Best care by the best people

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Havering CAMHS - Useful Resources for helping children and young people with a bereavement

Bereavement

Introduction

The term 'bereavement' refers to the whole process of grief and mourning and is associated with a deep sense of loss and sadness. All children will grieve when a person they love dies, although they vary tremendously in how they react. They are more resilient than adults in the face of bereavement, and in general they seem to be less affected in the long term by death than by parental separation.

A child's level of resilience depends on a number of factors; including temperament, self-esteem, ability to form new relationships, and having a confiding relationship with a surviving adult. Parent's reactions to loss will have a major impact on how children cope, and other family members may need reassurance that apparent indifference often occurs, and that grief may resolve more quickly in children than in adults.

The majority of children who are bereaved will not require specialist mental health services.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

All of the many different emotions that children have during bereavement are completely natural and normal. Some of the reactions can be unexpected or surprising and may seem inappropriate to adults (e.g. they may be deeply distressed one minute, then ask if they can go out to play) but this is normal and doesn't mean that the child doesn't care or isn't grieving.

Adults often try to protect children from things they think will upset or distress them. However, children need to be given information and to be included. They can feel more anxious or lonely if they don't know what is happening. Bereaved children may have difficulties with other children who may ask difficult questions, or may avoid them because they don't know what to say or they are worried about getting upset themselves.

Consider accompanying losses – a house move, for example, may initially have more impact than the death. Remember that children's needs change over time, they may need to go over the details of the death again at a later stage.

THINK ABOUT YOURSELF

Talking to a child about the death of someone close may be among the hardest things you have done or will do. It can be exhausting and bewildering and it may also bring back memories of your own. Recognise that conversations may feel uncomfortable or awkward, but try to put these feelings aside and discuss things openly and freely, this will reassure children that these issues are OK to talk about.

Do what you can to support the child, but don't expect too much of yourself and talk to someone if you need support.

What can you do to support the child?

- Ask the child how they are feeling. Their reactions are often different to those of adults so their feelings may not be obvious. Feelings of isolation can increase if a child thinks nobody understands how they feel.
- Give them information to help them make sense of what has happened. Use simple, clear language and words they will understand. Check they have understood.
- Give ample opportunity for children to talk, without pressure, and to ask questions. Some questions will be easy, some more difficult to answer. If you don't know the answer, don't be afraid to say so.
- Reassure children that whatever they are feeling is OK. People have many different reactions to death, and all are normal and natural.
- Help children to name and understand their feelings, especially yearning, and to understand that these powerful emotions come in waves and will pass if allowed.
- If you are upset, don't be afraid to show it. This can help children see that it's OK to show how you are feeling.
- Ensure children and young people know that it's OK to cry, whilst also accepting that it's OK if they don't.
- Reassure children that it's OK to feel happy, and that they shouldn't feel guilty if there are times when they don't think about the person who has died.
- Try to maintain the child's normal routine as far as possible.
- Expect some behavioural changes; for example, expressions of anxiety and possible behaviour problems or lack of attention.
- Don't worry that you might make things worse by talking about the death. The child has just experienced a terrible life-changing event. It's unlikely things can get much worse.

