

Responding to bereavement in schools

Updated Covid 19 – June 2021

Useful websites

Many organisations are currently providing further specific support for children and young people during the Covid 19 pandemic.

NHS

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/children-and-bereavement/>

Open Minds Website: <http://www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk/bereavement-support-2-2/>

Local support contacts for families and young people including

- Noah's Ark Centre
- Open Minds (CAMHS)
- Kooth.com
- West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health and Care Partnership grief and loss support service

Winston's Wish ; <https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus/>

National Freephone helpline 08088 020021 (in order to protect our staff, our Helpline is currently operating a remote service. Please leave a message on our voicemail with your first name and a contact number (with area code) and a Helpline Practitioner will call you back from a withheld number as soon as possible) Mon – Fri 9am -5pm. Email info@winstonswish.org

Themes include;

- How schools can support children
- Talking to children about corona virus
- Telling a child someone is seriously ill
- Telling a child someone has died of corona virus
- How to say goodbye when a funeral isn't possible
- Ways to manage anxiety about corona virus
- Managing grief in self-isolation

Child Bereavement UK - <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/pages/category/coronavirus>

Helpline Mon – Fri 9am -5pm 0800 88840. Email support@childbereavementuk.org

Themes include;

- Supporting bereaved children through difficult times
- When you can't visit someone who is ill
- Corona virus supporting pupils
- Supporting bereaved children

Cruse Bereavement Care – <https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/coronavirus-dealing-bereavement-and-grief>

0808 808 1677 Monday and Friday, 9.30am to 5pm, and Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 9.30am to 8pm. Email info@cruse.org.uk

Themes include;

- Grieving and isolation
- Corona virus and young people
- Traumatic bereavement
- Funerals

Hope Again – <https://www.hopeagain.org.uk/hope-again-about-us>

0808 808 1677 Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 5pm. Email hopeagain@cruse.org.uk

Part of Cruse Bereavement provides support, advice and information to children, young people and adults when someone they love dies

Grief Encounter – <https://www.griefencounter.org.uk/serviceupdate/>

0808 802 0111 Monday to Friday, 9am to 9pm, or email contact@griefencounter.org.uk

Themes include;

- Supporting Children and Young People
- Telling children and young people someone has died of Corona virus
- How to say goodbye when attending a funeral isn't possible

Childhood Bereavement Network

020 7843 6309

The Compassionate Friends; <https://www.tcf.org.uk/>

0345 123 2304 Email helpline@tcf.org.uk

- Includes support for parents grieving the loss of a child from the corona virus
- Reference to wide range of books to help family members deal with bereavement in different circumstances

Escayp and The Nick Smith Foundation

These organisations have partnered to provide counselling and therapeutic play sessions for children aged 3 and over who face the death of a parent or significant figure in their lives in Calderdale – both pre-bereavement and post-bereavement.

- The sessions can be accessed in two ways. Through self-referral by parents, carers or other family members or through referral from nurseries, schools, health professionals and other organisations. Please contact Escayp directly if you feel they might be able to help: Telephone – 01274 878117. Online – www.escayp.org.uk

- Clearly at the moment the service is unable to do face-to-face appointments which limits what they can offer the younger children – but they can do phone calls/video calls with slightly older children

Rainbows <https://rainbowsgb.org/>

Able to download a free book about Coronavirus for children

<https://rainbowsgb.org/2020/04/coronavirus-a-free-book-for-children/>

Rainbows West Yorkshire (*Leeds, the Dales and all West Yorkshire*)

rainbows.westyorkshire@btconnect.com

The UK Trauma Council has been set up by the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families.

They have created a website with links to the latest UK picture and resources available to schools and colleges to help and support traumatically bereaved children and young people.

It has a short-animated video guide on You Tube to set the scene of what Traumatic Bereavement is showing the sort of cases that would apply and benefit from additional support.

There is also a 6-point support plan supported by video resources and monitoring plans.

