

What made this collaboration unique was exploring the intergenerational element, raising awareness of local services and providing a Kirkwood presence in a school setting. This involved a true multidisciplinary team approach, with input across various disciplines within the hospice. A presentation delivered before the performance was designed to be child-friendly, to prompt questions and discussions as well as raise awareness. Children were supported to share their feelings and reactions and chose to share stories of bereavements they had experienced and memories of loved ones. Many wished to be involved in fundraising for Kirkwood.

We are keen to build on the success of the event, through development of a school young ambassador role, exploring ways of linking in with school as community hubs and supporting the theatre company in research for future performances.

**P-243 DRAGONFLY – GROUP WORK WITH GRIEVING FAMILIES**

Rob Nichols, Gemma Purnell. *St Richard's Hospice, Worcester, UK*

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**Background** Dragonfly group is a St Richard's Hospice bereavement group. It supports groups of families over six evenings, two weeks apart. It is run by a small team of staff and volunteers.

Over a number of years, the group has developed an effective way of helping families work through their grief. The core principles are:

- The most basic requirement is to give everyone a safe environment where they can express, articulate, and discuss their grief;
- Initially, allowing children to freely discuss their grief is easier if they are separated from their adult family members;
- Once children feel comfortable expressing their grief, bringing the children and adults together and continuing to provide a safe environment for them to articulate their grief together is beneficial for the whole family;
- Taking time doing too little is better than rushing to do too much.

We have learnt that initially both children and adults are reluctant to discuss or express their grief for fear of upsetting the other. Also, we believe that children learn from others that hiding their grief is a correct response to their feelings, following the death of a loved one.

To address this reluctance the following schedule of evening sessions has developed:

- Week 1 – An initial ice breaker where the families make pizzas together;
- Weeks 2 – 4 Groups are split into child and adult sessions. Exercises around craft and fun are used to allow the children to describe and discuss their feelings. The adults discuss their feeling within their group with some simple exercises being used to encourage discussion;
- Weeks 5 – 6 The families are brought back together, where they express and discuss their feelings of grief together in an environment where they feel safe to do so.

**P-244 MINDCRAFT: EXPLORING, CREATING AND RE-BUILDING INTERNAL WORLDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH LOSS**

Jo Marovitch. *Peace Hospice Care, Watford, UK*

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**Background** Mortality statistics and census information suggests approximately 370 parents die in Hertfordshire annually, leaving approximately 650 dependent children. Peer support is widely held to be an important way of helping children manage bereavement. Mindcraft is a group psychosocial programme (through medium of art making and creative activities, games and group support) to empower and support children through grief/loss with high level of emotional well-being. The group format is also more cost-effective, reaches wider beneficiaries and is good vehicle for involving parents/carers simultaneously.

**Aims**

- To support parents, resourcing them to be available and responsive to their child's grief needs thus minimising the potential long-term health manifestations (Gonclaves Soares, Howe, Matijasevich, Wehrmeister, et al., 2016; Cuervo Tilson, 2018; World Health Organization, 2015);
- To give children the opportunity to express their feelings within an informal group setting, meeting children with similar experiences and networking.

**Method** Four weekly sessions, followed by a 'catch up session' - primary school age group, secondary school age group and parent/carer group. Parents/carers completed pre- and post-programme questionnaires.

**Results** Nineteen parents/carers and children enrolled.

Results from evaluation:

- 73% of parents reported increase in their confidence levels and felt able to support their children more;
- 80% of parents reported feeling supported with the bereavement by attending the workshop;
- 73% of families felt decrease in isolation from attending the workshops.

Quotes:

*'I changed my status on Facebook to 'widow'. Seems like a small thing, but it was a big thing for me and now I have strength to acknowledge my situation.'*

*'P... is on his second week in his own room since my husband died. Just to be able to spread out in your own bed is amazing. The programme has been a major thing for us.'*

**Conclusion** Time-limited sessions can have significant impact on a child's ability to process their grief and lead to positive outcomes. Further programmes are recommended.

**P-245 CARE AFTER CARING: SUPPORTING FAMILY CARERS FACING AND FOLLOWING BEREAVEMENT**

Alison Penny. *National Bereavement Alliance, London, UK*

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This presentation will share findings and good practice case studies from a recent report from the National Bereavement Alliance and Hospice UK, commissioned by NHS England's Commitment to Carers programme.