

## **Initial Guidance Relating to Bereaved Children and Young People for those Providing Pastoral Support for the Bereaved during the Coronavirus Restrictions**

In the current situation where attendance at funerals is very limited it is probable that most children will not be able to attend funerals of relatives that die during this period. This may mean that they become hidden mourners. We can have a key role in helping families to consider their children's grief and feel equipped to talk with them and provide the support they need.

In addition to not attending funerals children who are grieving may be also be more hidden from the people who would normally provide them with support. The children are less likely to be in school so parents may not think to inform the school of a family bereavement. School staff who would normally see children every day and therefore pick up any problems or be able to offer informal support will not be able to do this. Many families may be unaware that the school can offer them support if they have been bereaved.

As the person providing pastoral support at the time of a bereavement **you have a key opportunity to ensure that the family are aware they can still access support for children** whatever their relationship was with the deceased.

Children are not likely to have seen the deceased in person for at least several weeks unless they lived within their own household. This could make it **harder for younger children to understand and also may make some children feel guilty** that they were not able to say goodbye or perhaps did not talk for very long last time the family called the deceased. It is therefore really important that we **help the adults in their life to talk with the children** even when they grieving themselves.

Within your conversations you may wish to ask particularly about the ages of children in the family and the part they played in the deceased life. These relationships can then be acknowledged within the funeral service and the children be told about this if appropriate.

If there are children connected to the deceased you could **signpost families to resources** that they can access to support them to talk to their children and for young people to access themselves. **Winston's Wish have updated their website with thoughts and guidance for people in response to the current crisis** <https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus/> . This would be well worth signposting families to if there are grieving children in the immediate or extended family.

Other resource suggestions can be found on the diocesan website <https://www.salisbury.anglican.org/parishes/cypaf/bereavement>

You can also encourage families to inform staff at the children's school this will then mean the school staff can then offer appropriate support. The school can then help them **access access additional support if they need it**. All schools should still have some way for families to contact them, even in schools holidays. Teachers can then link families with their pastoral and support services. In the coming weeks the Diocesan Board of Education will be providing additional support and guidance to church, schools and church leaders in relation to bereaved children and young people, particularly as we get a greater sense on what the impact on families and communities is likely to be.

**The Board of Education can also offer support to church and school leaders via the Critical Incident helpline 07788289843 please use this if you need further support or advice**