

## SEEKING EXTRA SUPPORT

Initially it is unlikely that a child or young person will need to have professional help and can be supported by those already around them. However if things don't seem to improve consider contacting your GP or one of the many support lines available.

See the back page for a list of some of these numbers.

## SUPPORT LINES

### Child Bereavement UK

Offers support to families and educates professionals when a baby or child of any age dies or is dying, or when a child is facing bereavement.

9am—5pm Monday to Friday.

0800 028 8840

### Hope Again

Supports young people living after loss. Free helpline. Monday to Friday 9.30am to 5pm.

0808 808 1677

### Winston's Wish

Supports young people after the death of a parent or sibling.

0808 802 0021

### The Dove Service

Counselling service to those living in the Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire area. They see children from age 4 upwards.

Request an information pack on-line or telephone the office on: 01782 683155 (see website for opening hours).

[www.thedoveservice.org](http://www.thedoveservice.org)

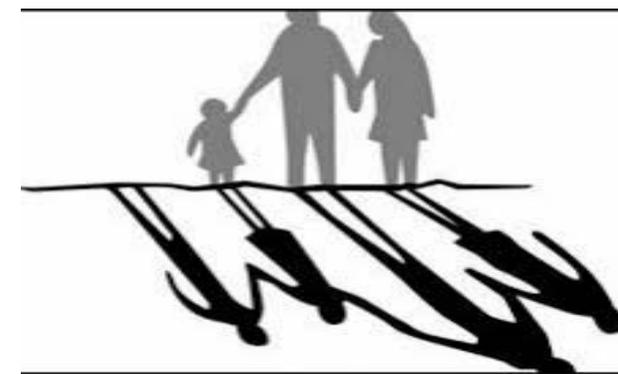
All numbers were correct at time of publishing. Some number may incur a charge.

**NHS**

University Hospitals  
of North Midlands  
NHS Trust

## BEREAVEMENT IN CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

A guide to bereavement and  
finding the help and support  
you need



Please note the information provided in this leaflet is for guidance only and not designed to diagnose a specific condition. Contact your GP if you are concerned about any of your symptoms.

## **GRIEF**

Children and young people experience grief just as deeply as adults. They often grieve by copying what the adults around them do. However they may display grief by behaving in a variety of different ways.

Younger children in particular have more of a tendency to “act out” as they struggle to use words to explain how they are feeling.

Children also have a tendency to jump between different behaviours and emotions. One moment they may be inconsolable but then the next be playing as if nothing has happened. Teenagers behave in this way too however they tend to have longer periods of one behaviour or another. They may try to keep themselves busy by going out a lot or they may become more isolated and withdraw from things they used to enjoy.

## **IS GRIEF NORMAL?**

Grief is a normal reaction to the loss of someone/something that means a lot to us. However it can lead to symptoms of low mood and anxiety which may need further support if they do not improve.

## **LOSING A SIBLING**

When losing a sibling the remaining child/ children may feel left out as all the emotions shown by those around them are for the child that has died. They can be filled with sadness but then also experience some relief that parents/carers may have sometime for them. This can leave them feeling bad and guilty for having these thoughts.

They could also question why their sibling died rather than them and be left thinking that maybe they will be next.

## **SUDDEN OR EXPECTED DEATH**

When someone dies suddenly there is no chance to say goodbye. The child may be left with feelings of frustration about the things that they had planned and now can't do or never had the opportunity to say. This doesn't mean that an expected death is any easier to cope with especially if the child has not been made aware of how serious the situation is.

## **LOSING A PARENT/CARE GIVER**

The loss of a parent or care giver can be devastating for the child. They may be worried about who will look after them now or have a fear of losing someone else close to them.

Some children feel the need to take on the burden of replacing the parent/care giver even though no-one has suggested that they do so.

## **WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

Each child or young person will react to grief in a different way. They will need reassurance that they are still loved and that someone still cares for them. It can be an exhausting and tiring time for everyone.

Children are very in tune with the things that are going on around them so it is important to have honest conversations with a child or young person especially if it is known that someone will pass away soon, the conversation will be hard but the child will feel better for being included instead of feeling uncertain and confused. If they don't know what is happening it could lead them to believe that they have done something wrong.

There are things you can do with the child to help them. For example you could suggest that they draw a picture, write a poem or song about the person, maybe write a letter to the person who has died expressing their feelings. You could make a memory box or book with them and fill this with pictures or objects that remind them of the person who died.

After someone has died things will be different. However with the passing of time it is possible to work through feelings of grief and become more able to face the future.