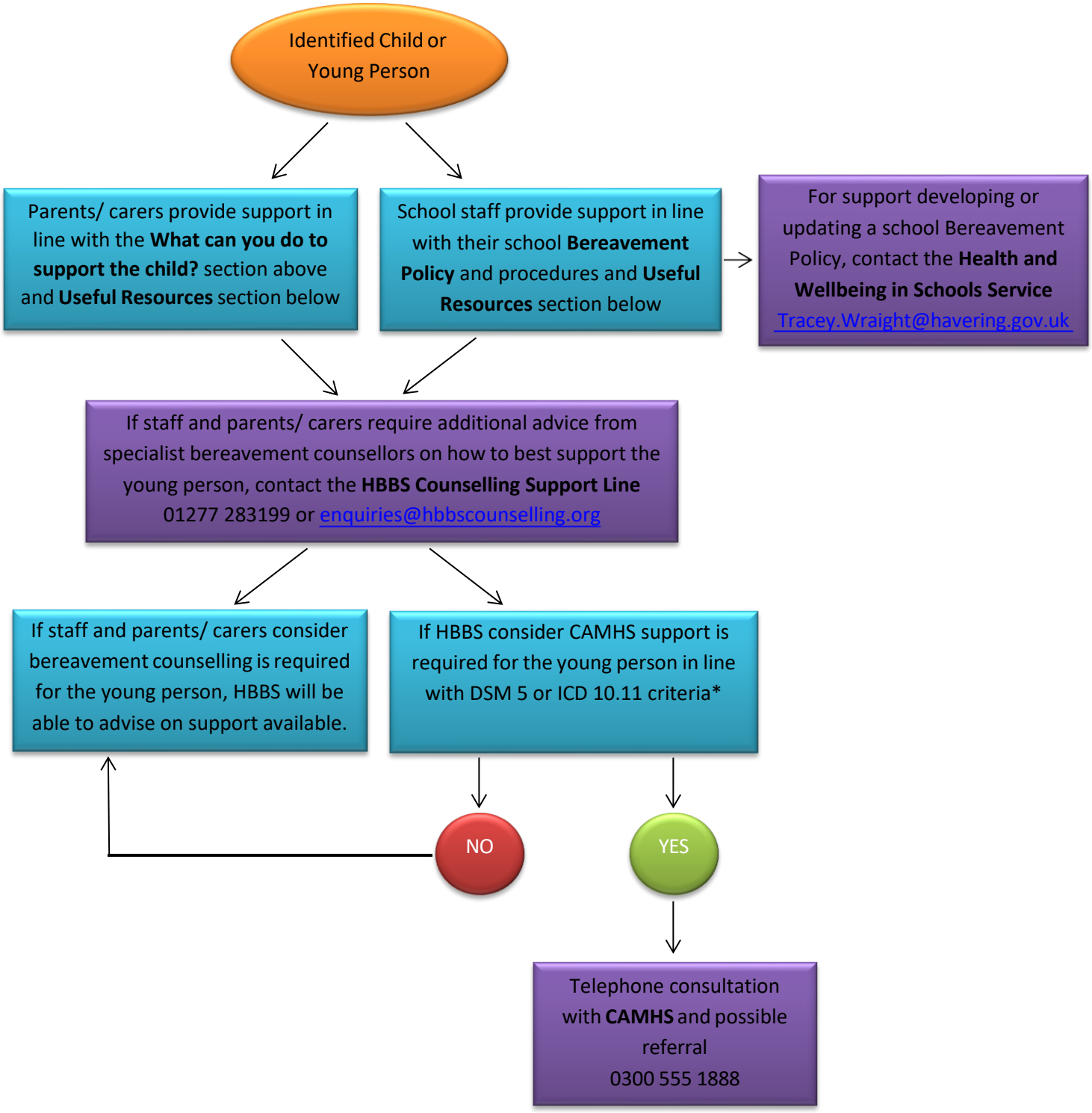
When to consider asking for CAMHS help

Following a death, the reactions of children and young people may cause a great deal of concern, and some families feel they should get CAMHS immediately. However, with the right support from the people around them, most children will be able to cope with the death of a loved one and gradually they will learn to deal with all of the changes.

Signs that a young person may need extra help include:

- Inability to sleep.
- Loss of appetite.
- Prolonged fear of being alone.
- Acting like a much younger child for a long time.
- Denying that the family member has died.
- Imitating the dead person all the time.
- Talking repeatedly about wanting to join the dead person.
- Withdrawing from friends.
- A sharp drop in school performance, or refusal to attend school.

Bereavement Consultation Flowchart



***DSM 5 Diagnostic Criteria for Persistent Complex Bereavement Disorder**

As persistent complex bereavement disorder is a relatively new disorder and yet to be classified, a number of diagnostic criteria have been suggested by a consortium of mental health practitioners from around the world. These are, broadly:

- The patient experienced the death of a loved one at least six months previously

At least one of the following symptoms has been present longer than expected, taking into account the person's social or cultural environment:

- Intense and persistent yearning for the deceased
- Frequent preoccupation with the deceased
- Intense feelings of emptiness or loneliness
- Recurrent thoughts that life is meaningless or unfair without the deceased
- A frequent urge to join the deceased in death

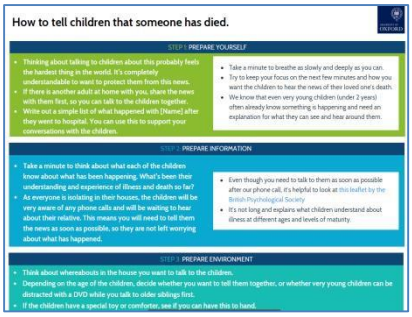
At least two of the following symptoms have been recorded for at least one month:

- Feeling shocked, stunned or numb since a loved one's death
- Feelings of disbelief or inability to accept the loss
- Rumination about the circumstances or consequences of the death
- Anger or bitterness about the death
- Experiencing pain that the deceased suffered, or hearing/seeing the deceased
- Trouble trusting or caring about others
- Intense reactions to memories or reminders of the deceased
- Avoidance of reminders of the deceased, or the opposite - seeking out reminders to feel close to the deceased

Symptoms cause substantial distress for the sufferer or impact significantly on areas of functioning and cannot be attributed to other causes.

