



cancer fund
for children

BSP

BEREAVEMENT
SUPPORT
PLAN

School Staff Resource Booklet



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INTRODUCTION



This is a booklet to accompany the 'Bereavement Support Plan' resource created by the Cancer Fund For Children #iWill Bereaved Advocacy Group. The #iWill group is made up of young people aged 12-17 who have all been bereaved of either a parent or sibling to cancer, but who wanted to use their own experiences to create change for others.

Through exploring their own grief, consulting with other bereaved young people and completing desk research, they decided to focus their efforts on improving support for bereaved young people in schools. Their experience and research showed that the level of support offered varied vastly between different schools and that most often, young people were not involved in the decisions around how they were supported post-bereavement.

The aim of their social action project was "to ensure that schools are a safe, comfortable and supportive place for bereaved students in Northern Ireland." Through speaking to a number of school staff as part of the research they found that this was a desire echoed by schools and that they would welcome input from bereaved young people on how to best achieve this aim.

Whilst this resource was created by young people bereaved through cancer, it is designed to be used with any young person who has experienced a bereavement. It is envisaged that the Bereavement Support Plan would be completed by a member of the school staff on a one-to-one basis with the young person. A space for review is also included, as young people shared that often, the bereavement was talked about and support offered initially, but not on a longer term basis.

We hope both this staff resource and the Bereavement Support Plan are useful tools in helping to support bereaved young people in your school.



HOW GRIEF CAN IMPACT ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



“It affects people differently, it hurts everyone,
but people deal with it differently”

They may..

Feel anxious, concerned that other people in their life might get ill and die

Feel exhausted

Experience physical symptoms such as headache, heaviness in the chest, stomach aches

Feel overwhelmed by a range of emotions

Feel lonely or isolated

Feel lost

Feel numb or not feeling anything right away

Feel guilt and regret

Feel angry, possibly at the person who died, but also with the world

Feel a sense of responsibility at home e.g., caring for siblings

Feel worried about their future

Experience conflict with friends and family members



Suggested Approaches to Supporting Bereaved Students

As grief affects everyone differently, this further highlights the need for involving young people in the decisions around how they are supported following a bereavement. Based on their own experiences and consultations with other bereaved young people, the #iWill group have compiled a list of suggestions of what could be helpful and what to avoid when supporting a bereaved student:

DO	DO NOT
Be direct with me and acknowledge my loved one has died	"Dance around the subject"
Consult with me on what I need "These children need a chance to talk about their feelings, about the bereavement in school, and decide how, when and what parts they would like to talk about"	Make decisions on my behalf "People tried to help me in ways I didn't need, I wish they would have asked me first"
Ask me if there's a specific member of staff who would be best to support me	Put pressure on me to complete work "It's very hard to focus on work while grieving"
Ask me how often, when, and how I would like a check-in	Label me by the bereavement "I don't want to be referred to as the girl whose brother died, I have a name"
Ask me if I would prefer extended time on homework	Assume I need extended time on homework
Offer me a space I can go to if I need some time out	Assume I want help
Offer me long-term support "I think teachers should always be there for you no matter how much time has passed because everyone heals at different stages, even if you think we have healed, you don't know what feelings we are having."	Assume I am ok after a certain amount of time has passed "I got lots of support when it first happened, but then after a year or so it was just like it was forgotten about"



Examples of Bereavement Support in Schools

Recognising that every school is different and that the support each school can provide may differ, the group wanted to share some examples of support from their own or other schools. These examples may help you consider what you already have in place in your school that could benefit bereaved students or provide some ideas that you can introduce:

Partnership with other organisations (e.g. youth work/mental health organisations)

Homework pass/ allowance for impact of grief on focus, learning, motivation, and energy

Ongoing check-ins/ listening/asking/ support offers

Allocated person for support

Chaplaincy Support

Counselling (in-house/signposting to external organisations)

Safe space/ sensory room

Key staff visit home following death and attend funeral

'Take 5' (or similar) cards/ time out of class as needed

Involve students in decision making (e.g. do they want staff to tell their class)

Art Therapy

Memory activities in school

Interactive feelings wall

1:1 support in school

Self-referral Box

USEFUL LINKS



Childhood Bereavement Network

Giving Pupils Choices- [Giving pupils choices \(childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk\)](https://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk)

Winston's Wish

PSHE Lessons- <https://www.winstonswish.org/pshe-lessons/>

Child Bereavement Network

Ideas To Help Your Teacher Support You [For young people: if you have been bereaved \(childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk\)](https://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk)

Education Authority-Bereavement Information and Resources

Education Authority- Bereavement Information and Resources- [Managing a Critical Incident | Education Authority Northern Ireland \(eani.org.uk\)](https://www.eani.org.uk)

Child Bereavement UK

Online Resources for School Staff- <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/online-learning-for-schools>

Cruse Bereavement Support- Schools

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/organisations/schools/>

At A Loss Bereavement Resources

<https://www.ataloss.org/Pages/FAQs/Category/bereavement-resources>
(can filter for children, young people, young adults and those supporting the bereaved)



cancer fund for children

T: 028 9080 5599

E: services@cancerfundforchildren.com

W: cancerfundforchildren.com



@CancerFundChildren



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