adults. No apparent response does not mean that a child does not care.
-  End up discussion on a positive note - not all people who are ill or have accidents die - many get better. Consider a prayer, poem or silence to remember the deceased and their family.
-  Discuss arrangements for pupils to attend the funeral if this is appropriate.
-  Try to identify any key answers that you may need to prepare, e.g. the facts about an illness, or dates which may be relevant to the death such as end of school year and changing class or schools.

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## Appendix 7 Responding to a Bereavement in the School Community

### Hear about the death

(Day 1)

Contact relevant school/education personnel

Contact parents/send letter of condolence

Visit family if appropriate

Decide who and how to tell pupils and if possible involve parents (close group or all pupils):

- Whole school/ year group Assembly
- In class
- Small groups

Contact other parents/carers if appropriate

### Short term

Refer to policy: ***A Community Approach to Supporting Loss, Grief and Bereavement: Guidance for Educational Establishments***

Remove relevant pupil or family names from school system

Record the bereavement in Pastoral Notes

Consider the need for support for other pupils. This should be provided by someone familiar to the pupils with reference to the guidance in the policy.

Discuss and plan with the parent/carer the child's return to school and any Additional Support Needs

### On the child's return

Decide on the best person/people to meet the child initially – this may involve some time out of class

Acknowledge the death and be prepared to answer questions honestly

Discuss ways to remember with the pupil/family

### As time passes

Continue to offer support and plan for additional support needs

Consider Seasons for Growth or referral to Joint Support Team

Consider impact of anniversary and special dates

Pass on information at transition times to other education staff

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