

Children's Family Support

Children's Family Support Service offers support for children and young people from age 6 who have a carer or relative affected by cancer or other similar life-limiting illness.

The Children's Family Support Team is a team of staff and volunteers, all of whom have a background working with children and, in addition, have received specific training in listening to and supporting children when a special person in their life has a life-limiting illness or has died.

The stress of life-limiting illnesses or bereavement causes changes in families and children of all ages will sense the feelings of those around them.

The Children's Family Support Worker will see the child in a setting they are comfortable with and each visit lasts approximately one hour. The number of visits and how often are mutually agreed between the support worker and the child and/or parent or carer.

Each child will have different needs. Children may experience a number of different feelings, such as disbelief, shock, anger, anxiety, guilt, fear and sadness. Children often express their feelings in behaviour rather than words. Support workers will offer help in various ways depending on the needs of a child.

How can children be supported:

Children need to be told about illness in words they can understand and in an appropriate manner. Honesty is important. It is always difficult to tell children distressing news, but they quickly pick up on feelings and atmosphere and they may have guessed that something is wrong.



Reassurance

There is often an overwhelming need for understanding and reassurance. It is important for them to know what won't change as well as what will. Reassurance that family members will be there to love and care for them.

Freedom to Express Feeling

Encouraging children to express their feelings does not mean telling them how they feel. Children's anxiety is often displayed in behaviour rather than words, it often helps for children to express their feelings in practical ways, sometimes through play, activities or workbooks.

Involvement

When a member of a family has a life-limiting illness children may wish to help. They have a need to 'do what they can' too and memories of helping may be comforting later.

Memories

Memories are very special. They are unique to each person but ours to recall whenever we choose. Memories are in the mind, but there can be other memories too – ones that we can plan to leave behind when we go. One way of achieving this is to make a Memory Box.



A Memory Box is often a simple box, into the box can be placed any item which you feel will bring special memories to mind.

You can help build memories they will always have. You can sort through photographs, and include small tokens which have a sentimental meaning and value. You can also include cards and letters for the future, or even make an audio or visual records.

The possessions in the box are not family property to be shared with others. They can mourn in their own time and in their own way without necessarily involving others.

You may want to talk through some or all of the above aspects mentioned in this leaflet. If you know a child who you think could benefit from this service, or if you would like to know more information. Please call us on: 01527 889799 and ask to speak to a member of the team.

For more information

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