Cranham
Church of England (VA)
Primary School

Bereavement Policy

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Foreword by Bishop Rachel

I vividly remember that when I was a child there was a particular building in our local parade of shops which sat between the sweet shop and small grocery store. It had a black door and curtains across the window which didn't allow me to see in, but as I grew up I discovered that it was a place where people went to arrange funerals after people had died. I didn't know anything more about the 'funeral parlour' except it was a place to walk past. Death was something to remain hidden. When my aunt died (my first experience of human death) I don't remember much about it except that people were having quiet conversations which I couldn't hear, and my Mum and Grandad tried to hide their tears from me. I didn't go to the funeral.

Years later when I was in parish ministry, some of my most poignant pastoral encounters were with children and young people following the death of a parent or sibling, and I was always perturbed when families made the decision that the child should not be at the funeral. The decision was usually based upon a desire to reduce distress, whether the avoidance of seeing family members upset or facing the stark reality of a wooden box holding a body. Whilst I would always respect the decision, I would also gently encourage families to bring children to funerals and recognise that death is part of life.

Over the years I have given out numerous copies of Doris Stickney's book 'Water Bugs and Dragon Flies: explaining death to children' - A beautiful story which connects with children and adults alike. Therefore, I am delighted that we now have this wonderful pack which will be highly valued in families, schools and worshipping communities. It will enable people to feel better equipped to enter into conversation with children and encourage them to share their feelings, wonderings and questions. Indeed, I believe this pack will be a gift to all of us in reflecting on and speaking about life and death, knowing that the tears of sadness and the pain of grief are part of life and can be held in the hope of Christ's love and life. Death is not the end.

The sight and smell of candle flames delight children and adults alike, and bear witness to the truth that the darkness will never overcome the light. This pack reflects those mysterious flickering flames. It is not about answers but rather invites children and adults to talk about death without fear, and to be drawn ever more deeply into the mystery of life in its all fulness which stretches even beyond death itself.

May the peace of the risen Lord be with you.

Preface

This school recognises it will not be dealing with all these issues at one time, and many scenarios may never be relevant. However, the policy aims to cover as many scenarios as possible, in order to ensure this school is as prepared as possible to offer maximum support to individuals and communities in any eventuality.

Ethos of School

Like all church schools, Cranham Church of England Primary, was established on Christian foundations, therefore at times of bereavement, the Christian story which holds pain and hope together, will, where appropriate, create the backdrop for school experiences. This school community will draw on this by calling on the support of the local Christian community, drawing on our shared language of spirituality and using prayers and acts of collective worship as a place to express this grief and hope.

It will also take full advantage of all the support offered by professional and charitable organisations to support individuals, families and the community at times of bereavement (see Appendix 1) Whilst valuing its Christian heritage, this school also recognises that different religions, world views and cultures view death and bereavement from different perspectives and the views of all families and individuals within the school community are valued and will be respected and taken into consideration.

This policy also links to other relevant policies such as Safeguarding.

Aims of Policy

By thinking through and preparing a policy in advance of a tragic event, adults are equipped to respond and thereby support pupils and the wider school community in the best way possible. By having roles and responsibilities clear and resources immediately available, there will be a structure in place to provide support for all.

Rationale

There is a need for all schools to be prepared for responding to bereavement because sadly, there is a surprisingly high number of children in our community who have been bereaved or will be bereaved. In 2004, when a national survey was completed, 35% of sixteen year olds had been bereaved of a parent or sibling (Fauth & others 2012). That is around 1 in 29 children which equates to approximately one child in every classroom.

Within a school community there will always be some pupils who are struggling with bereavement or sometimes the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a pupil.

Objectives

This policy will create a bereavement aware culture, for example by providing:

- A framework for all staff, giving guidance in how to deal sensitively, compassionately and spiritually with the bereavement
- Recognition that different religions, worldviews and cultures view death and bereavement from different perspectives and all views of individuals will be valued and taken into consideration
- Support for pupils and/or members of staff before (where applicable) during and after a death
- Effective communication and clarifying the pathway of support between members of staff, pupils, the family/carers and the community.

- Clarity on the key staff and sources of support and expertise within school, the Governing body, Local Authority/Academy Trust/Local Christian Community including responsibility for:
    - Pastoral care of teaching/support staff.
    - Pastoral care of pupils.
    - Spiritual support.
    - Legal support.
    - Practical support.
- Clear expectations about the way the school will respond to a death and provide a nurturing, safe and supportive environment for all, recognising that grief may not always be apparent to the onlooker, but its invisibility makes it no less real.
- Sensitivity to pupils/adults with previous experiences of bereavement because further death may impact them profoundly.
- Understanding that children and adults alike have the right to:
    - Be given space and time to grieve.
    - Be given support from whichever source is deemed the most appropriate – if possible of their own choice.
    - Encounter a caring environment in which they feel safe to demonstrate grief without fear of judgement.

Section One: Death Within the School Community (Pupil or Member of Staff)

Roles and Responsibilities

- In the event of a death, the expectation is that our Pastoral Lead, Lucy Ryan will take overall charge.
- The best person to liaise with the family will be Lucy Ryan.
- The school will deliberately and intentionally share the news of a death personally to staff members by a telephone call from the Headteacher.
  The details of how this is done will be determined by the timing and nature of events. However, in all the circumstances the school will aim to be clear, sensitive yet unambiguous and consider carefully who may need to be informed first, whilst recognising due to digital media, messages may spread rapidly. Recognising that some news is not best received by digital media, this school will endeavour to deliver difficult messages by direct means such as face to face or by phone conversation, if possible.
- When delivering news to pupils, this school will ensure the message is delivered clearly, sensitively yet unambiguously.
- This school will provide a safe space and time to grieve for the school community by providing collective worship and prayer spaces, as well as free time within school day for outdoor play where feelings can be released
- This school will provide pastoral support through our Pastoral & Mental Health Lead, supported by our vicar, our SENCo and our Early Help Coordinator. We will also request support from the Educational Team at the diocese.
- Details of bereavement support organisations will be made available to the school community through our newsletters and website.
- If the press are involved, they will be required to speak directly to the Headteacher.

Procedures

- This school understands some families may want to share information with the school community while others may not. A simple confirmation of the death may be required until more details are available, and/or the family are consulted. The school will endeavour to prevent speculation and rumours, as well as be a source of support for the family and the school community.
- In order to be prepared when delivering sad news, a script will be used where appropriate. Staff may show emotion whilst delivering difficult messages, this is a human reaction and will model to the pupils that expressing emotion is acceptable and safe. The following guidelines will be referred to when preparing a script:
    - Start by acknowledging you have some sad news to give.
    - Be honest. Give the news stating simple facts, use the words dead/died.

- If known, and with the family's permission, explain briefly where and when the death occurred.
- If not known, say so, and that you will endeavour to find out. If rumours are rife, say which of these are definitely not correct, if known. Where appropriate, remind pupils of their responsibilities and the impact when posting on social media.
- Talk briefly and positively about the person who died without exaggerating.
- If age appropriate, mention any arrangements already in place, including for those needing support. For younger pupils talk simply about what you are going to do now, which may include reading an appropriate story (see appendix) it may include having time to run around and release emotions or simply going back to something familiar.
- Acknowledge that not everyone will be feeling sad and that is OK.
- Allow a break in the timetable for pupils to process the news and take a little time-out.
- A template letter to parents/carers is provided (see appendix *).
- The charity Child Bereavement UK provides information for parents to help them discuss a death with their children. They can also access the Child Bereavement UK's Helpline on 0800 02 888 40 or Live Chat on the website, available 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

It may be helpful for colleagues to role play breaking the difficult news to each other prior to addressing large groups.

The First Few Days

In the immediate days following a whole school bereavement consideration will be given to the possibility of changing the timetable, recognising that whilst school routines can provide stability and normality for staff and pupils, some flexibility may be necessary and will vary depending on the ages of each cohort.

Immediate space for grieving pupils will also be made available, if required. For example our garden space could be used by pupils needing time to grieve and manage overwhelming feelings. Staff members should also feel able to express their need for time and/or space to grieve and can confidentially speak to Lucy Ryan, our Pastoral Lead in the staff room.

In this school we will provide an opportunity for pupils and the wider community to express their respect and emotion by working with the bereaved family to consider the use of a book of condolence or a special place of remembrance within the school grounds.

The Funeral

The member of staff liaising with the family (identified in roles and responsibilities) will consult the family to discover if members of staff and/or pupils are welcome to attend the funeral and if they are comfortable for the school to send flowers and/or organise a collection.
If appropriate, the headteacher will make sure that all staff are asked if they wish to attend the funeral.
If many wish to attend and the school could not run safely if all are granted their wish, then decisions will be made according to how close people were to the child and family. The Headteacher, (or in their unavoidable absence their Deputy,) will always attend as a mark of respect.

