

Loss and Bereavement Covid-19 For Early Years Settings

1. Prior to the Return
2. The First Few Weeks
3. In the Long Term

Many thanks to the schools and settings whose contributions form the FAQ structure of the Loss and Bereavement pack.



For more details contact your STLS district team,

SEN EY, KEPS, TEP or Beck Ferrari.

With thanks to all the above for their collaboration on this project.

Loss and Bereavement

1. Prior to return

What can your Early Years Setting do to support bereaved young children?

How can I plan and prepare for any bereaved young children to return to my setting?

- Check your Bereavement policy is up to date and reflects COVID-19 if appropriate to do so (see Small Steps document or Child Bereavement UK for sample policies if your setting does not yet have one).
- Download the Small Steps document to share with any EY and Key stage 1 staff
- Make a “bereavement box” so you have resources to hand to support a bereaved child (See Small Steps and below)
- Collate resources available e.g. information leaflets for staff, parent/carers, books for staff and workbooks or story books for children. (See booklist)
- Ensure you are aware of any children where bereavement has occurred within the family. Gently seek to find out about the circumstances of the death and what the child knows about it. Consider any cultural implications to understanding and supporting the family’s grief (eg. background, religion).
- Consider accessing staff training to help build understanding and confidence. (See Training below)
- Provide supervision for staff who may be experiencing their own anxieties, as well as supporting children, at this time.
- Consider setting up a bereavement support group within districts/ collaborations

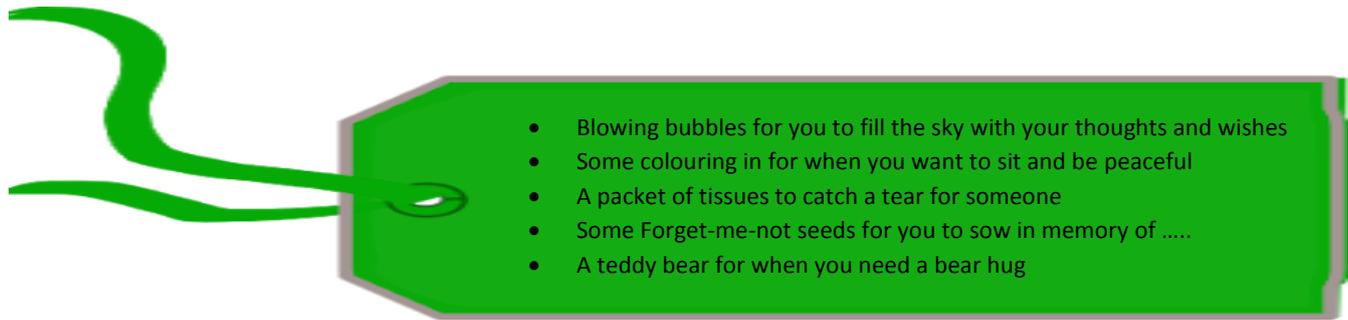
What can I say or do to support one of my young children who has been grieving through the lockdown period?

Checking in with families by phone can remind them that you are there and help you keep liaison going prior to return. Grieving through the lockdown has the potential to have made things more challenging for bereaved families as they have had to manage without much of their support network and with far less to distract them. (To find out more see Bereaved Family Voices below)

What can I say or do to support a newly bereaved child where someone has died during the Coronavirus pandemic?

It can be really helpful for families to know you are thinking of them and can make a big difference to know that your setting genuinely care and are interested in supporting their child. You could send a card and follow up with a telephone call. *“I am so sad to hear about How are you all managing at the moment? Is there anything school can do at this stage to support your child? How are you and your child feeling about returning to school?”*

You might want to send a small 'comfort package' with some items to support the child. It might include:



What plans do I need to make for a bereaved young child to return to my setting?

Discuss with the family about the child's return to pre-school letting them know that staff will be made aware of their bereavement. Find out whether they would like their child's peer group to be told in advance. Ask if there is anything that they or their child are concerned about. Outline any support the setting may be able to offer- remember to check with the pupil what they would like. Signpost the family to support organisations.