The video and resources are all available from this site:

<https://uktraumacouncil.org/resources/traumatic-bereavement-for-school-communities>

Responding to Bereavement in Schools (December 2019)

INTRODUCTION

At some stage, all schools will find themselves in a position where they have to manage a response to bereavement in the school community. This may range from dealing with the loss of a pupil's cherished pet, to the death of a relative, a member of staff or a pupil. Circumstances can range from common, more benign and comprehensible natural events, to rare but extremely emotionally distressing situations such as a pupil suicide, which may be accompanied by significant external interest and social media or press speculation. Headteachers who have found themselves in these situations often report that these are the hardest professional moments of their careers.

This document is divided into three parts: the first provides some simple first steps to take when you are notified of a significant bereavement that will require a response; the second provides links to some organisations that schools have found helpful when managing a response to bereavement; the third provides some exemplification of responses taken and learning gained in relation to dealing with the death of a pupil, from recent local experience. Please note that the organisations listed in section 2 are listed for their relevance only, and are not necessarily recommended by Calderdale

MBC. Please note also that there is a cost attached to some of these services, although many are free.

1. WHEN NOTIFIED OF A SIGNIFICANT BEREAVEMENT

- In your initial conversation when you are notified, try to establish the facts rather than speculation. Remain calm and express sympathy.
- Inform the following:
 - Members of the Senior Leadership Team;
 - Chair of Governing Board;
 - Director of Children's Services via 24hr Calderdale Emergency Duty Team: 01422 288000.
- During the working day you can also contact a member of the School Effectiveness Team - they will be able to put you in contact with other services, and with senior leaders in other schools who have dealt with similar or related issues recently. Their telephone numbers are:
 - Lesley Bowyer: 07545 423453
 - Michelle Joyce: 07702 656832
 - Christine Nicholson: 07872 416826
 - Chris Sylge: 07702 656831
 - Office: 01422 394101
- Depending on the circumstances, you may also need to contact a number of other services, for example:
 - (In event of an accident) Calderdale Health & Safety Team, Chris Smith: 07734 395176
 - (In event of a critical incident) Early Intervention Service Manager, Parveen Akhtar: 01422 394094
 - Calderdale Open Minds First Point of Contact: 01422 300 001
 - Schools Safeguarding Advisor, Steve Barnes: 01422 228326, 07540 672735
 - Press & Communications Office, Lucy Bradwell: 01422 393100
 - West Yorkshire Police, Emergency: 999, Non-emergency: 101

2. LINKS TO HELPFUL ORGANISATIONS

General bereavement support

- *Calderdale Help in Bereavement Service (CHIBS)* offers a free, befriending service that provides emotional support to bereaved adults living in the Calderdale area <http://www.chibs.org.uk/>.
- *Child Bereavement UK* supports families and educates professionals when a baby or child of any age dies or is dying, or when a child is facing bereavement www.childbereavementuk.org.
- *The Childhood Bereavement Network*: help for people supporting bereaved children www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk.
- *The Bereavement Trust*: helplines available in English, Chinese and Asian languages www.bereavement-trust.org.uk.
- *Cruse Bereavement Care* www.cruse.org.uk.
- *Funeral Services Guide*: information for coping with bereavement from the Funeral Services Guide www.funeralservicesguide.com;

- *Grief encounter*: Useful resources for those supporting bereaved children and young people both professionally and personally www.griefencounter.org.uk.
- *Leeds Anglican Diocese*: Useful guidance for schools
<https://www.leeds.anglican.org/sites/default/files/Bereavement%20Guidance%20Diocese%20of%20Leeds%20-%20Final.pdf>
- *Rainbows Bereavement Support GB*: offers training in bereavement and loss, and supports communities in reviewing or developing their own bereavement policy and procedures
<http://www.rainbowsgb.org/>.
- *Calderdale Open Minds First point of Contact*: 01422 300 001 for general advice, support and signposting firstpointofcontact@calderdalecamhs.org.uk

