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SUPPORT FOR COPING WITH ISSUES OF LOSS IN SCHOOLS (SCILS)Nikki Archer, Jo Walker *St Giles Hospice, Lichfield, England*

10.1136/bmjspcare-2011-000105.125

Working in collaboration with local schools we developed an innovative programme of support to enable staff and pupils to cope with issues around loss and bereavement.

We aimed to use our experience of working with young people living with grief to enable schools to be better prepared for a death in the school community and to normalise death and dying.

Working in partnership with the schools we proposed a four tier triangle of service provision. The services were funded jointly by community money earmarked for 'vulnerable children' and investment from the hospice.

We provided opportunities for staff, pupils and parents to learn about loss as part of life, through a varied programme of workshops and assemblies.

We delivered training and resources which introduced staff to the bereavement pathway for schools, this equipped staff to respond appropriately to pupils experiencing loss and explored how they could offer proactive bereavement support.

A strategy for identifying vulnerable children who required specialist bereavement support when grief became more complex was developed.

The project was rolled out to 37 schools, representing over 11 000 pupils. Evaluations were received from 316 staff. 100% understood the aims of the bereavement pathway and felt they

had the necessary skills to follow the policy, 80% felt they might require support to work with a bereaved pupil but all understood how to access this. 10 young people were referred for further bereavement support.

This programme, not only met the needs which schools had identified but widened access to hospice care and facilitated community engagement opening a dialogue around death and dying in line with the government's EOLC strategy.

We have been approached by numerous schools who were not part of the original project, and are currently working with them to develop a plan to roll the project throughout our catchment.