

LanCasterian Primary School

Bereavement Policy



Version No.	Date	Approved by	Review Frequency	Review Date
1	Sept 2024	Governors	2 years	Sept 2026

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INTRODUCTION

Bereavement is an experience which will be faced by members of school community at different times, whether this be the death of a family member, a friend, a pupil or member of staff. The term 'bereavement' refers to the process of grieving and mourning and is associated with a deep sense of loss and sadness. We understand the importance of providing support to pupils, staff, governors, and the wider community before (where applicable), during and after a bereavement.

When implementing this policy the wishes of the bereaved family will always be considered; if the family objects to any of the procedures reasonable adjustments will be made.

1. AIMS OF THE POLICY

The aims of this policy are:

- To provide a framework and guidance in how to deal sensitively and compassionately with a bereavement.
- To support pupils and/or members of staff before (where applicable), during and after a bereavement.
- To identify key staff within the school who can offer support with a bereavement.
- To have clear expectations about the way the school will respond to a death and provide a nurturing, safe and supportive environment for all.
- To ensure all families have access to the same level of support when/if the wish to access it.

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 The headteacher.

The Headteacher will be responsible for:

- The overall implementation of this policy.
- Informing the Senior Leadership Team and coordinating informing of other members of the school community as appropriate, identifying an appropriate staff member to be the nominated contact for the person/family affected.
- Responding to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death.
- Monitoring and supporting the team or staff members supporting the bereaved pupils or staff.

2.2 The Senior Leadership Team.

The Senior Leadership Team will be responsible for:

- Where appropriate communicating the news of the death to staff and pupils and parents/carers.
- Establishing regular contact with the bereaved family through a nominated member of the SLT; the nominated staff member will be chosen based on relationships with the person/family affected.

2.3 The Pastoral Care Manager

The Pastoral Care Manager will be responsible for:

- Providing direct support to bereaved pupils and staff.
- Signposting external support available to bereaved pupils and staff (see Appendix).
- Identifying bereaved pupils Five Trusted Adults, sharing appropriate information with them to support them in supporting the pupil.
- Devising a bank of resources and safe spaces for pupil to access to take time out.
- Monitoring and supporting the team or staff members supporting the bereaved pupils or staff.
- Providing additional support during difficult transitions e.g. moving year group or transitioning to secondary school.
- Attending relevant panel meetings linked to the bereavement.
- Undertaking bereavement support training.
- Referring pupils to external services for additional support when appropriate.

2.4 All Staff Members

All staff members will be responsible for:

- Undertaking any bereavement support training identified by their line manager or pastoral care manager, when appropriate.
- Seeking support from their line manager/Pastoral Care Manager as appropriate.

3. PROCEDURES

3.1 Immediate Actions Following A Death

When the school is informed of the death of a pupil, staff member or member of the school community, the following actions should be considered;

- The Headteacher or a nominated member of the senior leadership team will contact the family.
- The initial phone call will be used to gather factual information about what has happened and establish the family's wishes with regards to what information can be shared to the school community and how.
- If a death affects the entire school, e.g. the death of a pupil or staff member, the Headteacher will inform the family that staff and pupils will be informed and discuss how to do this.
- The senior leadership team will discuss the best way to share the information with pupils, staff and the school community.
- The senior leadership team will devise a script for those responsible for informing the pupils which sets out what pupils should be told and includes information on how to answer difficult questions and identifies how they can get support.

4. INFORMING STAFF AND GOVERNORS

Staff will be informed of the death before pupils. This may be done by inviting all staff to a meeting as soon as practicable. Where possible staff members who are known to have a close relationship with the deceased will be informed by the Headteacher or member of SLT either 1:1 or in a smaller group setting.

If the death affects the entire school the Headteacher will contact the Chair of Governors to discuss the death and appropriate next steps

During the meeting the Head Teacher will:

- Explain what happened leading up to the death.
- Give a factual explanation of how the death occurred.
- Allow staff time to discuss what has happened and how they feel.
- Identify what internal and external support is available to staff.
- Discuss the arrangements for telling pupils, including whether all pupils will be told and who will be responsible for telling them.
- Identify the media spokesperson in the case of a publicised death and advise staff not to comment or engage with media.

Any absent members of staff will be identified and informed as soon as possible, if they are unable to be seen in person, a phone call will be arranged.