Support to children after the death of a parent or sibling

- *Winston's wish*: supports children and young people after the death of a parent or sibling
www.winstonswish.org.uk.
- *The Coat I Wear*: Mel Maxwell's comforting book that helps children deal with their grief after the loss of a loved one www.thecoatiwear.com
- *Let's Talk About Loss*: a safe space to talk through taboos and address the reality of losing someone close to you when you are young www.letstalkaboutloss.co.uk .
- *Mum's Last Wish*: short documentary film following the story of Shanti and Calvin after they lost their mother, Seema, to cancer in 2015: www.bbc.co.uk/mums-last-wish

Support for parents after the death of a child

- *The Compassionate Friends*: supporting bereaved parents and their families after a child dies
www.tcf.org.uk.

Counselling

- Face-to-face counselling from *Noah's Ark* (<http://www.noahsarkcentre.org.uk/>) and *The Samaritans* (https://www.samaritans.org/branches/samaritans-halifax-and-calderdale?gclid=Cj0KCQjwn-bWBRDGARIsAPS1svtPsdJh-hVMsLI9iXdWju-Qjz5XMET05ndx_2BbJjXAKM5VfZO1exwaAuThEALw_wcB) has been used successfully for by local heads in response to the death of a pupil.
- On-line counselling from <https://papyrus-uk.org/> has been used successfully by local heads in response to the death of a pupil; and Kooth.com <https://kooth.com/> provides a free anonymous, online counselling service for children and young people aged 10-25.

Support after suicide

- The Samaritans have a detailed and comprehensive free support package called *Step by Step - How to prepare and respond to suicide in schools* (<https://www.samaritans.org/your-community/samaritans-education/step-step>). This document guides you through the process of responding to suicide appropriately and constructively, in order to help rebuild the well-being of the school community and reduce the risk of further deaths. The guidance is based on research and best practice concerning suicide response within school communities from across the world. Media guidance for heads with some useful fact sheets and information can be found at: <https://www.samaritans.org/about-samaritans/media-guidelines/>

- *Support After Suicide*: for people bereaved or affected by suicide www.supportaftersuicide.org.uk;
- *Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide*: Support for people bereaved by suicide www.uk-sobs.org.uk.
- *Calderdale Open Minds First point of Contact*: 01422 300 001 firstpointofcontact@calderdalecamhs.org.uk
- *West Yorkshire and Harrogate Suicide Bereavement Service* provide support through one to one peer support, peer support groups and advocacy. Support on offer includes practical advice and signposting to other services, for example counselling or financial advice. Additional support is available to staff affected by suicide in the course of their duties. Referrals can be made by visiting www.wyhsbs.org.uk or by calling 0113 305 5800.

Support after murder & manslaughter

- <https://childbereavementuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/2-3-Supporting-Children-Bereaved-by-Murder-or-Manslaughter.pdf>
- SAMM: Support after murder and manslaughter www.samm.org.uk.
<https://www.samm.org.uk/support-for-the-bereaved.php>.

Support for families affected by drugs and alcohol

- *Branching Out - Young Person Substance Misuse Support*: works with children, young people and young adults who are under the age of 21 and reside in, or are educated in Calderdale: <https://www.disc-vol.org.uk/projects/calderdale-branching-out/>;
- *Adfam*: support for families affected by drugs and alcohol www.adfam.org.uk;
- *Drug Fam*: information and support about bereavement through drugs or alcohol www.drugfam.co.uk;
- *Drug Rehab*: information and support to overcome addiction www.drugrehab.com;
- *Drug Rehab Connections*: support for addicts and their families to put their lives back together after overcoming an addiction www.drugrehabconnections.com;

Loss of a pet

- *Blue Cross*: coping with the loss of a pet www.bluecross.org.uk .

