

# Bereavement policy training and support for educational settings: a collaboration between three hospices

Every 20 minutes, a parent dies in the UK leaving dependent children behind<sup>1</sup>.

This means the majority of educational settings regularly support grieving children. Worcestershire's adult hospices: St Richard's Hospice, Primrose Hospice, and KEMP Hospice, are frequently contacted by staff in local educational settings for advice. Many teachers report feeling anxious about how to support bereaved children.

Preventative measures for bereaved pupils can help reduce the risks of negative outcomes<sup>2</sup>.

The three hospices wanted to support staff in educational settings by:

- raising awareness of the importance of consistent and effective bereavement support
- supporting teams to develop a bereavement policy
- increasing the confidence of staff in supporting bereaved children

## How did we do this?

Following an online survey completed by 25 schools, an unmet need was identified as only 20 per cent reported having a bereavement policy. As a result, the three hospices worked together to develop training for educational settings across Worcestershire.

Delivered over two virtual workshops and attended by five settings, the training provided guidance on creating a bereavement policy and its benefits. It introduced the idea of having an educational bereavement lead: a main point-of-contact for supporting bereaved children, families and staff. Topics also included the perspectives of bereaved children, educational settings' responsibilities, and staff resilience.

## What were the results?

Attendees completed an evaluation form and reported the training has encouraged them to develop a bereavement policy and has increased their confidence when supporting grieving children.



## What is a bereavement policy?

A bereavement policy puts plans in place to deal with death and bereavement. It:

- Provides guidelines around these sensitive subjects
- Ensures a calm, planned approach when faced with death and bereavement
- Supports pupils, their families, and staff
- Reduces staff stress and anxiety

The policy can be applied when supporting a bereaved child or member of staff as well when a critical incident or tragedy happens, for example the death of someone within the school community.



**“When my daughter lost her father the pre-school staff checked in with us regularly when many others seemed to have forgotten. They noticed when she was struggling and her behaviour changed.”** – comment from a parent of a bereaved child.

**“My family asked for support for me but I wasn't ready. I felt pushed. When I knew I was ready it helped as I could talk in confidence to somebody different.”** – comment from a bereaved child.

**“After attending the training, we will write a bereavement policy and feel more confident how to deal with any situations that might arise.”** – comment from education staff member.



## Looking to the future

The training was well received by the educational settings which attended the workshops and evidenced training in this area is needed.

Further sessions on the development of a bereavement policy in educational settings will be rolled out and will be offered both virtually and face-to-face.

1. Childhood Bereavement Network. Key statistics [Internet]; 2022 [cited 19 Apr 23]. Available from: [www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/about-1/what-we-do/research-evidence/key-statistics](http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/about-1/what-we-do/research-evidence/key-statistics)

2. Child Bereavement UK. Summary Research report: Improving bereavement support in schools [Internet]; 2018 [cited 19 Apr 23]. Available from: [www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=fa7a443b-636d-4238-af12-accedec84419](http://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=fa7a443b-636d-4238-af12-accedec84419)

3. Internal organisational survey: 'Supporting Educational and Childcare Settings with Responding to Bereavement'; [Internal survey] 2021

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