For many children, pre-school is a place of normality and routine but right now there are additional challenges in making it feel normal. Bereaved children would benefit from being with familiar staff and peers, although with social bubbles being proposed as settings reopen, this may be more difficult to achieve.

What support could I set up for a grieving child?

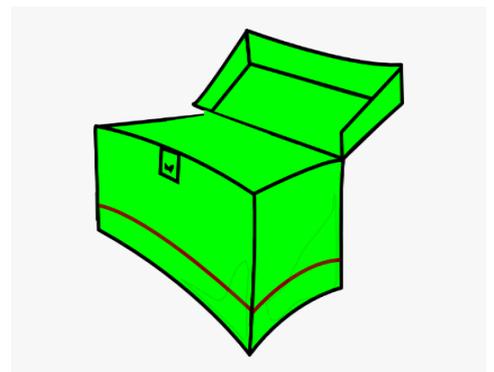
Support can be set up but needs to be adapted to the wishes of the returning child. When so much around a child has changed it can be hard if others set out to control what they should do with their grief. Young children might want to use their pre-school time just to feel normal and be away from grieving adults. You might wish to consider having named staff (not just one) on hand to provide support. Remember that your ideal member of staff for such a role (warm, caring and empathic) may not be the same as the child's. Prepare to adapt!

Decide on spaces that could be used if a child wishes to have some quiet time - both indoors and outdoors within safety parameters. Agree these with the child on return. Would they like anything available in these places to support them?

Bereavement Box (for more details see Small Steps)

Resources might include:

- A blank photo frame for decorating (card, foam, wood)
- Puppets to encourage conversation
- Water balloons to fill and burst outside to let go of feelings
- Wooden spoons with wool and fabric offcuts to make two sided feelings faces
- Foam hearts for decorating with ribbon to hang
- Beads to thread to make a coping bracelet with each bead representing a key person for support
- Feathers and voile bags with feathers representing memories
- Mindful colouring activities
- Jar, salt, chalk etc for a memory jar



What external support will be available to bereaved children and their families?

Most children with good support from their family, friends and school or setting will adjust and manage their grief. For young children it can be overwhelming if they are surrounded by new adults and professionals to ‘work on’ their grief. Support for young children is best when it is from familiar adults and at times when the child wants it rather than for a scheduled appointment/session. Staff and families may however need help to offer this support. A few may have more difficulties with their grieving journey because of challenges within the home environment, the traumatic nature of the death and factors that make it difficult for the child to make sense of the death. These children may require more specialist therapeutic support on top of that provided by the setting. Settings should get guidance from STLS and bereavement organisations.

Where can I learn more about supporting bereaved children?

There are many excellent resources to develop staff understanding about child bereavement and to provide families with helpful information. A good place to start is:

Child Bereavement UK	Download their Schools Information pack https://www.childbereavementuk.org/primary-schools-supporting-bereaved-children Additional guidance about COVID-19 and video clips https://www.childbereavementuk.org/coronavirus-supporting-pupils
Winston’s Wish	Guidance about supporting pupils and coronavirus https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus/
Grief Encounter	https://www.griefencounter.org.uk/serviceupdate/
Kent Educational Psychology Service	Resources and support for schools Schools can order the Grief and Loss Resource available on KELSI https://www.theeducationpeople.org/products/partner-providers/grief-loss-and-crisis-support/
Small Steps – Supporting Bereaved Young Children in Early Years settings	Download a free copy of Small Steps from Threads of Success website https://www.threadsofsuccess.co.uk/small-steps-1 Small Steps is a support guide for pre-school settings to help a child with their first steps in their grieving journey
Slide Away	Toolkit for schools http://www.slideaway.org/Portals/0/Documents/Toolkit-factsheets-pt2.pdf
Beck Ferrari	Contact for consultation or training beck.ferrari@gmail.com

What training can staff access in supporting bereaved children?

The Education People Free Webinar for Early Years: <i>Bereavement and Loss in Covid 19 for Early Years setting</i> facilitated by Beck Ferrari	Friday 22 May 2020 https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7760308395783045391 Further dates tba
Kent Educational Psychology Service Free Webinars <i>Grief and Loss in Schools</i>	Details to follow via KELSI and LIFT
Beck Ferrari Bespoke bereavement webinar training for schools and settings	Various dates term 6 and term 1 Contact: beck.ferrari@gmail.com

What books could I read to help me understand children's grief and what my setting can do?