Other relevant resources and organisations

- *Open Minds in Calderdale*: an emotional health and wellbeing website containing information, advice and support for children and young people and those who work with them www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk ;
- *Pushing Up Daisies*: Todmorden-based volunteer organisation who run an annual festival in May to have conversations about dying www.pushingupdaisies.org
- *Invictus Wellbeing* are a Calderdale based Community Interest Company who aim to deliver wellbeing and support services to students of all ages: <http://www.invictuswellbeing.com/>;
- *Childline*: a place where young people can talk confidentially about any issues they are dealing with www.childline.org.uk
- *Hello me, it's you*: a project for 17-24 year olds to write a letter to their 16 year old self about mental health problems www.hellomeitsyou.weebly.com;
- *London Friend*: LGB&T Support and Wellbeing www.londonfriend.org.uk;

- *Marie Curie* www.mariecurie.org.uk;
- *Miscarriage Association*: support for people affected by miscarriage www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk;
- *The Mix*: free confidential help for young people under 25 www.themix.org.uk;
- *Much Loved*: Online Memorial Garden www.muchloved.com;
- *Road Peace*: support for people bereaved by road deaths www.roadpeace.org;
- *SADS UK* provide info and support for sudden arrhythmic death syndrome: cardiac death in young to middle aged persons www.sadsuk.org.uk;
- *Self-Harm UK*: Support for people dealing with and recovering from self-harm www.selfharm.co.uk;
- *Victim Support*: support for people affected by crime www.victimsupport.org.uk;
- *Virtual Memorial Garden*: online Memorial Garden www.virtualmemorialgarden.net;
- *What's Your Grief?* promotes grief education, exploration, and expression in both practical and creative ways www.whatsyourgrief.com;
- *Young Minds*: improving the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people www.youngminds.org.uk.

3. LEARNING FROM RECENT HEADTEACHER EXPERIENCES

The following are some key learning points outlined by local headteachers who have had to manage recent responses to a pupil death:

- Each situation is unique and requires a bespoke response. The prior experience of the head and other leaders, in particular safeguarding leads, is key in ensuring rational and effective decisions are taken, priority and secondary action undertaken in the right order and sensitive, accurate information is communicated in a timely fashion. Where heads are dealing with things for the first time, the support of heads' associations, for example CASH, CPHA, is vital. The Director of Adults and Children's Services at the Local Authority should also be notified. This should happen as soon as possible, and at any time using Calderdale's emergency response number (Calderdale Emergency Duty Team): 01422 288000. Getting hold of the facts rather than speculation can be difficult but is vital.
- The availability of a skilled safeguarding team in full for immediate deployment was seen as key to the effective management of complex situations, especially where there is press interest and significant social media traffic and speculation. Careful communication is vital and the flow of information needs to be underpinned by strong safeguarding processes.
- Where the police have been involved in a response, the attentive and skilled Police Family Liaison Team have been seen as invaluable in supporting a school's handling of a response, helping manage press intrusion, agreeing press statements and helping with issues arising in social media.
- The family's wishes must be respected and adhered to in every element of the response, from funeral attendance to the nature of remembrance and condolence activities in school or the community. Consultation with the pupils' friends is also recommended.
- Having one person only as the family liaison is key.
- Have one person in charge of all practical logistics is also key. This needs to be extensively micro-managed in fine detail, for example if family members are attending a school memorial service,

where will they go at arrival, who will supervise and greet, how will you manage safeguarding, how will they access catering, toilets etc., what if it is raining, disabled access?

