

Press Release

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Child bereavement charity awarded National Lottery funding to deliver vital grief support across Exeter, Mid and East Devon

Devon charity Balloons provides vital support to bereaved and pre-bereaved children and young people, and it's just been awarded National Lottery funding to continue its important work.

You may be surprised to know that:

- 1 in 29 schoolchildren are bereaved of a parent or sibling – that's one pupil in every class
- 111 children are bereaved of a parent every day
- The incidence of childhood bereavement in youth offenders is ten times higher (41%) than the national average (4%)

With the right support at the right time, bereaved children and young people can become resilient adults.

The three year grant from the Big Lottery Fund will help to fund more of Balloon's work. In 2016, Balloons supported 144 children and young people, and over 400 families. In the first six months of 2017, Balloons has already supported over 100 children and young people.

Grief is a wound that is hard to heal, but it's a pain that proves we are human. Indeed, bereavement is a universal human experience, and the vast majority of us will lose someone we love at some point in our lives.

Bereavement can affect children and young people in many ways and every child will grieve differently. At Balloons, we know that grieving children and young people can withdraw from interacting with others and become isolated, can struggle to communicate their feelings and become anxious and angry. They may become 'clingy' to those they love, and become fearful that other important people in their lives may die. They may not be able to articulate what they are thinking and how they are feeling and their struggles can cause negative changes in their behaviour.

Bereaved children and young people who are not supported to process and manage their grief are vulnerable in many ways. They may have poorer health and educational outcomes, they are more likely to engage in anti-social behaviour and enter the criminal justice system, they may be more prone to depression, anxiety, self-harm and attempted and successful suicide.

Every bereaved child is different, and every bereaved child deserves support. This is where Balloons comes in. Balloons stands alongside grieving children and young people, helping them to find ways to manage their pain, build precious memories and develop coping mechanisms to move forward positively.

With this huge boost from the Big Lottery Fund, from September 2017 to August 2020, Balloons will continue to be able to provide grief support services to children and young people in their area.

Balloons CEO Sara Bennett, said: “We are absolutely delighted to have been awarded National Lottery funding to continue our important work. We see first-hand the difference that our work makes to the lives of bereaved children and young people and their families. We commit to continuing to support bereaved children and young people who would otherwise have nowhere to turn. This money will go a long way to help us to do this, and will support bereaved children and young people to find a way forward at a very distressing time in their lives”.

Service user: “I was referred to Balloons when my Dad took his life. This was a terrible time for me and for my family. I had no one to talk to and I couldn’t talk to Mum because she was too upset. Balloons helped me to find ways of coping. I miss my Dad so much but because I had Balloons to help me, I have managed to stay at school and to find ways of remembering him that aren’t too painful”.

To find out more about our work, please visit our website – www.balloonscharity.co.uk

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For media enquiries contact:

Sara Bennett – Balloons CEO

Telephone: 01392 826052

Email: sarabennett@balloonscharity.co.uk

Notes to Editors:

- Balloons is the child bereavement charity working in Exeter, Mid & East Devon
- For more information about how Balloons supports bereaved children and young people and their families, please visit the website www.balloonscharity.co.uk
- By receiving Big Lottery funding, Balloons will be able to make a huge difference to the lives of bereaved youngsters and their families, and benefit the wider community

- The Big Lottery Fund is the largest funder of community activity in the UK. It puts people in the lead to improve their lives and communities, often through small, local projects.
- It is responsible for giving out 40% of the money raised by National Lottery players for good causes. In 2016/17 it awarded £712.7 million and supported more than 13,814 projects across the UK for health, education, environment and charitable purposes.
- Since June 2004 it has awarded £8.5 billion to projects that change the lives of millions of people.