If there has been a memory book, this will be taken to the funeral and passed on to the parents. If appropriate, pupils and/or staff members will be involved in choosing flowers or organising a collection.

(Special thought should be given to how the school will prepare for the funeral if the church and funeral procession will be very close and visible from the school grounds.)

Reflection Opportunities

This school recognises that following a bereavement within the school community, many members of staff will be emotionally affected and may benefit from the provision of a calm environment in which to meet with other colleagues and spend time in reflective mode. Depending on circumstances this opportunity will be provided before or around the time of the funeral. Time will be made available at a lunchtime in the staff room. Staff will be invited to meet and share their thoughts with each other over a tea or coffee. The Ex-officio and/or Children's Minister/ Diocesan Lay Bereavement Representative will also be available to offer support.

If appropriate, around the time of the bereavement or funeral, a whole school reflection will be held which will include an act of collective worship (see appendix 6 for suggestions) and/or an activity in agreement with the family such as tree planting

Ongoing Support for pupils

It is anticipated that most pupils will be supported by staff and each pupil will have a favoured member of staff to approach.

For pupils who need additional support the following agencies and charities may be called upon depending on the specific needs and requirements of the individual pupil. For contact details, please see appendix 1.

- The Education Psychology Team.
- Gloucestershire Healthy Living and Learning.
- Gloucestershire Safeguarding in Education Team.
- Winston's Wish - a specialist bereavement support service (they also provide expertise in bereavement through accident or illness, after suicide, murder or manslaughter and deaths that occur in the military.)
- The local Incumbent or Children's Minister.
- The Diocesan Rapid Response to Bereavement in Schools' team.

Ongoing Support for Staff

This school recognises any form of tragedy will bring additional stress to staff and the wellbeing of staff will be monitored throughout through informal conversations and observations.

Supporting bereaved pupils can be very stressful for staff who may already be struggling with their own reactions and emotions. At certain points in time, some members of staff may be more vulnerable due to circumstances in their own lives. Further support from professional organisations may be sought for these colleagues if appropriate (see appendix * for contact details)

Training requirements for staff will also be considered carefully.

Remembering

Depending on circumstances, a specific pupil/member of staff may be remembered by the school in a permanent memorial or through an event. Prior to any decisions being made, the school will consult the family of the person who has died about any such plans.

If a more permanent memorial (a tree, a special garden, a piece of artwork, a bench) is chosen then the future removal, relocation or replacement will be managed sensitively and with consultation.

Section Two – Supporting A Bereaved Child

Returning to School after a Bereavement

Prior to their return to school following a bereavement, this school will give careful consideration to the needs of the pupil. This will include the appropriate staff (the Class Teacher/ SENCO/ the Pastoral Lead/ Headteacher) meeting with the pupil and their family/carers to discuss their return to school and any concerns. The meeting may include the following:

- Acknowledgement of the death.
- Find out how the pupil would like to share their news.
- Organise a safe space for the bereaved pupil to go if they feel overwhelmed by their grief and need a 'time-out'. Agree how will they inform staff of this, for example, by using a 'time-out' card, a non-verbal signal or message. Decide how this will be communicated to all staff.
- Consider whether it would be useful to provide 'time-out' activities – journals, art and craft, books, screen time, memory boxes etc. (see appendix 4 for details of published books providing ideas)
- Set guidelines for communication – with the pupil, between members of staff and between home and school.

This school recognises that most grieving pupils do not need a 'bereavement expert', they need the support of familiar and trusted adults. Our school, with its familiar environment and routines, aspires to be a place of comfort for a bereaved young person.

The peer group of the bereaved friend will also be affected by the loss to varying degrees. The impact of this will be monitored by appropriate staff members and support offered as and when necessary.

Longer Term Support

This school recognises that bereavement is a journey. Every journey through grief and recovery is unique to each individual and death, and may go through many different stages and phases. In recognition of this the school will endeavour to:

- Welcome ongoing communication with the family/carers and pupil to help to build up an overall picture of how the pupil is coping. This communication will be reviewed over time.
- Keep a school record of significant dates for bereaved pupils and pass this information on at times of transition.
- Be sensitive and make necessary adjustments for dates such as Mother's/Father's Day.
- Monitor the wellbeing and learning of the pupil by adding them to vulnerable list of children and identify a member of staff to specifically track the pupil's progress and wellbeing over an agreed period of time. This school acknowledges grief may impact the pupil's progress. Some pupils work really hard and may put themselves under extra pressure to

succeed, while others may find it difficult to focus in class and on their work. There may be changes in their behaviour and consideration will be given to how these are managed.

- Be aware the pupil will continue to grieve and may require ongoing support for years and vulnerable pupils may need additional support, particularly on transition.

Some ideas here may also be appropriate when supporting pupils who have faced loss due to life changing accidents, disintegration of family units etc.

Death, Grief & Bereavement in the Curriculum

When and where appropriate, this school will include aspects of death, grief and bereavement in the curriculum, as teaching the topic of death, grief and bereavement will help pupils to understand feelings of grief and prepare them for the future.

Prior to learning in PSHE the class teacher will inform parents and carers in advance and gather information about previous bereavements so that vulnerable pupils can be appropriately prepared for the lesson. Special consideration will be given to recently bereaved pupils who may find it helpful if they are given the option to work elsewhere or step outside, if they think it would be too painful to attend.

• Books to support conversations around death and grief can be found in Appendix 4.

Appendix 1: Professional Support Organisations

Organisations Specifically Supporting Bereaved Children

Child Bereavement UK childbereavementuk.org
This website supports all aspects of dealing with children, death and bereavement including a dedicated area for the education sector. There is also a helpline 0800 0288840.

Childhood Bereavement Network www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk
This website has a link to a directory of childhood bereavement organisations across the UK. It is also a source of data, research and information.

Winston's Wish www.winstonswish.org
Winston's Wish offer a range of resources and publications and an interactive website for young people where they can email questions to bereavement support staff. There is also a section for schools with many resources. Additionally, as this organisation is based in Cheltenham it may be able to provide face to face counselling and other direct support in Gloucestershire. The helpline number is 08452 030405.

CRUSE Bereavement Care www.cruse.org.uk
As well as a offering various resources including books for children and adults, leaflets and DVDs, there are nearly 200 local branches providing one to one bereavement support, social groups and in some cases specially trained children's counsellors.

Organisations and Websites supporting Young People Directly

Hope Again www.hopeagain.org.uk
Hope Again is the youth website of Cruse Bereavement Care.

Papyrus www.papyrus-uk.org
Dedicated to the prevention of young suicide, this charity delivers awareness and prevention training, provides confidential support and suicide intervention through its helpline 0800 068 4141.

Help 2 Make Sense https://help2makesense.org/
A collection of stories where young people can see how other young people have dealt with grief and bereavement.

Grief Encounter https://www.griefencounter.org.uk/young-people
A website designed specifically for teenagers and young adults in facing grief.

Young Minds https://youngminds.org.uk/
A website for young people providing help with mental health, bereavement and other anxieties.

Organisations & Websites supporting Families, Adults & Specific Trauma

The Compassionate Friends www.tcf.org.uk
This is a charitable organisation signpostingbereaved parents, siblings and grandparents to the support other bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents when a child dies. They can provide befriending initiatives, one-to-one and group support. The helpline is 0345 123 2304.

The Good Grief Trust www.thegoodgrieftrust.org
A website run 'by the bereaved for the bereaved', providing support and information.

SAMM (Support After Murder & Manslaughter) www.samm.org.uk

A national charity supporting families bereaved by murder and manslaughter, providing advice and training to many agencies on linked issues. The helplines are 0845 872 3440 / 0121 451 1618.

WAY Widowed and Young www.widowedandyoung.org.uk
This is a national charity for men and women aged 50 or under when their partner dies, providing peer-to-peer support.

Brake Care www.brake.org.uk
This is a road safety charity offering emotional support and practical information to anyone bereaved, or seriously injured, in a road crash. This includes advice and information for families, friends, children and young people. The Victim Helpline is 0808 8000 401.

Sudden www.suddendeath.org
For people bereaved by sudden death whether it's through a road crash, suicide, disaster, war, accident, or undiagnosed medical reasons, who are often left isolated, bewildered and traumatised and need specialist support to help them cope and move forward with their lives.

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide SOBS www.uk-sobs.org.uk
SOBS exists to meet the needs and break the isolation experienced by those bereaved by suicide, providing a safe, confidential environment for people to share their experiences and feelings, gaining support from each other. The helpline is 0300 111 5065.