5. INFORMING PUPILS

The Head Teacher or nominated senior leader will have a discussion with the family about whether all or some pupils need to be informed about the death.

The Head Teacher will make the final decision regarding which pupils will be informed.

Where possible, pupils will be informed in small groups by a member of senior leadership and their class teacher. These conversations will take place at the same time across the school.

If it is not possible to inform pupils about the death in small groups, the Head Teacher or nominated senior leader will decide if it will be appropriate to tell pupils in a large group. For example, during an assembly. Pupils will then return to their class where they will be given time to express any thoughts or feelings about what they have been told.

Pupils with specific needs that may influence their response to being informed about the death will be identified and told separately. These needs may include the following:

- Pupils that had a long term and/or close relationship with the individual who has died.
- Pupils with a history of loss.
- Pupils with SEND.
- Pupils who have difficulty managing their emotions or behaviour.

Staff responsible for informing pupils will use the script provided to them by the SLT. To ensure all pupils are told about the death in an age-appropriate way, a number of scripts may be created and distributed to staff with clear instructions of which script to use for each year group.

Pupils will be given time to ask questions about what has happened and to talk about how they are feeling. Any questions that are asked by pupils will be answered factually. Pupils will be told who they can go to in school for support and will also be directed to any external support.

Where an individual pupil has been bereaved, they will be asked if they want to be present whilst the news is shared with pupils. Appropriate support will be provided for the pupil during and after the information is shared.

6. INFORMING PARENTS AND CARERS

The Head Teacher or nominated senior leader will have a discussion with the family about whether any parents/carers need to be informed about the death. If the death affects the whole school, e.g. the death of a staff member or pupil, the Headteacher will strongly recommend to the family that all parents should be informed; however, if the death does not affect the whole school, it may be more appropriate to just inform parents that are directly affected, if any.

The heads teacher and nominated senior leader will compose a letter or message to parents about the death. The letter will contain the basic, factual information about the death, information about how the school is supporting pupils, how they can support their children, and who to direct questions or concerns to.

7. FUNERALS

If appropriate, the Headteacher will discuss with the family whether any staff, governors or pupils are able to attend the funeral. With the family's approval, the Headteacher will arrange for the school to be represented at the funeral and identify which staff and pupils may want to attend.

The Headteacher and chair of governors will decide if it is necessary for the school to be fully or partially closed during the funeral of a staff member or pupil. Necessary cover arrangements will be made for staff attending the funeral.

8. THE MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Any communication with the media or social media activity will be agreed with the family. Only the Head Teacher will deal with media enquiries and communications. Staff, governors and pupils will not respond to any media enquiries themselves or make any public statements about the death.

Staff, governors and pupils will not post any information about the death on social media. If staff, governors or pupils find any false, negative or malicious information being posted about the death on social media, they will report this to the headteacher.

If a member of staff is found to have been posting content on social media or providing information to the media that is false, negative or malicious, action will be taken in line with the

Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. If a pupil is found to have been posting content on social media or providing information to the media that is false, negative or malicious, action will be taken in line with the Behaviour Policy.

9. SUPPORT FOR THE FAMILY

The Headteacher or nominated senior leader will be the main point of contact between the school and the family. The point of contact will suggest a home visit, if agreed they will attend the family home with one other senior leader to offer the family condolences and discuss how the school can best support them. The family's wishes and feelings will always be considered and respected when making decisions and conducting activities relating to the death.

Any support that is put in place will be decided on a case-by-case basis, depending on the family's needs and wishes. Support may include but is not limited to, the following:

- Sending a card or letter of condolence.
- Signposting and/or referring the family for bereavement support.
- Giving the family the opportunity to collect any personal belongings of the person who has died.
- Inviting the family to commemorative events held by the school.
- Signposting and/or referring the family to external agencies.
- Planning phased returns to school.

10. SUPPORT FOR STAFF

10.1 When a staff member or pupil has died.

Staff directly affected by the death, e.g. if they are a relative or close friend or worked closely with the individual that has died, will be identified and the appropriate support will be put in place. The level of support will be decided on a case-by-case basis by the line manager and headteacher, and may include the following:

- Ensuring the staff member is supported by their colleagues.
- Arranging for lessons or other duties to be covered.
- Organising bereavement leave, in cases where this is necessary and appropriate.
- Identifying external support including employee assistance.

