

THE LEEDS CHARTER FOR BEREAVED CHILDREN



"If I feel upset or need to talk to somebody – she tells me to go and see a teacher who I will talk to about how my day's been and just make sure I'm okay."

B



"I just wanted time to be able to think about it."

E



"I was surprised by what had happened and that remembering special times and occasions about the person who died."

R



"It was scary at first when my mum had cancer - I thought cancer was when you died straight away."

E



"I have my friends to stick up for me."

A



"We had the choice of staying off school at first until we were ready."

V



"Its important to have fun even though someone has died."

E



"It was good to be with other people who knew what I had been through."

M



"Its good to think about the person but if you keep doing that you won't be able to live your life and you will always be thinking about things."

E



"I now understand that I wasn't to blame."

N



"Try to talk it always helps."

T

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

Bereaved children need to receive support from their family, from their school and from important people around them.

EXPRESS FEELINGS AND THOUGHTS

Bereaved children should be helped to find appropriate ways to express all their feelings and thoughts associated with grief, such as sadness, anxiety, confusion, anger and guilt.

REMEMBER THE PERSON WHO HAS DIED

Bereaved children have the right to remember the person who has died for the rest of their lives; sharing special as well as difficult memories.

EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

Bereaved children need and are entitled to receive answers to their questions and information that clearly explains what has happened, why it has happened and what will be happening.

APPROPRIATE RESPONSE FROM SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Bereaved children need understanding and support from their teachers and fellow students without having to ask for it.

VOICE IN IMPORTANT DECISIONS

Bereaved children should be given the choice about their involvement in important decisions that have an impact on their lives such as planning the funeral and remembering anniversaries.

ENJOYMENT

Bereaved children have the right to enjoy their lives even though someone important has died.

MEET OTHERS

Bereaved children benefit from the opportunity to meet other children who have had similar experiences.

ESTABLISHED ROUTINES

Bereaved children should, whenever possible, be able to continue activities and interests so that parts of their lives can still feel 'normal'.

NOT TO BLAME

Bereaved children should be helped to understand that they are not responsible, and not to blame, for the death.

TELL THE STORY

Bereaved children are helped by being encouraged to tell the story of what has happened in a variety of ways. These stories need to be heard by those important people in their lives.

The aim of the bereavement charter is:

- **To raise the profile of childhood bereavement in Leeds.**
- **To increase people's understanding of the needs of children who have been bereaved.**
- **To increase people's awareness and understanding of the effects bereavement in childhood can have on the future development and achievement of that child into adulthood.**
- **To work towards improved support for bereaved children in Leeds both through specialist and non-specialist services.**

Leeds Bereaved Children's Charter arose out of **The Children and Young Peoples Group of Leeds Bereavement Forum** and their recognition that service and support for children who have experienced bereavement is limited and stretched.

We recognise that Leeds would benefit from increased specialist services, but much positive support can be given by those non-specialist people who work with children and young people within familiar contexts. Increasing their confidence and understanding can be vital in supporting young people. Additionally signposting information and support could help practitioners recognise when and where extra advice or support may be needed and found.

This multi-agency Leeds Bereaved Children's Charter hopes to set a base line minimum standard of care and support and which could be used city-wide and across all services dealing with bereaved children and young people in any context.

This would encourage any organisation working with children and young people to sign up to the charter and to receive a package of information as a minimum starting point in raising awareness and skills. We anticipate the possibility of developing this further with training opportunities and guidance.

There is robust research evidence to demonstrate the significant numbers of school age children affected by bereavement and the effect this can have on children's long term emotional health and attainment levels. For anyone experiencing bereavement it is an emotionally turbulent time, and for children and young people the support around them will affect how they develop skills in managing bereavement, and how they manage future losses. There is also evidence to suggest that unresolved grief in childhood can be a contributory factor in adult mental health.

SIGN UP!

In signing up to the charter as an individual you are showing your commitment to these aims. In signing up as an organisation, you can be in a strategic position to influence developments. In both cases you can use the checklist to help plan how to progress these aims in your own setting.

Thank You