SANDS – Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Charity www.uk-sands.org
SANDS supports anyone who has been affected by the death of a baby before, during or shortly after
birth. The helpline number is 020 7436 5881.

Grandparentsplus www.grandparentsplus.org.uk aka kinship.org.uk
This charity champions the vital role of grandparents and the wider family in children's lives – especially when they take on the caring role in difficult family circumstances and when they have lost contact with children. The contact number is 0300 123 7015.

BACP (British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy) www.bacp.co.uk
BACP is a professional body for counselling and psychotherapy and the website provides a directory of counsellors and therapists via location.

NHS Advice https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/children-and-bereavement/
Advice from the NHS website on supporting a child facing or experiencing bereavement.

Support in Gloucestershire

Diocese of Gloucester Pastoral Assistants Bereavement Team for Schools c/o Revd Jo Wetherall, jwetherall@glosdioc.org.uk Tel: 07394059289

Gloucestershire Educational Psychology Service
https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/education-and-learning/special-educational-needs-and-disability-send/educational-psychology-service-eps/traumatic-events/
This is a specific area on the website which deals with advice for traumatic events.

Gloucestershire Healthy Living and Learning https://www.ghll.org.uk/bereavement/
Advice and resources on dealing with bereavement in schools.

Acorns Children's Hospice www.acorns.org.uk
This website provides details Gloucestershire's local Children's Hospice, including information about its facilities and the support it offers.

Tic Plus https://ticplus.org.uk/
Counselling and care for young people and their families, particularly supporting depression, anxiety, bereavement, bullying, anger, relationship problems, low self-esteem and self-harm.

Additional Useful Contacts

Child Death Review Co-ordinator cdop@gloucestershire.gov.uk or 01452 426228

Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Executive www.gscb.org.uk

Gloucestershire County Council Occupational Health ohu@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Gloucestershire Safeguarding in Education Partnership gsep@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub childrenshelpdesk@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Appendix 2: Exploring Ways of Understanding and Facing Grief

Introduction

In 1969, Elisabeth Küber Ross wrote about five aspects of grief and they have become key to the way our society understands what is happening as people respond to death.

Dealing with strong, powerful and sometimes unexpected emotions is not easy for us in our society, either in ourselves or in others. We have been shaped to value logic and science and are often more comfortable with this than with powerful emotions.

The five aspects of grief which Küber Ross identified were: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance/adjustment. However, these are not necessarily experienced in this linear way, but rather as part of a cycle that could continue over and over, with varying strength, some stages appearing in different orders at different times and for different length of times. These responses may continue for many years.

Recognising these stages in others and/or ourselves may prepare us better with recognising and responding more sensitively to grief when we encounter it.

The following stations have been created to help you think about these aspects of grief in a variety of ways.

Some people may find tactile and multisensory activities helpful to stimulate thought and reflection around these themes.

Others may prefer to focus on words and poems to encourage reflection are provided. Others may find it useful simply to have time to think and reflect for themselves about these themes using the reflection questions, possibly with the support of music or the image provided.

Some may wish to use a combination of all the above!

For each of the aspects of grief, please use the cards to help you as appropriate. There are also Bible references and prayers which you are invited to use if they would be helpful for you.

Denial

Feeling numb is common in the early days after a bereavement. Some people at first carry on as if nothing has happened. Even if they know intellectually that someone has died, it can be hard to believe that someone important is not coming back. It's also very common to feel the presence of someone who has died.

Reflection Activity

You may wish to slowly rub lotion into your hands – as you do this take time to reflect how carefully Jesus' body was handled by those who loved him when he died.
Oils and lotions are meant to soothe – take time for this to happen.

Questions for Reflection

In order to process the death of someone, some people may need to retell the story of the events around the death over and over again.
Have you ever stayed away from a grieving person because you were unsure of what to say?
Have you ever considered that it may be more important to be able to listen than to speak?
Do you think there is the right/wrong thing to say in these situations?

Image and Poem to Support Reflection

There's an elephant in the room.
It is large and squatting,
so it is hard to get around it.
Yet we squeeze by with,
'How are you?' and 'I'm fine'
and a thousand other forms of trivial chatter.
We talk about the weather. We talk about work.
We talk about everything else,
except the elephant in the room.
There's an elephant in the room.
We all know it's there.
We are thinking about the elephant as we talk together.
It is constantly on our minds.
For, you see, it is a very large elephant.
It has hurt us all.
But we don't talk about the elephant in the room.
Oh, please say their name.
Oh, please say their name again
Oh, please, let's talk about the elephant in the room.
For if we talk about their death,
perhaps we can talk about their life.
Can I say their name to you and not have to look away?
For if I cannot, then you are leaving me…
alone … in a room …
with an elephant.
'Elephant in the Room' by Terry Kettering.

'Denial' by Kit Kelley

Biblical Reference & Prayer

Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. **Romans 12:15 (ESV)**

Anger

Anger is a completely natural emotion and occurs very naturally after someone dies. Death can seem cruel and unfair, especially when there is a feeling someone has died before their time or there were unfulfilled plans for a future together. It's also common to feel angry towards the person who has died, or for someone bereaved to feel angry at themselves for things done or not done before the death.

Reflection Activity

Look at the display of emotions on the tear shapes, for example anger, confusion, numbness, relief, etc. All emotions are valid – there is no right or wrong way to respond to death and tragedy. Select one of the tiny tear bottles. You may wish to decorate it, use a sharpie to represent something that will as a remind you, your tears are noticed. There are paper tears that can be used to capture your emotions in writing or drawing. Please take them with you and use them in any way that is helpful.

Bible References: The Bible says your tears matter to God …

You keep track of all my sorrows,
You have collected all my tears in a bottle.
You have recorded each one in your book. ***Psalm 56:8 (NLT)***

Questions for Reflection

Why are people afraid to show their emotions? Particularly at funerals?
What is our immediate response to someone expressing anger following a death? Why?
How can we safely support people responding to grief with anger?
Should we and can we validate anger, and all emotions, in those grieving?
How can we encourage an acceptance that it's OK to not be OK?
Is anger always visible? Can you think of times it may have been/may be invisible?

Image and Poem to Support Reflection

How dare you?

How dare you?
Seriously, how dare you?
Look at me!
I don't know what to do.
What do I tell mum?
Where are all the passwords?
Why do your clothes still smell of you?
How is it I can still feel hungry?
I need to talk to you,
I need to talk to you about all …
This …and you? You've bloody well died.
How dare you?
Anon

Psalm and Prayer: *Awake, Lord! Why do you sleep? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever. Why do you hide your face and forget our misery and oppression?* **Psalm 44:23-24** (NIV)

Bargaining

When someone is in pain, it's sometimes hard to accept that there's nothing that can be done to change things. Bargaining is when someone starts to make deals with themselves, or perhaps, with God whether they are someone of faith or not. There is a sense that if someone acts in a particular way, they will feel better. It's also common in this phase for someone to go over and over things that happened in the past and asking a lot of 'what if' questions, wishing they could go back and change things in the hope things could have turned out differently.

Reflection Activity & Questions for Reflection

Look carefully at a 'Blob' pictures, many examples of these can be found online.
Where would you place yourself?
Where would you rather be?
Can you remember a time when you wanted to bargain away difficult news?
How might you approach and/or support someone in that situation?

Image and Poem to Support Reflection

I would give anything,
I would do anything,
be anything.
If only.
If only I had delayed a bit longer?
If only I had talked a bit more?
Stopped for a selfie,
would it have happened at all?
If only.
If only I had held you tighter,
if only I had never let you go,
if only I had told you everything you mean to me.
I would give anything.
I would do anything,
be anything.
Anon

Psalm and Prayer

From Psalm 46…

God is our refuge and strength,
always ready to help in times of trouble.
So we will not fear when earthquakes come
and the mountains crumble into the sea…
Be still, and know that I am God!
Psalm 46:1-3 (NLT)

Depression

Sadness and longing are what we think of most often when we think about grief. This pain can be very intense and come in waves over many months or years. Life can feel like it no longer holds any meaning which can be very scary.

Questions For Reflection

Darkness and despair are real. Take time to acknowledge this. You may wish to close your eyes for a time.
In the darkest times of trouble where do you turn?
In these times we may be able to draw from the 'well' of our lived experience – what have we survived before?
In these dark times some may draw from their experience of God. Consider where you may turn.
Have there been times when you felt you would not find water/hope in the well of life again?
Take time to think about what and who helped you or who/what might help you at these times.