10.2 Staff returning to work after a bereavement.

The bereaved staff member will meet with their line manager to discuss how best to manage a return to school. The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Determine whether the staff member is ready to return to work and the best way to make that return (e.g. a phased return to work or temporary change in duties)
- Address any concerns the staff member may have about the return to work.

- Consult the staff member about how or even if they want their pupils and colleagues to know of the death (where relevant)
- Set guidelines for communication between the staff member and their line manager to monitor and support the staff member.

11. SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

11.1 Support for pupils that have experienced a significant bereavement.

When deciding what support will be put in place for a pupil, the impact the death will have on the pupil will always be considered in the context of pre-existing factors. The following contextual factors will be considered:

- The circumstances surrounding the death, e.g. was it under traumatic circumstances, was the death expected, or did multiple people die?
- The relationship between the pupil and the person who has died.
- The ability of the pupil's family to support them following the death, e.g. if a pupil's parent has died, how able is the surviving parent to support the pupil?
- Family factors such as size, financial state, structure, style of coping, communication and stressors that affect the child.
- The support the pupil has from their peers and other organisations and people.
- Characteristics of the pupil, including their age and any SEND they have.

The Pastoral Care Manager will meet with the bereaved pupil and their parents/carers to discuss how to best manage a return to school. The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Determine whether the child is emotionally ready to return to the classroom either full-time or with a phased return or flexible timetable.
- Address any concerns the pupil and their parent/carers may have about the return to school.
- Consult the pupil about how or even if they want their classmates to know of the death (where relevant)
- Consider any additional support needed for a pupil who is vulnerable or has SEND.
- Discuss referrals to play therapy and/or other external services to support the child and family.
- Ask the child who their five trusted adults are in order to prepare those staff members to best support the child.
- The identified five trusted adults will be informed of the bereavement, the pastoral care manager will advise them on how to best support the child.

A member of staff that is familiar with the pupil will be appointed to act as their main point of contact – the pupil will be involved in selecting who that person is.

If a death occurs soon before or during a time where the pupil will take an exam, the deputy Headteacher will report the circumstances to the exam board who will decide if special considerations apply. If a pupil misses an exam due to the death of a close family member or friend, the deputy Headteacher will report this to the appropriate exam board who will then decide as to whether special considerations can be applied.

11.2 Support for all pupils

All pupils, even those not directly affected by the death, will need to be supported following a death, particularly if the death affects the whole school community, e.g. the death of a staff member or pupil. Pupils will be informed of who they can speak to and how to ask for help. Staff will talk to pupils about what has happened using age-appropriate and developmental stage appropriate language (see Appendix 1 for age and stage related information from Child Bereavement UK)

Following a death in the school community, pupils will be invited to take part in remembrance activities, e.g. creating memory books, assemblies.

The Pastoral Care Manager and PSHE lead will discuss changes to the PSHE curriculum timetable to bring forward any relevant topics and devise additional lessons to support children's understanding of death and available support for them.

12. BEHAVIOUR AND SEMH

Staff will remain vigilant to the following behaviours that a pupil may display after the death of someone close to them:

- Inability to concentrate
- Lack of motivation
- Tiredness and irritability
- Heightened sensitivity to comments and remarks
- Inability to take other's feelings into account
- Anger, frustration or aggression
- A general change in behaviour, e.g. becoming unnaturally quiet or withdrawn
- Anxiety
- Being easily upset by events that would normally not affect them
- Physical complaints, such as headaches, stomach aches and a general tendency to be prone to minor illness

The pupil's nominated staff member will keep in contact with the pupil's family and share information about how the pupil is behaving at school and home. Any challenging behaviour

displayed by bereaved pupils will be addressed using the individual graduated response outlined in the Behaviour Policy alongside support from the Pastoral Care Manager.

Any incidents of bullying, where a bereaved pupil is the victim or perpetrator, will be addressed in line with the Anti-bullying Policy, taking into account the pupil's needs and circumstances.

The Headteacher and Pastoral Care Manager will ensure that all staff members are aware of the lasting impact that bereavement can have on a pupil's mental health, behaviour and education.

Staff members will remain vigilant to signs that a bereaved pupil is facing difficulties in relation to their psychological, physical and social development and will refer the pupil to the Pastoral Care Manager who will put appropriate support in place.

13. SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCES

The procedures outlined in this policy will be followed for all deaths affecting the staff, school community and individual pupils; however, specific measures will be implemented for certain circumstances.