For adults:

The Little Book of Bereavement for Schools	Ian Gilbert	A personal account of how schools tried to support one family after the death of their mother, containing 'must know' advice and structured into fifteen points for schools to follow.
A Child's Grief	Winston's Wish	An accessible guidebook for parents and professionals.
Grief in Young Children: A handbook for adults	Atle Dyregrov	An excellent handbook providing advice and strategies for understanding and supporting a grieving young child.

What books could I share with bereaved young children?

For children:

Information and Workbooks

When Someone Dies (Questions and Feelings About)	Dawn Hewitt	A picture book featuring simple language to explain questions about death for young children.
What does Dead mean?	Caroline Jay and Jenni Thomas	A simple book with questions and answers for young children. Also ideal to help adults in knowing how to answer the many questions young children may pose.
Someone I know has Died	Child Bereavement UK	A workbook for young children who want to remember someone who has died (Key Stage 1) Available from: www.childbereavementuk.org
Remembering	Dianne Leutner and Daniel Postgate	An awarding winning book prompting children to explore and record their memories of a special person after they have died.
Saying Goodbye	Dr Susie Willis	Written specifically to support children bereaved by Covid 19 PDF: https://adobe.ly/3aphMF7 Animation : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SnIYOmeAZE

Story books about Grief

Always & Forever	Alan Durrant	A story about grieving animal friends and their memories.
A Place in my Heart	Annette Aubrey	A helpful story about a little boy trying to understand his feelings after his Grandad has died.
The Memory Box	Joanna Rowland	With beautiful illustrations this story follows a young girl making a memory box to help her explore two key questions about grief; will I forget my loved one? What do I do with my feelings?
Sad Book	Michael Rosen	A fantastic book exploring the feelings of sadness when someone is bereaved.
Wherever you are my Love will Find You	Nancy Tillman	A beautiful book of reassurance for children that they will always be loved. Not written for bereaved families but very useful as a message that love carries on and will always find you!

Where can I signpost families to for bereavement support?

CRUSE Bereavement Care	Support, advice and information for bereaved adults and children including free access to trained listeners
The Good Grief Trust	COVID-19 Bereavement Helpline and website with advice for families
Child Bereavement UK	Website and Helpline to support families and young people.
The Compassionate Friends	A peer support group formed by and for parents whose children have died, irrespective of the child's age at death and the cause of death.

Holding On, Letting Go	A bereavement support charity holding weekends for children and young people with support for parents and carers across Kent.
Slide Away	A bereavement support charity holding workshops for school aged children in West Kent.

For details on further books and organisations that offer bereavement support contact Beck Ferrari

What has it been like for bereaved families through lockdown?

Bereaved family voices:

Lockdown has been hard because I can't go to school anymore and school was helping me a lot. Primary aged girl

I don't like being at home all the time. I miss my friend. He understands how I feel. Primary aged boy

Well, being trapped inside is obviously making us all lonely, but when you've lost someone who means a lot to you, you already feel lonely. So the added isolation just repeats in your head; how wrong things are and pushes in how different life is without them, especially when you lived with them. It makes you feel independent, but the wrong type of independent, when you have to face all your fears alone because you know they weren't meant to leave and they didn't want to, but they did so you fear everyone else will too. Teenage girl

Lockdown has just made it hard, really tough, really tough. It's just me and my mind with nothing to take my mind off it, nothing to keep me busy. Teenage boy

His grandad died of COVID-19. I have told my son he died but not how. I don't want to say about the virus yet because I think that will make him more scared of getting it too. Parent

There have been negatives and positives with lockdown. The negative; that it's hit quicker, you're isolated just being on your own. It's just the realisation that it's just us now. The positive is that we have all spent time together and have had to just get on with it. It feels like more of a rollercoaster ride. Parent

This situation has made it all so, so hard. I have felt so alone just trying to look after my son. And all can do is ring people if I'm struggling, it's not the same. My grief is with me all day and then all night. Nothing to break it up. Parent

For more details contact your STLS district team, SEN EY, KEPS, TEP or Beck Ferrari.