Reflection Activity

Within the 'well' you will find beads which could symbolise loss and/or hope. As you think about where you go to find your wisdom, you may wish to dig deep into that 'well'. Take your time. When you are ready find a bead and hang it onto the tree.

Image to Support Reflection (see poem overleaf)

Psalm and Prayer

Why are you cast down, O my soul?
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God;
For I shall yet praise Him,
The help of my countenance and my God
Psalm 43:5 (NKJV).

Poem to Support Reflection

Grief is a thief;
Stealing
The air from my lungs,
The energy from my muscles
The desire from my appetite
For food or love.

Grief is a thief
Stealing
Sensation
Satisfaction
Sanctification
And I am wholly undone.

Grief is a flash flood;
Outpouring
Instant pain,
Illogically triggered,
Immutable
It will not be gainsaid.

Grief is a flat empty landscape;
It becomes
Absence
Aching nothingness
Apathy
That scorns sympathy.

Grief is a flat empty landscape;
It becomes
Absence
Aching nothingness
Apathy
That scorns sympathy.

Grief is isolating:
It is disconnection
Form the other
Form self
From the God
Who should be there.

Grief is a dull weight
And a dull wait
For change
For relief
For a way of living with new reality

Poet Unknown

Adjustment

Grief comes in waves and it can feel like nothing will ever be right again. But gradually most people find that the pain eases, and it is possible to accept and somehow adjust to what has happened. They may never 'get over' the death of someone precious, but they may feel they can learn to live again, while keeping the memories of those they have lost close to them.

Reflection Activity

The Christian story holds pain and hope together. Death is not the end of the story.
Look at the Kintsugi image. Very slowly a break or a crack can be mended and turned into something, forever altered, but differently beautiful.
You may wish to reflect on this by drawing or writing on scratch card vases. Underneath the darkness, may you find hope.

Questions for Reflection

What does the idea of holding pain and hope together mean to you?
Have you ever been aware of gradual healing? What helped you? Did you want to share it or talk about it?
How and why do people feel guilty for feeling a sense of healing after loss or bereavement? What would you say to someone who was feeling that way?

Poem and Image to Support Reflection

Bird Wings

Your grief for what you've lost lifts a mirror
up to where you're bravely working.
Expecting the worst, you look, and instead,
here's the joyful face you've been wanting to see.
Your hand opens and closes and opens and closes.
If it were always a fist or always stretched open,
you would be paralyzed.
Your deepest presence is in every small contracting and expanding,
the two as beautifully balanced and coordinated as birdwings.

Rumi

Biblical Reference and Prayer

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. **Matthew 10:29-31 (NIV)**

But those who trust in the LORD will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint. **Isaiah 40:31(NLT)**

Appendix 3: Template Letters

These template letters have been taken from Child Bereavement Uk's handbook; 'Managing Bereavement: A Guide for Schools', page 65
https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=4b13d694-2038-4918-90b3-13c06100aafb

Template letter to parents and carers in responding to a death in the family

Dear
We are so very sorry to hear the sad news of (Name's) death. There are no words to express our sadness and we can only begin to imagine the anguish you must be going through.
As a school community, we will miss (Name) very much and we are doing our best to offer comfort and support to <his/her> friends, classmates and teachers. (Name) was a (valued/cherished/highly-regarded/well-liked/popular/friendly) member of our school family.
If we can do anything to help as you plan (Name's) funeral, please let us know.
We will continue to keep in touch and will support you in any way we can.
With sympathy

Template letter to parents and carers – informing them of a death of a pupil

Dear parents and carers
Your child's Class Teacher/Form Tutor/Headteacher /Head of Year had the sad task of informing the pupils of the death of (Name), a pupil in (Year *).
(Name) died suddenly/in hospital/after a short illness (yesterday/last week/over the weekend/during half term).
(He/She) was a (valued/cherished/highly-regarded/well-liked/popular/friendly) member of the (class/school) community and will be missed by everyone who knew (him/her).
When someone dies, young people may experience many different feelings, such as sadness or anger. Some pupils may feel shocked and upset by the news, while others may be confused or numb. These reactions are all normal.
We have tried to answer their questions in school, using age-appropriate and honest language. For more information about speaking to children and young people about death, visit the Child Bereavement UK website: www.childbereavementuk.org /or (alternative website).
Our thoughts are with (Name's) family and friends at this time. We will be in touch with details of how our school will celebrate/remember (Name's) life.
Sign-off Headteacher

Template letter to parents and carers - death of a member of staff

Dear parents/carers
I am sorry to inform you that a (well-respected/long-standing/well-loved/popular/well-known) member of our staff, (Name), died (suddenly/in hospital/after a short illness).
The pupils were told today by their (Class Teacher/ Form Tutor/Head of Year/in assembly)

and many will be reacting to this news. When someone dies, young people may experience many different feelings, such as sadness or anger. Some pupils may feel shocked and upset by the news, while others may be confused or numb. These reactions are all normal.

We have tried to answer their questions in school, using age-appropriate and honest language. For more information about speaking to children and young people about death, visit the Child Bereavement UK website: www.childbereavementuk.org / (or alternative website)

Our thoughts are with (Name's) family at this time. We will be in touch with details of how our school will celebrate/remember (Name's) life.

Sign-off

Headteacher

Appendix 4: Reading Lists

Story Books KS1 & KS2

- **The Heart and the Bottle** by Oliver Jeffers,
  A gentle picture book story exploring grief, loss and hope
  Published by HarperCollins 2010, ISBN: 978-0-00-718234-3

- **Sad Book** by Michael Rosen
  A poignant picture book where Michael Rosen describes simply and honestly what it's like to be sad but gently offers hope.
  Published by Walker Books 2004 ISBN: 978-1-4063-1784-8

- **No Matter What** - Debbie Gliori
- A book about setting big worries to rest.
  Bloomsbury Children's Books 2014, ISBN: 9781408850008

- **Water Bugs and Dragon Flies** by Doris Stickney
  A simple story using the experience of water bugs and dragonflies to help children process what death might be like.
  Published by Bloomsbury ISBN: 9781472973153.

- **Always and Forever** by Alan Durant & Debi Gliori
  A gentle story for anyone who has experienced the death of someone they love.
  Published by Penguin Random House Children's UK ISBN: 9780552567657

- **Tapestry** by Bob Hartman and Susie Poole
  A story about life and legacy.
  Published by Authentic Media 2011 ISBN: 978-1904637585

Information Books

- **When Dinosaurs Die**: by Laura Krasny Brown and Marc Brown
  (Dino Tales: Life Guides for Families) A guide to Understanding Death
  Published by Little, Brown & Company, ISBN: 9780316119559

- **A Child's Grief** – produced by Winston's Wish
  Information on how to support a child when someone has died.
  Published by Winston's Wish 2021 ISBN:978-1-5272-9708-1

- **What Does Dead Mean?** by Caroline Jay and Jenni Thomas
  A book for young children to help explain death and dying.
  Published by Jessica Kingsley ISBN 9781849053556

- **As Big as It Gets** – produced by Winston's Wish
  A book that offers practical guidance for families when someone is seriously ill and may die.
  Published by Winston's Wish 2019 ISBN: 978-0-9559539-8-9

Memory & Activity Books

- **Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine** produced by Winston's Wish
  This book, aimed at primary aged children, offers a structure and an outlet for the many different feelings which inevitably follow when someone dies.
  Published by Hawthorn Press 2000,
  ISBN 978-1-869890-58-2 (paperback) 978-1-90345896-9 (hardback)

- **Someone I know has Died** produced by Child Bereavement UK
  An innovative activity book with many unusual and interactive features, written for younger bereaved children to help them understand what it means when someone dies and to explore their thoughts and feelings with an adult.
  Published by Child Bereavement UK

- **Out of the Blue** by Julie Stokes & Paul Oxley
  A collection of tried and tested ideas to help young people remember the person who died and to help them express their thoughts and feelings.
  Published by Winston's Wish 2006, ISBN: 978-1-903458-71-6

- **Red Chocolate Elephants** Winston's Wish
  Activities to support a child who has been bereaved through suicide.
  Published by Winston's Wish

Selection of Books to Send to Schools in Specific Circumstances

- **The Family has been Informed** produced by Winston's Wish
  Information to support grieving children and young people from forces families.
  Published by Winston's Wish 2018, ISBN: 978-0-9559539-7-2

- **We All Grieve** produced by Winston's Wish
  A toolkit to support bereaved children who have special educational needs and disabilities.
  Published by Winston's Wish 2019, ISBN:978-0-95595399-6

- **Never Too Young to Grieve** produced by Winston's Wish
  Supporting children under 5 after the death of a parent.
  Published by Winston's Wish 2018, ISBN: 978-0-9559539-6-5