- Counselling for children may need to be in groups or 1:1 and should not neglect children at the pupil's former school.
- The approach to supporting pupils requires constant re-examination. Some pupils are able to move on more rapidly than others so the responses with different groups need continuous filtering.
- Counselling should be offered for staff as well as pupils. Some children move on quicker than some adults.
- Ensure pupils are able to opt in or out of any part of the process.
- Continue with support for as long as it is needed.
- The values of the school can be used effectively to help structure the nature of remembrance assemblies.
- Ideally a member of staff should be trained to support with bereavements.
 - *Winston's Wish* (see above) offer a CPD course split over three days which has been recommended by a local school: <https://www.winstonswish.org/supporting-you/professionals-and-training/>;
 - *One Education* offer a one day conference on Bereavement and Loss in Manchester – next is 19 June 2018 <https://www.oneeducation.co.uk/events/cpd/educational-psychology/bereavement-loss-19-june-2018/>;
 - Schools can consider becoming a 'Rainbows School - guiding children and young people through life's storms' (<http://www.rainbowsgb.org/>).
- Have a selection of bereavements books in school, such as *Winston's Wish's* activity book *Muddles Puddles and Sunshine* (<https://shop.winstonswish.org/products/muddles-puddles-and-sunshine>), and Mel Maxwell's *The Coat I Wear* which helps children deal with their grief after the loss of a loved one www.thecoatiwear.com.
- Finally, having a crisis management plan which outlines actions and responsibilities in detail is useful to help ensure nothing is missed in highly emotionally charged situations where leaders, staff and pupils will be upset and fatigued. One school's plan is exemplified below. This is not intended to be a template for a response, but is nonetheless an instructive picture of the sorts of decisions that leaders were making when dealing with a response.

Group	Action	Specific Actions	
SLT	Agree a course of action that will not interfere with any investigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the police involved; SLT member to contact the police to agree a course of action • If not, SLT to meet and discuss a strategy. 	XXX
	Support the investigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange for a room for the police to carry out an investigation in school if necessary 	Conference Room
	Support Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Below 	
	Supporting Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Below 	
	Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Below 	
	Handling the situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will want to grieve. Through the emergency bereavement team arrange times, places and staff • Obtain a book of remembrance and a candle. This should be 	Clear theatre and re-room classes

		<p>placed in the theatre for the first few days so students can pay their respects and sign the book.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange for the student's form to be the first to sign this, followed by any groups the pupil was in, then the rest of the year group, then school. 	
Students	Dealing with the news of the incident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify any siblings/cousins and inform them of what will happen before informing the rest of school. • Keep the facts basic and impersonal around the incident. Do not give too much detail however be truthful and deal with the facts. 	
	Informing the students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timing: Most suitable timing is at the end of the day as per DfE guidance. Gather the whole year group together before the final bell. Timing is everything. The pupils will listen intently until you tell them that the pupil has died. Then they stop hearing. If the pupil has died as the result of an accident you may want to ask them not to speculate about the causes of the accident and not to spread rumours. Getting them to hear this is very difficult. Allow them ten minutes to just be together as a year group. They will need to cry. Expect that some pupils will contact the local press. • Disseminating the information • Guide to media • Social Networking 	
	Support for students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Bereavement Service • In school support through Invictus 	
	First Aid on call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform all first aiders to be on-call to deal with any students 	
Staff	Dealing with the news of the incident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard statement given to staff and students 	Staff briefing
	Informing the Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call staff together who taught the student first. This should be done after discussing the incident with the key people e.g. relatives • Call a staff briefing to inform staff. It should be recognized that the media will try to get information from them and that this should remain a confidential matter and not discussed outside of school. 	
	Support for Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of bereavement services to be managed through XXX 	
Parents	Child's parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The police will be the main contact for parents. 	
	Student Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter to parents via student post, email and letter on the website 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer a drop-in service to support parents as they will have concerns and display an array of emotions dependent on the circumstances of the child's death. 	
Media	Headteacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head teacher should contact the LA as soon as possible, especially if at all unclear about procedures for dealing with the media. Note: the LA may advise the school not to speak to the media and direct all enquiries to an appointed LA officer. 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Headteacher or nominated SLT should act as press officer 	Headteacher
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The press and local TV channels may contact the parents and they together with the press may speculate about the cause of death. This is a very hard thing to deal with, especially if a TV crew has filmed this speculation by distraught parents. 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may find you have no time to prepare interviews and certainly no time to filter statements through the Director of 	

		Education even if the LA wants you to do this.	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep expressing your sympathy for the parents so that editors will find it hard to cut this part of your statement. 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there is a postmortem, this may happen very quickly, possibly within 24 hours of the death. 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure you are advised of the results of any postmortem as soon as possible. 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your LA may want to hold onto this information, but you will need it. The best way to stop media speculation is to give them facts. 	