

A Whole School Approach to Loss and Bereavement



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Background

In 2011 a scoping exercise was carried out (by the Children and Young People Mental Health Short Life Working Group – a group consisting of NHS, education services and voluntary organisation staff) in order to establish the range of services and activities for child and youth mental health available throughout Greater Glasgow and Clyde, including educational establishments. A total of 37 Glasgow schools participated in the survey and the results obtained reflect the variety of curricular programmes and activities taking place across the city in order to support children and young people’s mental health.

The results also detailed training undertaken by education staff in the last two years as well as highlighting any staff training needs relating to mental health. In addition to general mental health training, training on bereavement and loss was highlighted by school staff as an area requiring further development.

A Glasgow city working group was formed in response to the need for training/guidance around loss, bereavement and change. The group consists of staff from local NHS Health Improvement Teams, Glasgow City Council Education Services staff and the Glasgow hospices; Marie Curie, Prince & Princess of Wales and St Margaret’s.

Work to date

Online toolkit development

In 2012/2013 the group worked together to develop a guidance document for staff working in educational establishments in Glasgow. The document, entitled “A Whole School Approach to Loss & Bereavement”, compliments existing policy such as “Managing Critical Incidents”, (Glasgow City Council Education Services, 2011) and contains the vision for Glasgow; Prepared, Supportive & Informed as well as information on how children and young people (C&YP) grieve, a guide to supporting C&YP when they return to school and as time passes, lesson plans, a self-evaluation tool, resource lists, useful contacts and signposting to services. This resource is re-visited annually to ensure information is up to date and to add any new resources and/or information around additional topics related to bereavement, loss and change.



Training Course Delivery

A training day has been developed for educational establishment staff, who then cascade their learning back to colleagues. Training is delivered twice per year. 5 courses have been delivered to date, supporting 150 staff in the process. The course content includes an overview of loss, grief and bereavement, understanding of grief at different ages, when bereavement becomes a barrier to learning, what its really like (reflecting on some experiences by staff), group work looking at case studies, reviewing DVD resources to provoke discussion for example the Good Grief DVD and an introduction to the online resource. In 2014 the group responded to previous delegate evaluation and included "a parent's perspective" (provided by a member of education staff). In 2015 we will work with Families Outside to deliver an input around the affects on C&YP with a relative in prison.

Each course undergoes evaluation and responses are reviewed to allow the training to continue to develop and improve. Training is delivered as a partnership between Education, NHS & the Glasgow Hospices, allowing us to draw on staff experience, skills and knowledge.

Feedback from Participants

Training delivered to date has consistently evaluated positively, participants tell us that the course meets their learning needs and that aims set out for the day are always met. All aspects of the course evaluate positively, with the majority of staff rating each course as very relevant or relevant to their own professional development needs.

Some participant feedback;

"It was really good to have people from so many different backgrounds contributing to the training"

"Always wondered whether as a teacher and SMT; I was doing the right thing or saying the right thing to children, suffering loss and bereavement"

"Sharing information and experiences of how we deal and manage situation relating to event"

"We have had a lot of bereaved children in our school"

"All very useful! A fantastic day of networking and information despite the difficult subject"

"Found all the programme very useful. Being able to chat to professionals to gain ideas was great"

"Networking, chat with colleagues and facilitators in a very supportive atmosphere"



Next Steps

The group will continue to deliver training twice per year to Glasgow City Council Education Services staff while reviewing and adapting training content as per participant feedback.

The group will also review the content of the online toolkit and develop new topic specific sections including information around bereavement, loss and change in relation to Homelessness, having a relative in prison and experiences of people seeking asylum.

We will work with Glasgow City Council Education Services & the Good Life, Good Grief and Good Death website to review usage in terms of number of hits and document downloads.

We will develop and deliver a bespoke training course for staff working with young people in the community i. e youth work staff.

We will develop and deliver annual re-connector sessions to support networking and information sharing between professionals who have attended our training.

We will continue to share the resource as widely as possible via networks, conferences and our own organisations.