- **You Just Don't Understand** produced by Winston's Wish
  Written to help adults support grieving teenagers, this book may also be helpful with supporting year 6 pupils.
  Published by Winston's Wish 2013, ISBN: 978-0-9559539-5-8

- **Beyond the Rough Rock** produced by Winston's Wish

Information and ideas to help support a child who has been bereaved through suicide
Published by Winston's Wish 2008, ISBN: 978-0-9539123-7-7

- **Hope Beyond the Headlines** produced by Winston's Wish
  Support to help a child who has been bereaved through murder or manslaughter.
  Published by Winston's Wish 2008, ISBN: 978-0-9559539-1-0

Recommended books for home/church:

- **Milly's Big-Nut** by Jill Janney
  This story book tells the story of a family finding their way through bereavement and of Milly who finds an unexpected answer to her heart's desire. Jill Janney, the author of Milly's Bug Nut, wrote this story for her own children after the death of their father.
  Available through Winston's Wish https://shop.winstonswish.org/products/milly-s-bug-nut

- **The Secret C** by Julia A Stokes
  This booklet is aimed at supporting parents or carers with the challenge of trying to explain to their child what cancer means and how it may affect their family, and encourages open communication and questions about cancer within the family.
  Available from Winston's Wish https://shop.winstonswish.org/products/the-secret-c

- **Grandad's Prayers of the Earth** by Douglas Wood
  Beautiful prayer book, more suited for home and church than school context.
  Published by Candlewick Press, ISBN 978-0-7636-4675-2

Appendix 5: Prayers to Support School Communities

Sometimes when the pain is too deep or all encompassing, it's hard to pray. It's hard to find the right words or even to think straight. These prayers are to support school communities and/or individuals in these times. Schools are welcome to use and adapt the prayers as appropriate, remembering that confessional language will not be suitable and appropriate for every child or adult.

Personal Grief

God, I need to talk to you,
I think about (Name) a lot even though they have died
and I cannot see them anymore.
I can feel like I have a big hole inside me, I feel sad and empty.
I can feel like I am on fire, burning with anger.
I can feel afraid as though I am in a very dark and unsafe place.
I can feel alone.
I really miss (Name) and I just want everything to be like it was before.
I can feel happy as well.
The memories and special things about (Name) fill me up and make me smile.
God you are always with me,
your love is stronger than my feelings.
Help me to remember that (Name) is loved by you always and so am I.

Being with others

God of love,
I think about (Name) a lot because someone important to them has died.
I wonder how they feel?
Maybe they feel sad, like there is an empty space inside them.
Maybe they feel angry, like they are on fire.
Maybe they feel alone and afraid.

Help us to be who we are - their friend.
To listen to them, run, laugh and play with them maybe just be quiet with them.

God help (Name) to know you are always with them and they can always talk to you.
That your love is stronger than their feelings.
That they are always loved by you and so is the person they miss.
Amen
With grateful thanks to Revd Jo Wetherall for these prayers

Prayer for staff

Father God, thank you for the community you have called us to be and to work in. As we walk through these dark days, may we see the light of your presence as a very real source of hope for the future. We give thanks for all that (Name) brought to the life of this community and pray you will bring comfort and hope to their family (may want to add and class) and to us. Rebuild us as we move forward into a community that is stronger than before, as we look up to you in faith and out to each other in love, in Jesus' name.
Amen
With grateful thanks to Lyndall Bywater, this prayer

Appendix 6: Collective Worship Ideas on the Theme of Saying Goodbye

The ideas in this section have all been taken from the Diocese of Leeds & York Education Teams' Bereavement Guidance. https://dioceseofyork.org.uk/uploads/attachment/4720/bereavement-guidance-diocese-of-york.pdf

Introduction:

It is always a good idea to hold a special service when there has been a death of a pupil or an adult in the school. It brings the school community together and enables them to share their memories and grief. Death can be after a long illness when there has been time to think and prepare or it can be sudden. In both cases, there is not always time to prepare something in advance. The outline below will give you a simple structure to follow or adapt.
If members of the family wish to attend, it makes it more personal and they often find comfort in being present. Others may find it hard, but they should be offered the choice.

Creating an atmosphere for worship:

- It is worth considering where the worship might take place. It might be in the school hall or perhaps in the local church. It might be that in the summer term it could be held outside.
- Thought should be given as to how an atmosphere can be created. It is often a lovely idea to have photographs of the deceased on a PowerPoint loop that the pupils can watch, reflect a and remember as they enter. This should be discussed with the grieving family as it could cause distress. It might be more appropriate to have images of growth and hope from the natural world.
- It is also a good idea to set up a special table/altar with a special cloth, candle, a photograph and some flowers.

Introductory music:

There is a vast amount of appropriate music that can be used. It is a good idea to consult the classes as there may be some favourite music. It is a good idea to encourage the staff to contribute ideas.

The Act of worship

- Welcome everyone and begin by explaining how important it is to remember.
- Give a brief factual input about the circumstances surrounding the death. Light the candle.
- Perhaps pupils and staff can alternate between memories of the person and bringing objects or pictures/drawings to remember the deceased and placing them on the table.
- It is often a good idea to have a special memory box prepared on the table. This can be used to place the objects in at the end and it can be presented to the family.

Prayer and Reflection

- There are many published prayers for these times, but it is often prayers from the pupils themselves that have more meaning.
- It is also a lovely idea to have a large bowl of water or an empty basket. Pupils and adults can pick up a pebble, come forward and, using the pebbles as a vehicle for prayer, carefully drop their pebbles/prayers/thoughts about the person into the bowl or empty basket. It is important that all of the pupils have an opportunity to say goodbye.

- Hymns and songs / exit music: You may want to sing a hymn, but this is often difficult when pupils and adults are feeling sad. It might be that pupils leave to a favourite song.

Examples of Possible Wording for Collective Worship

Words of Introduction:

Coming together as a school today is very important. We are probably all thinking different things at the moment and have mixed emotions. Today we are going to remember and think about (Name) who died (date). Our emotions run deep at this time. You may be feeling very sad, tearful, even angry that this person has been taken from us, you may be calm knowing they are now at rest or upset at what has happened. You may also be thinking 'I wish I'd said this to them..., I'm glad I knew them well'. Amongst all these emotions there are probably lots of fond memories, happy times, times of laughter and times of joy. Coming together today isn't easy for any of us, but it is important that we mark and celebrate (Name)'s life.

Lighting a Candle

Many schools choose to light a candle as a focal point for the collective worship.
These are examples and options for words that can be read by the leader or done in a responsorial way:

We light this light as we look back with gratitude for what we have had
We light this light as we look forward with courage for what is to come
We light this light as we look upwards with confidence, to God
who is always with us.

We will light a light, in the name of God the Father who made all things
We will light a light, in the name of Jesus the Son, who brings life and hope to all things
We will light a light, for the spirit of God, with us at all times.

- We light this light to remember Jesus, the light of the world, who lights a path for us to follow.
- We can light a candle to remember…
- We can light a candle as a prayer beyond words
- We can light a candle to symbolise that love is stronger than anything

Possible Readings

Psalm 23: 1-4 (Easy-to-Read Version)
The Lord is my shepherd. I will always have everything I need. He gives me green pastures to lie in. He leads me by calm pools of water. He restores my strength. He leads me on right paths to show that he is good. Even if I walk through a valley as dark as the grave, I will not be afraid of any danger, because you are with me. Your rod and staff comfort me.

John 14:1-3 (Easy-to-Read Version)
Jesus said, "Don't be troubled. Trust in God, and trust in me. There are many rooms in my Father's house. I would not tell you this if it were not true. I am going there to prepare a place for you. After

I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back. Then I will take you with me, so that you can be where I am.

Readings – specific to children

Matthew 19:13-15 (Easy-to-Read Version)
Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.