13.1 Pre-bereavement – when a pupil's family member is not expected to live.

If a someone close to a pupil has an illness where they are not expected to live, their family will make the school aware of the situation and the school will ensure the appropriate support is in place. A member of pastoral staff will meet with the pupil regularly to provide the pupil with an opportunity to talk about what is happening and how they are feeling.

All staff will remain vigilant to signs that the pupil is facing challenges in relation to their psychological, physical, and social development and will refer any concerns to the Pastoral Care Manager who will ensure appropriate support is put in place.

13.2 Pre-bereavement – when a staff member's family member is not expected to live.

If someone close to a staff member has an illness where they are not expected to live, they will make their line manager or the Headteacher aware of the situation. The line manager or Headteacher will discuss with them if they want the information to be shared with other staff and signpost them to support. Absence due to the illness of their family member or their death will be managed on a case-by-case basis in line with employee absence and special leave procedures and policies.

The Headteacher or line manager will have regular meetings with the staff member to share information and provide support and opportunity for the staff member to discuss what is happening.

13.3 Pupils with a life-threatening illness.

Pupils with life-threatening illnesses will be encouraged to take part in school routines as much as possible, and the school will continue to expect the usual standards of behaviour as appropriate.

The headteacher, the pupil and their family, and the Pastoral Care Manager will decide how to share the news that a pupil is terminally ill with the school community. Other pupils will be informed about how they can best support the pupil in the most appropriate way.

If the pupil is receiving treatment from a local hospice or hospital, the key professional responsible for the pupil will be identified and the Headteacher will contact this person for advice and support as necessary.

If the pupil is unable to attend school the Headteacher and Pastoral Care Manager will arrange to visit the pupil and family, during the visit they will identify ways to continue to involve the pupil in school life where possible for example their class could write them letters or send them videos.

13.4 Staff member with a life-threatening illness.

Staff members with a life-threatening illness will notify their line manager or the Headteacher of their condition. The Headteacher will discuss with them if they want to inform other staff, pupils and the school community and how best to do this. The Pastoral Care Manager will support in deciding if and how to share the news with pupils.

The staff member will be asked to share the contact details of a named family member or friend to maintain contact with the school on their behalf should they become too unwell to do so.

The Headteacher and line manager will discuss with the staff member if they will be attending school during their illness and what/if any accommodations need to be made, this may include involvement of an occupational therapist. The Headteacher or line manager will meet with the staff member regularly to share information and provide the staff member an opportunity to discuss what is happening.

If the staff member is unable to attend meetings the Headteacher and Pastoral Care Manager or line manager will arrange to visit the staff member.

The staff member's absence will be managed in line with the employee absence procedures and policies.

13.5 Cultural and religious equity.

The school will keep in mind the cultural beliefs and behaviours relating to death and will make sure these needs are taken into consideration when putting support in place for those affected.

13.6 Forces' families.

The needs and feelings of bereaved forces' pupils will always be considered prior to any school activities relating to the armed forces, e.g. commemorating Armed Forces Day, and additional support will be put in place for pupils as required.

Appropriate support will be implemented for bereaved forces' pupils, particularly during times of change. Bereaved forces' pupils will be protected from any unwanted media attention and there will be a designated area in school that the pupil can go to if they are feeling overwhelmed.

13.7 A death involving murder or manslaughter.

The Headteacher will contact the family to establish the facts about what has happened. The Pastoral Care Manager will be available to talk to the pupil to help them to answer any questions they may get from their peers about what has happened.

Any concerns relating to the pupil will be shared with the Pastoral Care Manager, who will provide appropriate support.

Any communication from the Police will be managed by the Headteacher or Pastoral Care Manager.

14. REMEMBRANCE ACTIVITIES

Following a death in the school community, the school may conduct some remembrance activities, e.g. a remembrance assembly. The family will always be consulted prior to any remembrance activities being planned and will be invited to take part in the activities.

All members of the school community, including staff, governors, pupils and parents, will be invited to take part in remembrance activities. All remembrance activities will be planned so that they are respectful of the culture and religious beliefs of the family.

