

**Conclusion** Coping with bereavement can be extremely difficult for young people and if successful the programme would extend the level of care being provided to support young people pre- and post- bereavement, expanding the holistic support that can be offered to families.

**P-7 EMPOWERING SCHOOL STAFF TO ENABLE A BALANCED AND HEALTHY VIEW OF DEATH, DYING AND BEREAVEMENT THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT**

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The hospice received funding from the local Clinical Commissioning Group for a schools' project. The aim was to empower school staff to support pupils in their grief whilst enabling a more balanced and healthier view of death, dying and bereavement.

The Family Support team consulted with local schools and bereaved families ascertaining what would help most. A programme of workshops was developed and rolled out to 16 schools. 159 staff attended over a two-year period. A resource pack was developed and given to each school.

Workshops were evaluated by a snap survey, responses were positive and requests for more training resulted in the hospice developing a formalised training day. The 'One Step Beyond' training was rolled out.

An increase in contact from schools was noted; i.e. The head teacher of a local primary school requested advice following the sudden death of a pupil. She described the distress of the pupils, parents, staff and of the wider community. Within 24 hours the hospice team had visited the head teacher. Support meetings were held with the head teacher on a one-to-one basis, group meetings with the parents and the staff, and the school was supported to provide an afternoon for the children where they were able to say goodbye through a variety of activities.

**Feedback from the head teacher**

*'When you find yourself supporting staff, pupils and parents who are struggling to understand unexpected events, nothing prepares you. I will be forever grateful for your understanding, compassion and practical suggestions.'*

This head teacher has agreed to be filmed talking through these points so that her experience encourages other schools to develop processes enabling staff to support pupils in their grief whilst enabling a more balanced and healthier view of death, dying and bereavement throughout the school environment.

**P-8 BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN – IMPROVING WELL-BEING THROUGH INTERACTION IN CREATIVE ARTS AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES**

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Healing Hearts provides bereavement support for any child or young person aged four – 16 years, who have experienced the diagnosis or death of someone close, regardless of the cause. It might also be the first direct contact with a hospice based service.

The project is resourced by one member of staff, ably assisted by a number of committed volunteers and offers services to approximately fifty children per annum. We have found that

since the introduction of additional activities the demand for service is growing. In addition to individual counselling sessions, there are group activities and workshops, as a therapeutic option to improve the general wellbeing of participants. The project is evaluated in terms of its impact on the health and well-being of children, other family members and carers.

Research has shown that bereaved children/adolescents can become disadvantaged in a range of ways including, but not limited to issues such as risk of family problems, poverty, mental health problems, offending and substance abuse, poor school achievement and poor self-care/self-esteem.

Healing Hearts recognises that pre-bereavement services can be a very useful way to address a child's or adolescent's emotional turmoil and therefore assists with the child's progress in accepting the events and can discourage behavioural and emotional problems in the long-term.

By working in partnership with community arts groups, we have created a platform whereby children have the opportunity to express their emotions through art, creativity, physical activities and social events. This enables interaction and allows children to share their stories with peers who have had similar experiences. Feedback suggests that this also enhances their self-esteem and confidence. Our primary focus is to ensure that children do not become withdrawn and feel comfortable expressing their feelings and discussing their own experience.

**P-9 SATURDAY MORNING PICTURES: A CHILDREN'S TEAM INITIATIVE**

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**Objectives** The idea came from an eight-year old client receiving bereavement support. He knew of our evening films for grown-ups and suggested films on a Saturday morning for children and their families. He thought *Up* would be a good start.

Our community engagement programme now offers a monthly Saturday family event all the year round. We have outdoor activities during Spring and Summer and films in the Autumn and Winter. All family members can participate in the support we give our youngest clients.

**Death literacy** The films screened have themes of loss, ageing, illness and death within stories of love, compassion and care. Films for children do not shirk death and can look at it sensitively with a respectful regard for life. *Up* is a wonderful example.

**Education** It provides a safe environment for families to experience together their feelings and thoughts around loss. Children are always keen to talk about the film afterwards. During a sad part of *Inside Out* a little girl left her comfy chair to have a cuddle with mum seated nearby. She returned to her own seat when the sad moments passed. If empathy is about imagining another person's world from the perspective of your own, then films certainly encourage that regardless of age.

**Outcomes** Attendance and feedback have been extremely encouraging with families suggesting films for future screenings to watch together in a group. One dad said it provided something to do with his young daughter at the weekend.

**Future possibilities** Inspired by our young client, we are now considering asking teenagers at the drop-in service if they would like to watch films together. Experiencing a film in a hospice setting clearly has the potential to help support bereaved people of all ages.