A Possible Story Water bugs and Dragonflies

Down below the surface of a quiet pond lived a little colony of water bugs. They were a happy colony, living far away from the sun. For many months they were very busy, scurrying over the soft mud at the bottom of the pond. They did notice that every once in a while one of the colony seemed to lose interest in going about with her friends. Clinging to the stem of the pond lily, she gradually moved out of sight and was seen no more. "Look" said one of the water bugs to another, "one of our colony is climbing up the lily stem. Where do you suppose she's going?" Up, up, up, she went slowly. Even as they watched, the water bug disappeared from sight. Her friends waited and waited but she didn't return. "That's funny!" said one water bug to another. "Wasn't she happy here?" Asked a second water bug. "Where do you suppose she went?" Wondered the third. No one had an answer. They were greatly puzzled. Finally one of the water bugs, a leader in the colony, gathered it's friends together. "I have an idea. The next one of us who climbs up the lily stalk must promise to come back and tell us where he or she went and why" "We promise", they said solemnly. One spring day, not long after, the very water bug who had suggested the plan found himself climbing up the lily stalk. Up, up, up he went. Before he knew what was happening, he broke through the surface of the water and was falling onto the green lily pad above. When he awoke, he looked about with surprise. He couldn't believe what he saw. Startling changes had happened to his body with silver wings and a long tail. Even as he struggled, he felt an impulse to move his wings. The warmth of the sun soon dried the moisture from the new body. He moved his wings again and again and suddenly found himself up and above the water. He had become a dragonfly. Sweeping and dipping in great curves, he flew through the air. But by and by, the new dragonfly lighted happily on the lily pad to rest. Then it was that he chanced to look below to the bottom of the pond. Why, he was right above his old friends, the water bugs! There they were, scuttling about, just as he had been doing sometime before. Then the dragonfly remembered the promise: "The next one of us who climbs up the lily stalk will come back and tell us where he or she went and why." Without thinking, the dragonfly darted down. Suddenly he hit the surface of the water and bounced away. Now that he was a dragonfly, he could no longer go in to the water. "I can't return!" He said in dismay. "At least I tried, but I can't keep my promise. Even if I could go back, not one of the water bugs will know me with my new body. I guess I'll just have to wait until they become dragonflies too. Then they'll understand what happened to me, and where I went." And the dragonfly went off happily into his wonderful new world of sun and air.

A Prayer after the Story

Thank you, God, for the story of the water bugs and the dragonflies. Thank you for the miracle that makes shiny dragonflies out of bugs. Please remember (Name), who has left the pond we live in. Give (him\her) a good life too, in a wonderful new world of sun and air. And then remember me, and let me some day be with (him\her) again too. Amen

Seeds of Remembrance

Leader: Take a look at these bulbs I have brought in today. They look dried up and dead, but we are going to plant them in a special place in the school grounds, knowing that when the spring comes, each bulb will start to shoot and grow into a beautiful flower. They will come to life again, just as Jesus did and bring colour and hope to our school grounds. I have also brought some packets of seeds for us to sow. We know the seeds will grow into flowers and we will think of our friend (Name) as we watch those flowers grow. But I like to think that (Name) has given us all seeds of a different kind. You can't see them, but we can feel the seeds which are our memories of (Name) inside our hearts. I wonder what kind of memories (Name) has left with you? Let us be quiet for a while and think of the seeds (Name) has sown in our hearts.

Appendix 7: Children's Understanding & Response to Death

The material for this appendix has come from the Church of England's resource 'Never the Same' https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/faith-home/i-am-school-leader/appendix-2-practical-guidance-documentation#na

Children Aged 0-2 Years

Understanding of Death

• May become aware of the person not being there in the normal routines of life.

Some possible grief reactions to death:

• Show signs of anxiety or distress.
• Searching behaviour for the missing person.

Possible ways of helping a child:

• Maintain daily routines.
• Parent/carer maintain warm loving relationship with child.

Children Aged 3-6 Years (Early Years and Key Stage 1)

Understanding of Death

• Young children may be beginning to understand the concept of death, but do not appreciate its finality.
• Some may expect the dead person to reappear –"shall we dig granny up now?"
• They think in literal and concrete terms and so will be confused by euphemisms for death such as "gone away" or "gone to sleep".
• Repeated explanations of what has happened may be required.

Some possible grief reactions to death:

• Responses are varied.
• Outward signs are not always evident, but this doesn't mean that the child isn't grieving.
• May have difficulty in expressing feelings in words.
• They may yearn for the dead person, demonstrating anger and protest when they don't return.
• They may feel that it was partly their fault.
• Their behaviour may regress – becoming clingy and demanding more attention.
• Child might become frightened of going to sleep alone or in the dark.
• Babyish language, temper tantrums and bed-wetting may also increase.
• They are prone to fantasize at this age and if not told what is happening may dream up something scarier than reality.
• When first told, they may not understand and may ask inappropriate questions

Possible ways of helping a child:

• Gently repeat the fact that the dead person will not return.
• Maintain daily routines.
• Maintain boundaries.
• Be patient with 'accidents'.
• Answer his/her questions honestly.
• Do not protect him/her 'because he/she doesn't understand'.

Children Aged 7-10 Years (Key Stage 2)

Understanding of Death

• Most children realise that dead people are different from those that are alive, that they do not feel, they cannot hear, see, smell or speak and they do not need to eat or drink.
• By seven years of age the majority of children accept that death is permanent and that it can happen to anyone.
• They are aware that death is permanent and that the dead person won't return.
• They know that death can come about through illness or an accident.
• They are more able to express their thoughts and feelings but may conceal them and outwardly appear unaffected.
• They need to be given an opportunity to ask questions and to be given as much information as possible to allow them to adjust.
• They may at times use 'magical' thinking (the dead person watching or talking to them) to create stories around the bereavement.
• They are likely to be very interested in the rituals surrounding death.
• They begin to be aware of the feelings of others and to show empathy to those also affected by the loss.

Some possible grief reactions to death:

• They can show many of the grief reactions of younger children; crying, bed wetting, eating and sleeping problems.
• They may become very irritable or aggressive towards other children and adults, or may become clingy.
• They may become fearful that the same thing might happen to them or others close to them and this could result in them not wanting to leave home or be apart from remaining family members.
• They may develop psychosomatic illnesses; headaches, feeling sick.
• School attendance may be disrupted.
• Self-esteem and self-confidence may be affected.
• Social peer pressures may limit their ability to express their feelings.
• They may appear as though everything is fine – brave and in control.
• May become preoccupied with death.

Possible ways of helping a child:

• Give matter of fact information about manner of death and demonstrate the child was in no way responsible.
• Provide opportunities for the child to talk with parents or other adults and give permission for the expression of feelings through variety of means.
• Maintain daily routines.
• Maintain boundaries.
• Make sure school knows as much as possible. Try to find out how the issue is being handled.

Children Aged 11+ (Upper Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 & 4)

Understanding of Death

• At this age children's understanding of death almost matches that of an adult, although they find it difficult to grasp abstract concepts.
• The need-to-know details continue and may seek answers to very specific questions.
• The struggle for independence at this age may cause bereaved teenagers to challenge the beliefs and expectations of others as to how they should be feeling or behaving.

• Death increases anxieties about the future, they may question the meaning of life and experience depression.
• Teenagers may find it easier to discuss their feelings with a sympathetic friend or adult than close family member.
• They may be having difficulty coming to terms with their own mortality and that of those close to them and cope by refusing to contemplate the possibility of death by experimenting with risk taking behaviour.

Some possible grief reactions to death:
• Withdrawal, sadness, loneliness, depression.
• Anger and rejection.
• Joking, sarcasm.
• Dependence or regressing to younger age.
• Insecurity, low self-esteem.
• Bullying or being bullied.
• Self-harm, eating disorders.

Possible ways of helping a child:
• Maintain daily routines.
• Ensure boundaries.
• Beware of loading adult responsibilities on an adolescent.
• Support outside the family can be important.

Appendix 8: Supporting Children following Suicide

The material in this appendix has come from Child Bereavement UK
https://www.childbereavementuk.org/information-bereaved-by-suicide
Supporting Children and Young People Bereaved by Suicide

This information covers ideas for what to tell children and young people, how they might feel and respond, and what might help to support them.
It may not be clear that the person has died by suicide, or the official cause may be given as something else, such as an accident or an open verdict. In this sheet, we use the term 'bereavement by suicide', but many of the same issues and feelings may apply when the cause of death is not clear, but it may have been suicide.
There is no right way to grieve or to respond when someone may have died by suicide. This information is based on what we learn from bereaved families and professionals. Everyone's situations and responses are different, and you can use whatever information here is helpful or relevant.

The First Few Days: Support and Information

Families tell us that good information and support was essential in helping them at the time of the death, and afterwards. As well as support from family or friends, you can ask for guidance and information from some of the professionals who become involved, such as the police, a coroner's officer, hospital staff or the funeral director.

Telling Children

When someone dies by suicide, it can be very difficult to talk about what has happened. Adults often want to protect children from the truth and may worry about explaining suicide, as they do not want children to realise someone can choose to take their own life. However, children are much more able to deal with difficult events if they are given open and honest information.
Telling children about a sudden, shocking or unexplained death of someone significant to them is not likely to be a one-off conversation, but a process that may need to happen in stages over the days, weeks, months and even years after the death. By giving your child information in small steps, their understanding gradually grows in a way that you can all more easily handle together.