With thanks to all the above for their collaboration on this project.

Loss and Bereavement in Early Years

2. The First Few Weeks

Acknowledging loss in our Early Years settings

What can we do to support children's feeling of loss?

As a staff group, have a discussion (virtually) where you consider the losses that have been experienced by children, families and the staff team. Explore the losses that you are aware of from the communication you have had with families and staff as well as other potential losses not yet shared. During the pandemic we have all experienced some loss of stability and certainty, but many will have experienced much more. Building awareness of losses will help us to be mindful of both child and staff emotional states.

How can I help our community acknowledge the losses that have been experienced?

Use circle times, and other smaller group work to explore feelings of loss. It can be helpful to draw on the depth of the emotions (*How big is that feeling?*) as well as the range of emotions (*What feelings have you felt?*) See the Universal strand for Early Years lesson plans and activities to support emotional wellbeing.

How do we share news of/talk about the death of a member of staff/school community?

See guidance in Small Steps (download from <https://www.threadsofsuccess.co.uk/small-steps-1>) or "Managing Bereavement: A guide for schools by Child Bereavement UK" page 7 section 3 – Breaking Sad News – a death in the school community. This resource provides template letters in the appendices too.

How can the community acknowledge the death of a member of staff or child?

Where possible, hold a goodbye service for public remembrance of the death and to help recognise the significance of the loss. If this is difficult to achieve for some time due to social distancing protocols, then plan activities that everyone in the community can contribute to whether or not they are attending your setting right now. (Child Bereavement UK – Remembering: Collaborative Projects for the School community

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=7c952b41-2a99-443c-827d-25a739301a25>), for example a memory book; pages could be emailed in by children/families and collated at the end as a keepsake for the whole community.

For bereaved pupils

How can I understand what grief has been like for bereaved children?

It is unwise to measure children's grief against a perceived value of the relationship and thus create a scale of loss. It can however be helpful to consider the particular challenges children face for different bereavements. In Kent there are an estimated 5750 school pupils who are parentally bereaved (no such statistics are available for pre-school children. Such a loss is likely to change their lives fundamentally and trigger a lifelong grieving journey. When a child experiences the death of a sibling, they not only face their own very painful grief but can be heavily impacted by the grief of their parents.

Although death from COVID-19 is very sadly possible at any age, the statistics show us that for those in their older years the death rate is significantly higher. It is more likely that your pupils will have been bereaved of an older family member, in particular, a grandparent or great grandparent. Recognising the significance of this is vital. Their grandparent may have been their childcare, their routine and stability. The relationship one of warmth and security, where young people had found unconditional love without the complications and tensions of parenting.

Of course, not all children experience the positive benefit of a grandparent in their life. It is however quite likely that this might be the first death of a family member they have experienced. Helping them understand and learn to grieve is therefore important. As well as trying to manage their own feelings, a child or young person may have to face the very real emotions of their parent. The legacy

of that most tangible grief may well last for weeks, months and years and the impact on family life be felt deeply.

The death of a pet can also trigger real pain and loss. For a child, their pet may have been their close companion who provided unconditional comfort. Children whose pet died during lockdown may not have had the opportunity to go to the vet with their animal and take part in goodbye.

What should I look out for in terms of children's grief?

It is worth remembering that although there are common emotions, child grief may look very different from adult grief. Some young children will externalise, being open and honest about their grief and some will internalise masking their grief, with changes being very subtle - this does not mean they are not grieving. Their responses can happen at different times, in different stages. There is often a delay. We might however see:

- difficulty regulating emotions and thoughts → anxiety (clingy behaviour), sadness and longing, anger/acting out, guilt/shame.
- restless, agitated, searching behaviour that is seemingly purposeless → trouble concentrating, hopelessness/despair
- disrupted physiological processes, e.g. immune system, hormonal system, cardiovascular functioning, sleep regulation → sleep difficulties, physical complaints, change in appetite
- cognitive challenges to work out and make sense of someone's death. Whilst it is not the job of a setting to inform a child about how or why someone died, staff maybe an important part of helping a child make sense of the information given to them. With the current Coronavirus circumstances settings will want to seek guidance in how to explain COVID-19 to children (see below).
- struggle to engage in learning, concentrating and socialising.
- some children may be in denial or 'grab the limelight' – allow/accept this behaviour in the short term.
- Some regression to more infantile behaviour.