ICD10/11 please refer to https://www.icd10data.com/search?s=bereavement

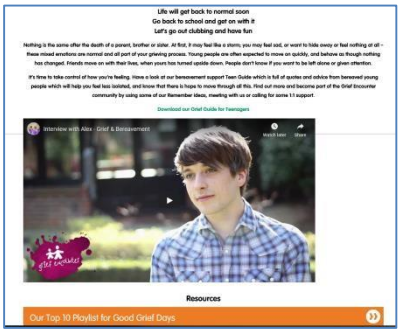
Useful resources:



1. University of Oxford

Guide on how to tell children that someone has died

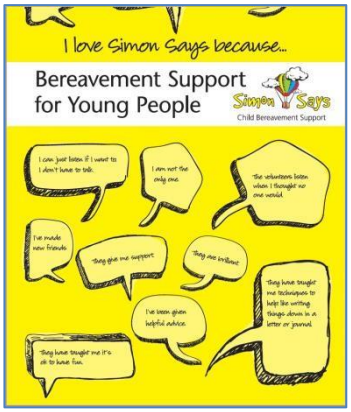
https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2020-04/how_to_tell_children_that_someone_has_died_final.pdf



2. Grief Encounter

Grief guide for teenagers

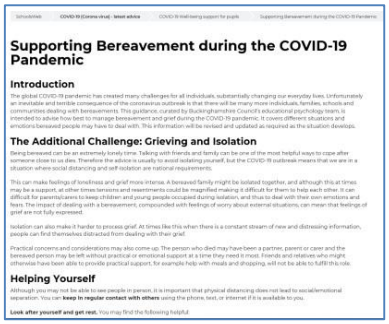
https://www.griefencounter.org.uk/young-people/



3. Simon Says

Bereavement support booklet for young people

https://www.simonsays.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/66074-sims20-a5-bereavement-support-booklet-hires1.pdf



4. Buckinghamshire Council

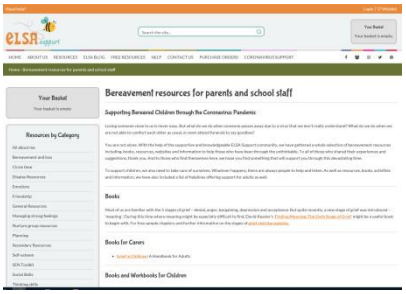
Guide by Buckinghamshire Council's educational psychology team on how best to manage bereavement and grief during the COVID-19 pandemic. (Parents & Professional use)

https://schoolsweb.buckscc.gov.uk/covid-19-corona-virus-latest-advice/covid-19-well-being-support-for-pupils/supporting-bereavement-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/

5. Nelson's Journey

Guide on losing someone and funerals during Covid 19. (Parents and Carer Use)

http://www.nelsonsjourney.org.uk/covid-19-funeralguidance/



6. ELSA Support

Bereavement resource including books, activities and information for Early Years, Key Stage 1 and 2 children

https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/bereavement-resources-for-parents-and-school-staff/?utm_source=mailpoet&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=brand-new-free-bereavement-pack_87

7. Headland & Irish Hospice

Animation on Youtube explaining five steps on how to deliver bad news. (For professionals)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=juKAMBh9J54

Bereavement websites

Parents/Carers:

Child Death Helpline – free phone service for anyone affected by the death of a child.

Child Bereavement UK - support families and educate professionals when a baby or child of any age dies or is dying, or when a child is facing bereavement

The Compassionate Friends - support and friendship to parents and families after the death of their child, at any age and from any cause

Cruse Bereavement Care - nationwide bereavement support and information.

Rosie Crane Trust - provide a number of services aimed at supporting bereaved parents including a 24 hour helpline.

Winston's Wish - support children and their families through grief after the death of a parent or brother or sister.

Young People:

1. Winston's Wish/Shout Crisis Messenger

winstonswish.org.uk

- In Partnership with SHOUT - a Free 24/7 Crisis Messenger for bereaved young people.
- If individuals are experiencing a personal crisis and need support, they can text WW to 85258. A trained volunteer will be available to support them through their feelings.