Telling Children that the Person has Died

- The important first step is to tell them that the person has died. Try to do this as soon as possible, as children can overhear the news from other sources. It is best that they hear it from someone they are close to and who they trust.
- Find a time and space where you can be with the child and remove distractions.
- Say that you have something very sad to tell them, and then say for example: "Dad died last night".
- For young children (under six years), explain what 'died' means, for example:

This means that his body doesn't work anymore, and he doesn't feel anything or need anything. It also means that he won't be coming back, which is very sad.

- Be guided by their response. Answer any questions honestly but don't give more information than you need to. It is OK to tell them that you don't know the answer to that, but that you will tell you if I find out.
- Some children may not understand the permanence of death. You may need to repeat the same information over and over again, and it helps children to hear the same consistent information from you and other adults.

Giving Simple Details

A next step can be giving simple, factual details which the child or young person can picture. This can help them shape the details into a story that they can understand and tell other people:
She died at her house / He died in his car / Aunty Kate found Dad this morning. The Ambulance came, and Paramedics tried to help Dad, but he had already died.

Explaining How the Person Died

What and when you decide to tell children about how the person died will depend on the situation, and it may only be appropriate to tell them when the facts become clearer, or when they are old enough to understand.
However, if any details, including the word 'suicide', are likely to appear in the media, social media or in your community, it is important that children hear this first from you or someone else they trust first:
Dad died because he took too many tablets. We think he did it on purpose because he didn't want to live anymore / Mum died because she put something tight round her neck and she couldn't breathe. / Joe was on the railway line and he was hit by a train.
Sometimes, the full facts around a death may never be made clear. However, children and young people may find it harder to grieve, and to trust the adults around them later on, if they do not hear at least some basic truths about how the person died. You can help build trust between you by giving children truthful information and answering their questions as honestly as you can.
If a child is told different versions of a story, then:

- What they are told doesn't add up into a story that they can understand and process.
- What they may imagine has happened can often be worse than the reality.
- They may find out the truth in an unhelpful way or hear it at a time where there is no support.
- Different family members will not know what the child knows, and what they can be told.
- A child may think that because they are not being told everything, the death was in some way their fault, or that the person did not love them.
- As time passes, it becomes more difficult to change the story.

Explaining the Word 'Suicide'

How you explain 'suicide' will depend on who you are talking to, their age and understanding and what you feel able to say. Here are some suggested phrases to explain what suicide means. You may want to use just part of this, or find other words that feel right for you and the child you are supporting:
When someone does something dangerous to themselves and they die, it is called suicide. Sometimes it is called 'ending your own life' or 'taking your own life' and we think that is what happened to Dad.

Explaining Why the Person Ended Their Life

This may be very difficult or impossible to explain if you do not know how the person who died felt. It may also be very painful to do, but you could consider adapting some of the following words:
It might be that Dad has been very sad and confused for a long time. He might have thought it would be better if he died. This is not true, but he may have felt too sad and confused to be able to think clearly.
There is nothing that you did or said that made Dad do this - he loved you very much.
Eddie had problems for a long time, and the problems built up on top of each other, like a tall tower. The higher the tower got, the more Eddie thought he couldn't solve any of the problems because there were too many.

Sometimes a person can feel so sad, ill or confused that they decide that the only way to stop feeling so bad is to stop living. They might think that their friends or family will be better off without them. Neither of these things are true but the illness has made them think this.

Why is Grieving Especially Difficult for Young People After a Suicide?

No meaning or no warning - Any death can be hard to understand. After a possible suicide, it can be more difficult or impossible to understand why the person made that decision. Also, the sudden nature of the death means that there is no opportunity to say goodbye, which can lead to shock and greater disbelief for longer, and lots of unanswered questions.

Stigma or lack of trust in support - The stigma often attached to suicide can mean that children are not offered sources of support offered to other bereaved children. People sometimes do not know what to do or say, and therefore may not do anything. Some bereaved families may have been failed by their GP and the mental health services who, in their view, allowed the person to die. They may therefore be reluctant to access any similar help for a bereaved young person.

Police, procedures and press - Due to involvement of many strangers such as police officers, coroners and the media, a family's private grief may suddenly become a very public affair. Young people may be surrounded by complete strangers, rather than people that they want to be close to. If the suicide took place at home, it may become a potential "crime scene" and stop feeling comfortable and safe. Possessions can be removed by the police, including any suicide note. Such procedures may lead to a delay in the release of the body, delaying the rituals that can be really important in helping people with their grief, such as a funeral or other occasion where they can say goodbye.

Difficult or shocking memories - We commonly make sense of experiences, including bereavements, by thinking about the experience and talking about it. However, a suicide can be violent or shocking, especially if someone directly saw the event or its aftermath. This can "trip up" the usual grieving process because each time you think of the person, the graphic vivid image of the death takes over from any other softer, more comforting memories. Bereaved children and adults may dread thinking about the person who has died and avoid it wherever possible. This makes grieving very difficult.

How Children and Young People might Feel and Respond

Like adults, children will experience the feelings of grief that they might have in any close bereavement, and also different feelings because it may have been the person's decision to die. Children may feel vulnerable, angry or frightened. At the same time, they also have the ability to play and love and have fun. Older children may find it difficult to talk about their feelings. Children and young people of all ages will respond in different ways, from emotional or angry responses to refusing to engage or being withdrawn. Or they may focus on helping or protecting the adults or their siblings. They might be overwhelmed by complex and conflicting feelings, which they cannot fully understand.

Sensitive, truthful and loving responses that are appropriate for the age and level of understanding of each child will allow them to grieve in their own way. This is the ideal, but when parents are grieving themselves, it is not always easy. Making use of support available to you will, in turn, help you to support your child.

Ways to Support Children and Young People After the Event and Over Time

- Be aware that children are around and that they can overhear what adults are saying.
- Reassure them repeatedly that they are in no way responsible for what happened and that they could not have prevented it. Guilt or shame are very common feelings after a possible suicide.
- Stress that the person loved them, if this was the case. Be aware that some children (and adults) may feel that because the person chose to end their life, they were also rejecting their family in some way.
- Keep routines as normal as possible and explain any changes. Explain who will be with them and at what time. Ensure that planned activities happen, as this will help children to feel secure.
- Include children and young people who withdraw in activities, whilst acknowledging any need they have for space and time on their own.
- Find time and space for comfort, reassurance and communicating with children and young people to help them feel they are included and important.
- Involve children and young people in arrangements and in making simple decisions that affect them, such as about attending the funeral. It is important even for very young children to feel included in decisions. They will remember this feeling later on, even if they do not remember much about the event or the person who died.
- Involve and inform other adults who see your child regularly, such as teachers and parents of your child's friends. This includes telling the school what your child has and has not been told. This can help support you and can keep messages from adults consistent.
- Acknowledge the feelings they might have now and in future. Explain that it is OK to have lots of different feelings, and that they can talk to you about how they feel.

What Else May Help Children and Young People?

- Being able to make sense of the death can be very difficult, especially if there is no answer to the question 'why?' However, if a child is able to build their own story around the death, this can help them to fit what happened into their own understanding of the world (their 'world view'). This can also help them talk about it to other people. Understanding that they are not to blame is important for this.
- Having opportunities to talk and ask questions can also help in making sense of the death. It can be very hard for adults and children to talk about suicide, because of possible stigma, not knowing what to say and not wanting our own view of the world to be challenged. Telling the story is not a one-off event; it goes on for a long time and children need to regularly update their knowledge to fit in with their growing and changing understanding of the world.
- Expressing thoughts and feelings including drawing, writing or playing. Some children may want to draw or write their own story of what happened, which can also be helpful for you in that you can see what they know and understand.
- Continuing and creating rituals can provide concrete ways for young people to express complex and intense feelings. Being part of a ritual with other people also helps them to feel a sense of belonging and support. A simple family ritual can be a special meal together, lighting a candle or saying out loud a short poem or memory.
- Building memories of the person, by collecting items such as photos, music on a CD, or by writing or drawing memories of their own. A memory box or workbook can become their own special place for this.
- Keeping normal boundaries around behaviour helps children to feel secure. You can acknowledge that it is OK to feel angry or very upset but help them find ways to express this in a way that is safe for them and others.

Supporting Young People

Grieving children of all ages need the support listed above. In addition, adolescents and young people will have a greater understanding than young children of the loss they are facing. They may also know more about the person who died, and any problems they had. Young people may want to spend more time out of the house or with friends, and this can help them to escape from any tension or difficult memories they have at home. This is all normal, and can be helpful for young people, as long as they also know that their family or other support is available.