15. MANAGING TRANSITIONS

Information about pupils that have been bereaved will be recorded by the Pastoral Care Manager on CPOMS. This information will be shared with relevant parties at key transition points, including the following:

- If the pupil moves school.
- When the pupil moves to secondary school
- When the pupils move class
- If the pupil will be taught by a new teacher

16. TEACHING ABOUT BEREAVEMENT AND GRIEF

Different aspects of the curriculum will be used to discuss relationships, feelings and emotions, and to think about how to manage these in relation to family events and death. Before delivering any lessons that cover topics of death and bereavement, the teacher will consider how the lesson may affect the bereaved pupils they are teaching.

The family of the bereaved pupil will be consulted over whether it is appropriate for them to attend lessons about death or bereavement, and alternative arrangements or additional support will be put in place as required. Where appropriate, the teacher will discuss what the lesson is going to

cover with the pupil and will work with the pupil to design activities that the pupil feels they are able to get involved with.

17. STAFF TRAINING

The Pastoral Care Manager will receive training in bereavement support.

If any members of the staff are not confident in delivering some level of bereavement support to pupils or other staff members, or in implementing this policy, they will speak to their line manager or the Pastoral Care Manager who will signpost appropriate training and support.

18. MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed on a biannual basis by the school governors, Headteacher and Pastoral Care Manager.

Appendix 1

CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDING OF DEATH (from Child Bereavement UK)

Children and young people can grieve just as deeply as adults, but they often show it in different ways. They learn how to grieve by copying the responses of the adults around them and rely on adults to provide them with what they need to support them in their grief.

Young children in particular have a limited ability to put feelings, thoughts and memories into words. They tend to 'act out' with behaviours rather than expressing themselves verbally. They will gradually gain the language of feelings by listening to words that you use. Showing your grief will also encourage them to express theirs.

A child's behaviour is often your guide to how they might be feeling. This is as true for a very young child as it is for a teenager.

Children are naturally good at dipping in and out of their grief. They can be intensely sad one minute, then suddenly switch to playing happily the next. This apparent lack of sadness may lead adults to believe that children are unaffected. However, this 'puddle-jumping' in and out of grief behaviour is a type of inbuilt safety mechanism that stops them from being overwhelmed by powerful feelings.

As children get older, this instinctive 'puddle-jumping' becomes harder and teenagers may spend longer periods of time in one behaviour, such as being withdrawn or keeping very busy.

If your child's behaviour is a cause for concern, impacts their safety or wellbeing or their ability to engage with normal life in the longer-term, you may wish to seek external support. If you are unsure or concerned, you can call Child Bereavement UK's confidential Helpline for guidance.

Babies and toddlers

It is now well recognised that very young children, including babies, do experience grief, they just show it differently. When someone familiar dies, the overriding response in the under 5s is a sense of loss. Being too young to understand the cause, and lacking the vocabulary, they express their distress through their behaviour. Even a very young baby, with clearly no concept of what being dead means, will pick up on an emotionally charged atmosphere and will probably have a reaction of some sort.

Whatever the circumstances, babies and children under five years of age need to have their grief acknowledged, and their distress comforted.

Understanding

Babies have no understanding of the concept of death yet, long before they are able to talk, they are likely to react to upset and changes in their environment such as the absence of a significant person who responded to their needs for care and nourishment on a daily basis. They may also be impacted by any emotional changes in a bereaved parent or main carer.

When it is a parent or main carer who has died, this loss will be particularly felt through the inevitable changes such as an upset routine, a different carer, and unfamiliar surroundings with strange sounds and smells.

Behaviours

A baby's sense of a change in atmosphere may lead to more clingy behaviour than usual. With no language to express themselves, their anxiety and insecurity may show as inconsolable crying. Feeding and sleeping routines may also be disrupted which may cause them to be unsettled.

From around the age of eight months, babies begin to develop a 'mental image' of the person who has died and have a sense of 'missing them'. Babies at this age may cry more or become more withdrawn; they may lose interest in toys or food and, as they develop motor skills and language, may call out for or search for the person who has died. You can help by giving lots of comfort and reassurance, and by keeping to normal routines as much as possible.

Age two to five years old

Understanding

Young children are interested in the idea of death, for example in birds, insects, and animals. They can begin to use the word 'dead' and develop an awareness that this is different to being alive. However, children of this age do not understand abstract concepts like 'forever' and cannot grasp that death is permanent.

Their limited understanding may lead to an apparent lack of reaction when told about a death, and they may ask many questions about where the person who has died is and when that person will come back. They may struggle with the concept of someone not being alive and may need reassurance that dead people feel nothing and therefore are not able to feel cold or pain.