2. Grief Encounter

griefencounter.org.uk

- Grief Encounter offers free, confidential national helpline on 0808 8020111, video counselling, web chat and email service grietalk@griefencounter.org.uk to all ages
- Available any weekday from 9am-9pm.

3. Hope Again

www.hopeagain.org.uk

- Cruse Bereavement Care's website for young people with information, vlogs, podcasts, videos and sharing personal stories.
- Freephone helpline: 0808 808 1677 (Mon-Fri 09:30-17:00).Email for young people, they can send a private email to: hopeagain@cruse.org.uk

4. Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (SOBS)

www.uksobs.org

- Support for people over the age of 18 bereaved by suicide
- Helpline: 0300 111 5065 (every day 09:00-21:00)
- Email: sobs.support@hotmail.com

Resources with activities

1. NAGC National Alliance for Grieving Children:

Workbook aimed at processing and creating space for everyone's emotions in regards to loss and grief.

https://indd.adobe.com/view/924b5436-fca0-4a15-901a-9233134766e4

2. National Bereavement Alliance & Childhood Bereavement Network:

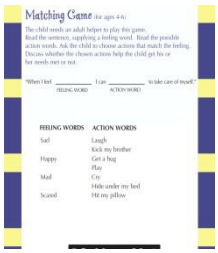
A document of ideas and activities to help people feel closer together to their loved ones at a time of social restrictions.

http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/media/102504/Keeping-in-touch.pdf

3. BBC Newsround:

Step by step guide to make a memory jar which is sometimes useful when helping people deal with loss.

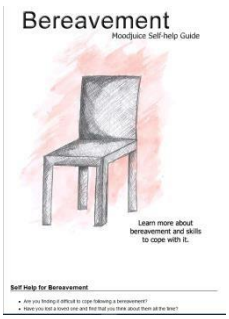
https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/39407116



4. YouthLight:

Activities for grieving children

https://youthlight.com/sample/activities_grieving_children.pdf

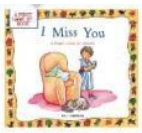


5. MoodJuice:

Self help guide to cope with bereavement

https://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/bereavement.asp

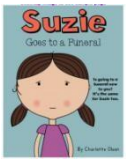
Books



I Miss You: a First Look at Death

Author: Pat Thomas

This picture book is for children around the ages of four to seven. It uses simple language and metaphors to discuss death and children's feelings and questions around the subject.



Suzie Goes to a Funeral

Author: Charlotte Olson

A book to help any child help understand the process of a funeral and to show that they will live on in our memories forever.

Love Will Never Die

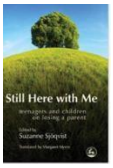
Author: Clare Shaw

This book is for primary school children to help them through bereavement. The book has areas where the child can write or draw their own feelings.

I Miss My Sister

Author: Sarah Courtauld

This book is recommended for children aged 4-10 years old. It helps to guide the child through the different emotions they may encounter following the death of a sibling, as well as the different categories of grief over a period of time.



Still Here with Me: Teenagers and Children on Losing a Parent

Author: Suzanne Sjoqvist

This book is a collection of the experiences of thirty-one children and teenagers who have lost a parent. In their own words, children and young people of a variety of ages talk openly and honestly about losing their mother or father.

Further books and resources for bereaved children and young people can be found at:
https://www.childbereavementuk.org/resources-for-children-and-young-people

Apps

1. Grief: Support for Young People

The app, created by Child Bereavement UK, is for 11-25 year olds who have been bereaved of someone important to them. It can also be used by friends, teachers, parents and professionals who would like to know how to support bereaved young people.

https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/grief-support-for-young-people/id883195199

2. Smiles & Tears

The app has been developed by Nelson's Journey and provides an interactive tool to record memories, send gifts and write thoughts, feelings and emotions. Nelson's Journey have also provided tips on how to manage emotions such as anger, confusion, guilt, loneliness etc.

https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/smiles-tears/id965830012

3. Apart of Me

This is a mobile gaming app developed to provide children with strength and resilience when someone is dying or has died. It provides a peaceful, safe virtual world that uses technology to help families talk, reduce feelings of isolation and allow children to work through their emotions.

https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/apart-of-me/id1170153160

4. Headspace

Not specifically for those who've been bereaved, Headspace offers guided meditation exercises for managing stress and problems with sleep. The Life Challenges section includes exercises on handling sadness, self-esteem and grieving.

https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/headspace-meditation-sleep/id493145008