

## **Guidance for Parents on How to Support your Bereaved Child from Salford & Tameside EPS**

If your child has been bereaved, it probably means you have been bereaved too. We're so sorry that someone in your family network has died and it is that much harder for this to have happened during the pandemic. When thinking about supporting your child, it's crucial to look after yourself first. So, give some attention to your own wellbeing (see Self-care section below); this will help you support your child better.

### How to talk and listen to children who've been bereaved

Use direct language like 'dead' and 'died', rather than euphemisms like 'passed away'. Be open and honest in talking to your child, at their developmental level. Be aware of not having your child in earshot of adult conversations which might worry or confuse them. Judge from your child how much to talk about the bereavement. Take time to really listen to them, to hear their feelings and thoughts, the things that are difficult for them, the things they miss about the dead person. In terms of questions, Winston's Wish, a national bereavement charity says, if a child is old enough to ask the question, they're old enough to hear the answer.

### What is normal for grieving children

Children can show a wide range of behaviours that may indicate they are grieving, e.g. Crying, irritability, difficulty concentrating, clinginess and anxiety at being alone, worries someone else might die, regression in development, changes in play or behaviour, sleep problems, thinking that the death was in some way their fault. Each child is unique and there is no one way to grieve. One way in which children tend to be different from adults in their grief is that they usually move quickly from one state to another, e.g. they may be crying one minute and then laughing and joking the next. It is normal for children to still be spending time laughing and playing, even if the adults around them are feeling sad. It's ok to show sadness and to cry in front of your child.

### Difficulties around not being able to see the dying person

Some differences around a bereavement through the coronavirus are that it can happen suddenly, so there is little chance to prepare, it is also likely that your child will not be able to be physically with their loved one when they are dying and it's also likely that they'll be apart from those who would usually help support in the aftermath of a death, such as their school teachers. Winston's Wish has a page giving helpful advice in this situation:

[www.winstonswish.org/telling-a-child-someone-died-from-coronavirus](http://www.winstonswish.org/telling-a-child-someone-died-from-coronavirus)

### Guidance around funerals

Usually funerals are an important ritual which help children and adults in their grieving process, with a chance to honour their dead loved one and to say 'goodbye'. Sadly, this may not be possible with the current restrictions. The funeral may still be able to go ahead but be restricted in terms of numbers attending. It is helpful to explain this to your child if this is the case. You may decide to hold a memorial service at a later point when it can be prepared for slowly and children can have input in its planning. Winston's Wish give advice on "How to say goodbye when a funeral isn't possible":

[www.winstonswish.org/telling-a-child-someone-died-from-coronavirus](http://www.winstonswish.org/telling-a-child-someone-died-from-coronavirus)

### Self-care

During the safety talk when flying, we are urged to put on our own oxygen mask before we put on that of our child. Now is a time when you need to fit your own 'oxygen mask' first. This means thinking about how you can best be supported. Make a list of the people in your support network, the ones who help you feel safe. Who from that list can you reach out to connect with at the moment? What activities tend to make you feel secure and safe? Make a plan to do one of these regularly. And what strength or personal quality do you have which you can draw on at this very difficult time to help you get through? By caring for yourself in this way, you will be much more effective in supporting your bereaved child.