Young people may also be at an age where their emotions are strong, even frightening and difficult to manage. Not knowing how to deal with such emotions can result in outbursts or behaviour that is challenging for them or for you. Some young people (and adults) may start taking risks, such as driving recklessly, drinking or taking drugs, as a way to shut out painful feelings or to feel more in control. This may help the person to stay numb for longer, so others around them can assume that they don't need support, when actually the opposite may be the case.

Children or young people, and their families, can worry that they might also be at risk of suicide, particularly if they are of the same gender as the family member who died, or when they get to the same age. Research around this is mixed, and there are many possible factors which bring a person to consider suicide. There is some evidence of a higher risk of suicide for someone who has been bereaved by suicide. On the other hand, there is also evidence that the experience of being bereaved by suicide, along with good support, can help someone reject this as a potential option for themselves in future.

The key thing is access to support that helps the child to grieve, understand their emotions, increase their resilience and learn coping strategies. Such support can also help to reduce their chance of mental health problems in future.

Signs that someone might be at risk of suicide can include depressed mood, recent changes in behaviour, giving away possessions, a history of self-harm or mental health problems, talking about self-harm or suicide, substance abuse, being unusually impulsive, or showing hostility. It is important to remember, however, that any one of these factors does not necessarily mean that the person is at risk of suicide.

If you are worried about a child or young person in this way, you can ask them if they have had thoughts about ending their own life. This may seem blunt, but many people who have thoughts of suicide feel they can't tell anyone. Asking them directly reduces the stigma around talking about suicide, it gives the young person an opportunity to tell you what they are thinking, and it can open the way to find support.

This guidance is given by organisations such as Papyrus and Samaritans, who specialise in suicide prevention, and research shows that talking about suicide does not make it more likely to happen. If a child or young person does tell you they have been thinking about suicide, you can encourage them to tell you more, and reassure them that you will listen and that they are not alone. You can also look for support options together (see Resources section).

Further Help and Support

Support or Counselling - Although the environment around a child or young person may give them all the support they need, in some cases bereavement support or counselling may also be useful. It can offer a way to express thoughts or ideas that could be unbearable for even the most supportive of families. Professional practitioners are able to handle and contain the young person's distress in a way that family or friends may not be able to, due to their own grief or worry. Professional support can also help young people to develop their own coping strategies and prevent further harm. It aims to offer a judgement-free environment in which someone can express all their complex feelings, including any they do not want to face, such as relief, shame or anger.

The Support after Suicide Partnership is a network of organisations offering support and information. Their website includes a searchable map of UK support options.

Group Support - this can be particularly helpful for children and young people who are bereaved by suicide. Just the process of hearing other people's stories immediately makes the young person realise that they are not alone. Other young people who had similar experiences sometimes provide more powerful support than professionals who may be perceived by the young person as being out of touch.

In conclusion, some of the feelings involved in bereavement after a suicide may be different to other bereavements, and the effects may be much stronger and longer-lasting. There are particular challenges around such a death that may make the normal processes of grief much more complicated. Children and young people may need similar kinds of support as for other bereavements. However, they may need more time, and a greater understanding and awareness of the extra challenges from those people around them.

Appendix 9: Reflection Spaces for Children

These activities have been designed to help children process their grief in a literally 'hands on' way that doesn't rely on words alone.

Ripples

This activity has been included to help explore the idea that not everyone will be impacted by someone's death in the same way. It's natural to feel differently from those around you – but that doesn't make your experiences any less real or right. Like ripples from a pebble in water, they can all be different in different places and at different times.

Equipment:

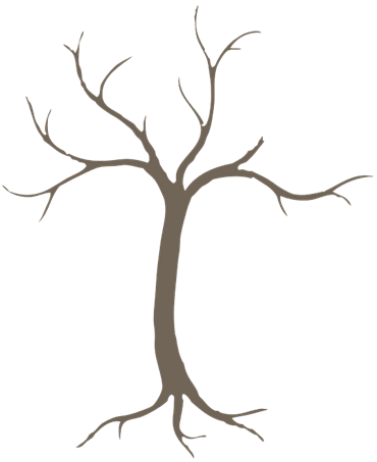
You will need a bucket full of water and some very small pebbles that can be gently dropped into the water. The smaller the bucket – the smaller the pebbles or beads will need to be. Have plenty of towels on hand for any splashes or spills.

Instructions:

- You may wish to gently drop a stone into the water and watch the ripples as you do.
- The ripples will move the water. Notice how dropping the stone effects the water close to it but things further away can also be changed.
- Notice how the water is still held by the container.
- As the dropping of the stone effects the water, think about how has the death of *(named person)* made ripples with you and with others.

Fingerprint Tree

This activity has been included to help explore the idea that any connection had with the person who has died has value and was precious and together all these links and connections were unique, just like the person who died.



Equipment: You will need a canvas frame with the shape of a tree and branches drawn or painted onto the canvas before the activity starts. You will also need ink pads or paints which can capture a fingerprint. Hand washing facilities will also be needed.

Instructions:

- Think about (named person's) life and where you were a part of it. Perhaps at the roots, the very centre, or the tips of the branches.
- Add your unique fingerprint to the tree.
- Notice how all our fingerprints together show the life of the tree.
- It doesn't matter how great or small the connection. But out of little and big connections something beautiful has been created – and we have all played our part.

Helping Hands

This activity has been included to help explore the idea that it's very important to be sensitive to each other and help each other at difficult times, like those times when someone has died. It's going to be a time when everyone will need to receive and give help to others at one point or another. This activity reminds everyone to think carefully about this.

Equipment:
You will need a shallow tray or trough that can hold water. You will also need pre-cut shapes of hands, 'helping hands' and pens (that do not run in water) or pencils.

Instructions:

- What kind of support do you need?
- What do you need from your friends? Teachers? Other adults?
- What can you give to your friends? Teachers? Other adults?
- Write or draw something on the paper hand. Then gently fold the fingers in and lay it on surface of the water – then as you watch the fingers open, think about what you might do or receive next.

Big, Big Questions

This activity has been included to simply provide the space to ask the big, sometimes unspoken questions and, if helpful, a chance to ask these questions of God.

Equipment:
You will need some paper squares for the questions – you may wish to print question marks on one side. You will also need pens/pencils. You will also need something to represent Jesus' hands. It is possible to get garden ornaments shaped as hands, alternatively you could print out a pair of open hands and attach them to a box.

Instructions:

Sometimes when someone dies, there may be many questions…
Why? How? Why now? How long? Where are they now? What happens next? If only…
Sometimes asking the question is enough.

Write down your big question or questions and place it/them in Jesus' hands.

Torn

This activity has been included to help explore the real feelings that can hurt and to gently suggest the idea that healing will one day come.

Equipment: You will need hearts of various sizes cut from a variety of materials and colours, for example, coloured card or greetings cards. You will also need pens/pencils, scissors (in case they are hard to rip) and washi tape (depending on the age of the users these may need to be pre cut into tiny strips).

Instructions:

- Sometimes our feelings can change us. Feelings can run very deep inside. It can feel as if you're broken, there is real pain.
- You may want to colur in your heart, as you do so you may want to talk about feelings.
- We talk about feelings coming from our hearts. When we are very sad it feels like our hearts are broken,
- if you want to, you could rip and break your heart. If you feel angry you could also break the heart.
- If you feel torn up inside you may want to tear your heart
- It won't always be this way, this is how we feel now.
- When you're ready and if you would like to, spend time putting your heart back together using the washi tape- use small pieces because hearts take time to mend and it doesn't happen all at once
- How does it look now? How does that make you feel?

Gems in the Sand

This activity has been included as a reminder to treasure beautiful memories.

Equipment:
You will need a tray of sand – and covers to catch sand that may escape from the tray during the activity. You will need to include a selection of beads, gems or jewels etc hidden in the sand.

Instructions:

- People are still precious to us after they have died and the Bible explains they're precious to God too, always.
- Move your fingers through the sand slowly to find a bead.
- Look at the gem you have found and remember the beautiful things about that person. Be thankful for the memories you have,
- When you are ready hang your gem the on tree.

Who is Still Here?

This activity has been included to reassure children that, whilst someone has died who will be missed, there are still people here.

Equipment:
You will need enough chenille stems (pipe cleaners) for each participant to be able to make at least one person. You may also want to create a string washing line with hooks or pegs so they can be displayed.

Instructions:

- It is important to think about the person who has died and how our lives may be different without them.
- It is also important to remember who is still here, among our families, our friends, our community.
- Make a person or people and join them to the chain to represent all the people and relationships that still surround you.