Children's understanding of death by age. (Remember that not all children develop in line with their chronological age).

Age 0-2	Aware of the absence of person they were attached to. Seek presence of person who has died. No understanding that death is permanent.
Age 2-4	Concrete thinking. Idea that death exists but no understanding of finality. 'Magical thinking' – may think they caused the death or that they can bring the dead person back to life.
Age 5-9	Understand that death is irreversible. More awareness of mortality. May think of death as something scary or spooky. Curious about death and may appear insensitive as they try to make sense of the death. May present physical symptoms of loss and stress (somatic symptoms) – e.g. tummy ache and sleeping difficulties
Age 9-12	Understand finality of death and own mortality. More able to understand death as both concrete and abstract. May make them feel different from peers at time when they want to be 'normal.'
Adolescents	Grieve in similar way to adults, but less able to process powerful emotions. Question meaning of life and bereavement.

What should I say to a bereaved young child as they return to preschool?

Saying something is better than saying nothing. Acknowledging the death directly with the child is key; when we say, *I'm so sad to hear that Daddy died*, we open the door of communication to the child and remove the responsibility from them to have to bring the subject up. We don't have to

use 'clever' or wise words, just acknowledge that it is very difficult. *I'm going to check in with you each day and you can tell me if you want to talk to me.* Children will usually let you know by their response if they wish to continue the conversation. After initiating conversation, we do well by simply listening and thanking the child for telling us rather than feeling that we need to say the 'right' thing.

What language should we use to communicate about death?

A lot of language around death is ambiguous and metaphorical so for children this leaves the potential for misunderstanding. The only word that means dead is dead. It can feel uncomfortable as an adult to use such direct language with children, but our tone and expression will convey sensitivity. Children need language that is clear and unambiguous and in line with their cognitive development to help them understand what death is: *When we die our hearts stop beating and our bodies don't work anymore.* They may need further help differentiating death from sleep. *Death isn't the same as sleep because when you're sleeping you are still breathing and your heart is still beating so you will wake up again.* A further step is understanding that death is permanent and irreversible *When someone has died their body can't come back to life anymore.*

Where the death has been from COVID 19, it is important to check in with the family to understand what the child has been told. The family may welcome some support in explaining what this means to their child: *It was very sad Grandad caught the virus/COVID-19. The doctors tried very, very hard to make Grandad better, but the virus was too strong and it stopped Grandad's heart from working so he died.*

Should I talk about heaven?

Finding out from the family about their beliefs is important, as our role is to support them and not introduce new ideas. Where the idea of heaven has been introduced to a child, we can then follow this up. Children may ask about what heaven is like- it is okay to say that we don't know as we haven't been there. *Some people believe that heaven is what do you think?*

How can I support a bereaved child who appears upset and tearful at pre-school?

One of the toughest parts of supporting a bereaved child can be for staff to learn to tolerate children's sadness and not to be scared of their grief. It is their grief that has made them upset, not us. It can be helpful to:

- share our sadness and tears with children.
- support crying, join in yearning.
- it is natural to want to hold, cuddle, touch children but with social distancing measures in place this can be difficult. Using duplicate teddy bears that the child and adult each hug to share the hug through the bear or providing the child time with the school dog can be helpful.
- review pleasant and difficult memories of the dead person.
- together make a memory book of photos captioned by the child.
- encourage the child to carrying a comfort object such as a small piece of warm furry blanket can be an aid for getting through difficult moments.
- use resources in the Bereavement Box (See Prior to Return section for ideas)

Most EY staff are not trained counsellors. What will they do if their support opens up a 'can of worms'? Who can they ask?

Grief is a normal response to the loss of someone significant and not a 'can of worms.' Yes, there may be times when a child becomes outwardly emotional or distressed. This is a normal part of them processing their pain. We don't need to be a trained counsellor to be a safe person for a child to express their feelings. Being a caring human being is enough. When our responses are empathetic, they will help contain the child from feeling overwhelmed e.g. *I can see that it's really*

hard for you right now. That's okay if your tears come. Shall we sit here quietly? Do you want to tell me about your tears?