Children at this age may expect the person to return. Young children tend to interpret what they are told in a literal and concrete way; therefore, it is important to avoid offering explanations of death such as 'lost', 'gone away' or 'gone to sleep' that may cause misunderstandings and confusion. Provide honest answers to their questions but do not feel you have to tell them everything in detail or all at once. Information can be built on over time.

As a child's understanding increases, so will their need for information, resulting in lots of questions. You may find you have to repeatedly answer the same questions, which is a sign that your child is trying to make sense of what has happened.

Behaviours

A young child is capable of taking in information from the adults around them and will be aware that something significant has happened. Under fives can, and often do, react strongly to their own grief, but also to the grief of significant adults involved in their day-to-day care.

Anxieties about everyday practicalities are common, as is increased separation anxiety, even when they are left for short periods with familiar adults.

Children may have disrupted sleep, altered appetite, or less interest in play. There may be regression in skills such as language or toilet training, or they might become anxious about the dark when going to bed.

Because children of this age find it hard to grasp the permanence of death, they may expect the person to return. When this does not happen there can be disappointment and sadness.

Primary school aged children

Understanding

Between the ages of five and seven years, children gradually begin to develop an understanding that death is permanent and irreversible and that the person who has died will not return. Children who have been bereaved when they were younger will have to re-process what has happened as they develop awareness of the finality of death.

Behaviours

Children's imagination and 'magical thinking' at this age can mean that some children may believe that their thoughts or actions caused the death, and they can feel guilty or may think they can make the person come back. Not being given sufficient information in age-appropriate language can lead them to make up and fill in any gaps in their knowledge.

Some children might feel that somehow what has happened was their fault. If this is the case, they might react by being especially good to make up for their sense of 'badness', or they might behave badly to attract the punishment that they feel they deserve.

Even when there is no expectation to do so, a child may take on the role of carer for a surviving adult or siblings. In an attempt to appear grown up they might take on inappropriate adult responsibilities.

Children increasingly become aware that death is an inevitable part of life that happens to all living things. As a result, they can become anxious about their own, and others', health and safety.

Teenagers

Understanding

Adolescence is a time of great change, and grief can impact on the developmental task of moving from dependence to independence. Young people are moving from primary reliance on their family to increased involvement with their peers. While they may strive to be independent and grown up, the death of someone close creates vulnerability but it can be difficult for a teenager to ask for support while trying to demonstrate independence. Young people do not like to feel different from their peers and being a bereaved young person can be extremely isolating. The support of peers with similar experiences can be extremely helpful in making them feel understood, heard and less alone.

Teenagers will have an adult understanding of the concept of death but often have their own beliefs and strongly held views and may challenge the beliefs and explanations offered by others.

Behaviours

Some young people may respond to a death by becoming more withdrawn, some may 'act out' their distress. Others might try to cope with the awareness of their own mortality through risk-taking or anti-social behaviour in an attempt to get back some control where life feels out of control for them. Some teenagers may take on adult responsibilities and become 'the carer' for those around them. Keeping to the usual boundaries of acceptable behaviour can be reassuring for bereaved young people and give them a sense of security when everything else might feel out of control. You may find it useful to watch our short animated film Volcano which aims to help children and young people cope with difficult feelings like sadness, anger, worry and guilt.

Some young people become apathetic, and develop a 'what's the point?' attitude to school or even life and they may withdraw into themselves, rejecting offers of help and being generally difficult to communicate with. On the other hand, a very hectic social life can be a distraction from thinking about grief, or a way of shutting out the pain. This can be useful at times, but the feelings of grief may re-emerge suddenly, which can be difficult to handle. Try to be patient and continue to let them know that you are there for them. However, try not to put them under pressure to talk if they don't want to.

Young people who have been bereaved at an earlier age may need to re-process their grief as they think about and plan for their future and fully understand the impact of life without the person who has died.

It is important to remember that grief is a normal response to a death and with help and support, most children and young people will be changed, but not damaged, by what has happened.

Appendix 2

GUIDANCE ON IMPARTING NEWS ABOUT A BEREAVEMENT (from Child Bereavement UK)

Prepare

Take time to prepare what you will say to a young person, use age and stage appropriate language; it is best to start by saying that you have some sad news. Find a safe space away from any distractions and consider how the young person might react to the news, being prepared to be led by them.

