



Balloons

Supporting bereaved children and young people in Exeter, East and Mid Devon

Referral criteria for One-To-One Post Bereavement Grief Support

We hope that this information sheet will assist you to assess whether or not we are the appropriate service to be providing support, but we are more than happy to chat anything through with you if that's helpful.

There will always be a level of emotional response to the death of someone significant. This is completely normal. However, sometimes children and young people may struggle with understanding or accepting their grief, and the chain of events that surrounds it.

It is always preferable for a loved one or trusted familiar adult to support a child or young person, especially in the first few months of grief. We are happy to help parents, carers and anyone working with a child or young person via the telephone or email.

However, sometimes children and young people can become 'stuck' in their grief, and perhaps need someone neutral to help them express what it is that they are really feeling, thinking and believing. **If this is the case, please read on for our criteria, then call us on 01392 982570 to discuss making a referral.**

As there is a high demand for our service, there is a wait between being referred and the support starting. We can clarify estimated waiting times at the point of referral.



Our Way of Working (One-to-One)

Our grief support is delivered by Balloons Grief Support Workers (GSWs) who are highly skilled and motivated volunteers, trained and experienced in the field of grief. They come from all walks of life and are not generic counsellors or psychotherapists.

Our way of working in one-to-one support is to 'follow the child' - their needs, concerns, issues and interests. Grief Support is a lower level, short term intervention which focuses on the impacts of bereavement rather than the wider mental health issues. It is not counselling.

GSWs broadly work within these topics:

- Child or young person telling their story
- Exploring feelings and managing anger, anxiety and building self-esteem
- Managing sleep disturbance
- Treasuring Precious Memories

They use a combination of arts and crafts activities, games, talking interventions, activity sheets etc to tailor the support to each individual.

Typically, this work takes place at school/college. We can also deliver grief support at the Balloons office in Exeter, but a trusted adult needs to stay in the building during sessions.

OUR CRITERIA:

We can accept referrals:

- For children and young people aged 5-25 in our geographical area, which is Exeter, Mid & East Devon.
- From parents, carers and professionals working with children as well as self-referrals from over-18s.
- From 12 weeks after the bereavement to allow the early-stage natural grief process to unfold. Having said that, we can take referrals for many months or even years after the bereavement.
- Only when the child or young person wants to explore their grief. In order to help the child/young person to decide if they want grief support, we suggest you share the description of what it is with them.

We cannot accept referrals

- For children and young people who are under the age of five, although we may be able to advise carers and workers on how to work with this age group.
- Who are receiving another form of therapeutic support (for example CAMHS, school counsellor etc).
- When grief is not the dominant concern but is a component of multiple issues.
- Who have not been told the cause of death and therefore don't have all the information about the bereavement. In saying this we do not mean that children need to be given every little detail, but we cannot work with children where they are not aware of key information such as that the death is a result of suicide.
- Where the trauma surrounding the bereavement is so significant that the level of support required is beyond the expertise of Balloons volunteers, such as if the child or young person has witnessed the death or discovered the body. In these circumstances, a trauma specialist service might be more appropriate.
- Who are experiencing abuse and neglect, as this requires different and very specialist support.
- Who have life-threatening coping mechanisms or are suicidal.
- Where there is challenging behaviour with no effective behaviour management plans in place. If relevant, we will need to have sight of any behaviour management plans as part of the referral process. This is to safeguard our volunteers as well as the children and young people.
- Where the cause of death is unclear/unknown. If an inquest is pending we sometimes need to wait until the outcome to ensure we have the correct information about the cause of death. This is because we are working with a child or young person about how the person died, and their feelings/thoughts about it.

Please note it is important that children and young people have someone outside of Balloons who can be generally supportive whilst they are exploring their grief as it can be emotionally challenging. Teachers, extended and close family, as well as organisations such as young carers support organisations are acceptable as 'general support'.