If our responses are from a place of fear or discomfort with the child's emotions e.g. *Don't get upset? Go outside and calm yourself down*, then they may give the child message that we cannot cope with their grief.

If we are worried about a child's level of distress or other grieving behaviours, then we should share this with other staff involved and check in with the family. We need a fuller picture to help us understand how the child is. If the shared information leaves us with concerns then we can access guidance from bereavement organisations, STLS, EY team or Beck Ferrari.

How can I support a bereaved young child who is very private and withdrawn about their grief?

Respect their privacy, they may want the normality and security of your setting away from a home of grieving adults. However, we can still let them know we've noticed them and remember what they are going through. A simple, *It's good to see you* or *Thank you for working hard /helping me* can help children not feel invisible even when they want to remain more private. Validate all feelings as legitimate and painful. Use books and stories to show how others coped with death and encourage them to share their feelings indirectly through the characters. Reading fairy tales where a child conquers adversity is a way to help restore meaning and hope. And remember that *Silence is Golden*. Sometimes there are no words that bring enough comfort to take away the pain. Your presence can sometimes say what words cannot.

How can I support a bereaved young child who is presenting with challenging behaviour at school?

Accept anger, understanding that it is misplaced grief. Reassure that being angry is OK. It will help children to have boundaries in place, but empathy comes first. Reassure that hurting is part of grieving and eventually will subside. Find safe physical outlets for children's anger, for example they can punch a pillow as a focus for their anger. Put aside adult activities when possible to emphasise the value of conversations about guilty or angry feelings. Encourage drawing, writing, and playing out feelings.

What happens if a child refuses to return to setting in fear they or a family member might die?

Fear of separation and fear of death are common and understandable responses for bereaved children. In the Coronavirus pandemic, levels of anxiety are likely to be heightened again with increased attention on death in the media as well as risks of contagion.

- Have open dialogue with parent/carers to acknowledge and validate such fears.
- Understand how parents themselves feel about this as their own anxieties might contribute to their child's concerns.
- Be open and honest about how your setting are putting into practice all safety requirements.
- Prepare to adapt usual expectations about attendance as children might benefit from shorter periods of attendance and increased support as they learn to manage their fear.
- Refer to child development stages and their understanding of death.
- Refer to the **Anxiety** strand of the working group for more information.

Loss and Bereavement in Early Years

3. In the Long term

How can we respond in the long term to loss in our EY community?

Showing we remember losses in our community for the long term sends a clear message that each member of the community is valued; and that they would be valued if something happened to them. Initial responses to loss in COVID-19 have had to be constructed within the guidelines about keeping people safe. Sometime in the future we hope that our responses will not have to consider social distancing.

naming a room
memorial award
each planting a daffodil
tree
wildlife garden
mosaic mural
garden
memorial area
naming a building
memorial service

Discuss ideas with the bereaved family, they may wish to take a role in planning or in attending something. Some families may be more private and would rather be sent a photo of what you made/did. Offer children and staff the opportunity to get involved too, this may be both empowering and healing for their grief.

Look to make links with other settings in your district where they have experienced loss in their community. Shared experience, ideas and support for staff and even families can be useful.

How long we can expect each stage of grieving to last for?

The idea of there being linear, one-way stages of grief has largely been dismissed. Each grieving journey is individual, and people may travel through different 'stages' (or 'tasks') in a bidirectional manner, revisiting feelings and darker periods of grief. It can be more helpful to think of tasks of grief and look to children managing and adjusting to a life without the significant person. For example, adjusting to changes in simple things, such as who locks the door at night. This can involve reinventing roles which can evoke feelings of helplessness and be difficult to manage. Children will revisit their grief as they reach different stages of development and different milestones. It is still important and significant, even when many years have passed.

How can we let bereaved children know we haven't forgotten their grief?