Explain

Tell the young person who has died, giving details of where and when, if this is known.

Children and young people want and need adults to be honest, particularly when talking about death and grief. If we do not tell them the truth, their active imaginations can fill in the gaps often with more frightening misconceptions.

Phrases such as 'gone to sleep' or 'passed away' or words such as 'gone' or 'lost' may feel kinder but are misleading and can lead to confusion; for instance, we encourage children to 'find' things that they have 'lost' so they may continue to look for the person who has died. Similarly, using the term 'gone to sleep' may lead them to associate going to sleep with dying which can result in anxieties at bedtime.

Check understanding

Make sure that the young person has understood what you have told them.

Acknowledge

People react differently to hearing the news that someone has died; they may feel very shocked, upset or numb. Tell them that whatever they are feeling is OK.

Talking about death can elicit emotional reactions. This can feel difficult, but by acknowledging this and talking openly about death and grief, it can help children and young people to trust in the adults around them. It will also encourage them to ask questions, share any worries and express their feelings.

Answer questions

Offer an opportunity to ask questions or talk about what happened. If you do not have the answers, say so. Take time to discuss their questions with open and honest conversations.

Although it can feel quite daunting, it is important to answer any questions as honestly and fully as possible. Although it might seem tempting to try and distract children and young people, this may actually cause them to become more anxious than hearing the truth.

How to answer questions children often ask about death or dying:

Will I die? Will you die? Why do people die? When will I die?

To answer these questions, it can help to explain that all living things die, that this is part of the cycle of life. As living things, people will also die. You can reassure them that most people are very old when they die. It may help to remind them of all the people they have in their lives and to think about all the things they wish to achieve in their lives, places they might like to visit, jobs they might want to do, their hopes and dreams.

What happens when you die? Where do you go when you die?

It can help to start with a simple biological explanation of death; the heart stops beating, the person stops breathing and their brain stops working. Younger children might like to feel their breath going in and out and their heart beating to help with their understanding. It can also be helpful to refer to the body as being a bit like an empty shell. Some young people want to know what happens to the body, for example between death and a funeral. This might naturally lead to a discussion about beliefs, ceremonies or rituals.

You might say, "Some people believe... and others think ...", or that you are not sure what happens when someone dies. It can be a good opportunity to ask them what they think and have a discussion with them.

Can we stop people from dying?

It is important to remind them that people die because we are living things, just like plants and animals. For younger children, it might help to talk about most people being old and their bodies being worn out, but younger people may die if they have an illness or serious injuries which cannot be cured.

For older children, it can be helpful to discuss how we cannot change the fact that someone has died but we might consider what we can learn about improving treatments or safety guidance to help others in the future.

Encourage young people to consider what sort of things help them to live healthy lives – such as eating well, keeping safe and looking after themselves and others. Explain that medicines and treatments for illnesses and accidents are always being improved and people today live longer and healthier lives than they did in the past.

Share feelings

It's okay to show your feelings; becoming emotional in front of a child or young person shows you are human and helps to let them know that is normal to feel upset and sad. Reassure them that you are okay but are feeling very sad because the person has died. Encourage the young person to share their feelings, memories, and any worries they may have.

Children learn from the adults around them, so if you experience an emotional reaction, it is best to acknowledge your feelings while reassuring them that you will be OK in a moment. You might tell them that you also find talking about it difficult, or that you also feel sad. This will help them to know that it is OK to express their own feelings.

Consider next steps

Talk with the young person about what they might do next. This might include giving them additional information as it becomes available, spending time with family, or doing something in memory of the person who has died.

Discuss support

Talk to the young person about who can support them such as their extended family, school and friends. You could also talk to them about resources and support organisations which can help them to manage their grief, or provide further support if needed.

Appendix 3

USEFUL RESOURCES AND LINKS

Child Bereavement UK:

Website: <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/>
Email: support@childbereavementuk.org
Helpline: 0800 02 888 40 (Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm)
Live Chat: via website (Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm)

Winston's Wish:

Website: <https://www.winstonswish.org/>
Email: ask@winstonswish.org
Helpline: 08088 020 021

Cruse Bereavement Care:

Website: <https://www.cruse.org.uk/>
Email: helpline@cruse.org.uk
Helpline: 0808 808 1677