Keeping the communication going will allow us to check in with a child and show them we are keeping them in mind. This might be particularly helpful when changes, transitions, anniversaries are ahead. Be mindful of triggers; Coronavirus has been the main focus of life for society, when this begins to dissipate the child may be glad that the attention has shifted, they may also be worried that their loss will be forgotten.

Other causes of death, particularly cancer appear in charity or fundraising appeals as well as TV programmes and each mention may be a trigger a wave of grief for a bereaved child.

How can we support transition on to school?

Transition within our setting:

Information about a child's bereavement would be kept within their EY file and this might include important dates/anniversaries. It can be helpful for settings to think about manageable ways to share this with key staff e.g. new keyworkers or if the child transitions to different groups within your setting. Dates could be held by a member of the staff and then reminders shared with as dates are nearing. Ongoing communication with the family can be valuable as you can ask the families to inform you (and give you reminders!) of any difficult dates.

Transition to school:

Ensure bereavement is noted on transition documents when children are transferring to school. Find an opportunity to liaise directly with the new school to make them aware. It can be hard for a new school to open the door of communication so facilitate this to happen if possible.

Also encourage the parent/carers to inform the new school in person. Ensure the child is told that their new school know about what happened to, so that they don't feel responsible to have to tell someone. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to send a card (e.g. to the child's home address) on a key date that has been extremely difficult, the year they transition. The aim of this would be to reassure the child that they have not been forgotten, whilst they settle into their new setting. It will be important to communicate that a lack of cards in future years does not mean the child is forgotten.

How should we support times in the day, timetable or curriculum areas that are difficult for grieving children?

Children struggling with anxiety might find separating from parents or carers on arrival difficult but there may also be other times which are tricky; this will depend on the individual child. For some playtime is a welcome respite, for others get engrossed in a story is a distraction. Observe to see whether there is a pattern of times that they are finding harder.

Curriculum areas, difficult dates, events, even charity fundraising can present challenges for grieving children and families. When we prepare children for something potentially difficult, we show them that we have them in mind and can work out together how best to manage the situation. We also give them the opportunity to contribute to something that is very relevant to them. There are many ideas for supporting children e.g. Mothers' Day or on anniversaries. See Child Bereavement UK <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/news/learn-how-to-makeformum-this-mothers-day>

Should a bereaved child be added to the SEN register?

Being bereaved is not a special need and grief is a normal response to the death of someone significant. Most children adjust and with support learn to manage their grief. For some bereaved children, the death may impact more significantly on their social, emotional or mental health. Where the child then needs to access additional support for this in line with your settings SEN policy they may be placed on the SEN register for their SEMH needs.

What should I do if I'm still worried?

We will often feel worried about grieving children. It can be upsetting to be around a grieving child, or to even imagine what they have been through. Most children with good support from their family and school will learn to manage. They will adjust and, although they will periodically revisit their feelings, will be able to grow around their grief. For some, when the death was traumatic (in the child's eyes), the support structure around the child is fragile or the child has particular needs which make processing and adjustment hard, there is risk of poorer bereavement outcomes. There may also be concerns that the child is experiencing ongoing guilt or blame cognitions which are interfering

with their ability to function in day to day tasks many years after the experienced loss. Sharing our concerns with both family members and EY staff can help us get the fuller picture. We may then wish to raise concerns with STLS, KEPS or other bereavement organisations.

Grief is not a mental health problem itself, but where a child struggles to adjust it can trigger mental health difficulties. These concerns can be discussed with your NELFT CYPMHS team to consider referral for psychological support.

I am worried about a staff member's ability to cope. How do we support staff who are bereaved?

It can be difficult to support a bereaved child as it can weigh heavy on our emotions. If you are also managing your own grief this may feel additionally hard. For more details on self-care and support see working group pack on supporting staff, and also page 20, Section 10: "Looking after yourself (staff)" in "Managing Bereavement: A guide for schools by Child Bereavement UK"

A final thought...

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

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— except the elephant in the room.

There's an elephant in the room.
We all know it is there.
We are thinking about the elephant as we talk together.

It is constantly on our minds.
For you see, it is a very big elephant.

It has hurt us all.
But we do not talk about the elephant in the room.

Terry Kettering

Although not always easy, ongoing **communication** is essential.