Terms of Reference Document

Bereavement and Loss

Working Group

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Background

Many children and young people will experience bereavement, through the loss of a parent, sibling, grandparent or friend. Children can also face the loss of a loved animal or pet which can be as significant for them as losing a relative or friend. The term 'bereavement' refers to the process of grieving and mourning, and is associated with a deep sense of loss and sadness. It is a natural process; however its effects can be overwhelming¹.

Among a nationally representative sample of children aged 5 to 16, 3.8% had experienced the death of a parent or sibling² (Fauth et al., 2009).

Winston's Wish reports that children often feel isolated during their grief experience, thus feeling that nobody understands their feelings. Although experience of bereavement will be unique to the individual and it maybe somewhat impossible to predict how someone will respond, certain reactions are common to children as well as adults.

During bereavement, children and young people can experience a great number of emotions, including sadness, anger, anxiety, guilt, fear, denial, disbelief and confusion. With the right help and support, most children and young people will not require professional help. According to the Child Bereavement Charity, what they do need is people who care and the understanding of familiar and trusted adults. Schools are well placed to provide such support. The Child Bereavement Charity goes on to state that, just by carrying on with their usual day-to-day activities, schools can do a huge amount to support a grieving child.

1 Information sourced from www.handsonscotland.co.uk

2 Fauth, B., Thompson, M. and Penny, A. (2009) Associations between childhood bereavement and children's background, experiences and outcomes. Children and Young People in Great Britain data. London: NCB

Purpose

- To promote a planned and progressive approach to staff training around supporting children and young people experiencing bereavement, loss and change in line with a Curriculum for Excellence, across educational settings to ensure consistency in relation to Bereavement & Loss.
- To support and equip staff to take forward learning around bereavement, loss and change with access to high quality resources and training.
- To develop an online resource that can be updated as new information becomes available.

Operational Impact

- Identification of existing resources and skills base.
- Identification of staff development needs.
- Coordinated and systematic approach to staff training across Glasgow City, to ensure consistent service provision to all areas.
- Staff capacity is maximised as training delivery is agreed by working group.

Service User impact

- All establishments across Glasgow City will benefit from a planned approach to training by approved providers.
- Staff feel equipped to support children and young people and are able to access further support/resources if required.
- Increased awareness of the range of opportunities, activities and methods available to support children and young people experiencing bereavement, loss and change.
- Increase in knowledge and understanding by children and young people around bereavement, loss, change and local supports.
- Citywide approach to loss and bereavement.



Issues and Challenges

- The need to have linkage across Glasgow City to ensure resource development is discussed, agreed and utilised at a strategic and operational level.
- Engage with teaching staff to ensure on line resource is fully accessible and meets their needs.
- Monitoring use of on line resource,
- Ensuring the online resource is regularly updated.
- Action Plan to be developed to ensure coordinated approach to resource development and training.
- Require “buy –in” from all partners to allocate ongoing staff time to contribute to resource/training development.
- Partnership working between staff of differing grades/remits, from different organisations.

Membership of Group

- Core group in place with representatives connected to structures within their localities/organisations to gather input and inform resource development.
- Members of group to ensure communication into local strategic and operational structures.
- Wider partner engagement to be agreed if required.

Representation to include:

- GCC Education Services.
- Educational Psychology.
- NHS GG&C Health Improvement.
- Glasgow Hospice staff.



Reporting Structures

Education Directorate

NHS GG&C Child and Youth Mental Health Working Group.

Health Improvement in Education Group (HIEG).

Educational Psychology Area Team Managers.

Local Authority reps to take responsibility to report back to own organisation and relevant structures.

Timescale

- Meetings twice per annum, commencing August, 2011.
- As training/resource continues to develop; meetings may occur more/less frequently to work on specific tasks.
- Engagement with teaching staff re resource content, design and accessibility, annually via survey monkey.
- Delivery of Centralised Training to occur twice yearly.
- Resource Review & Update, to occur annually.

Final outcomes

- A comprehensive and centralised training programme is in place, which meets staff training needs and is uniform across the city.
- On-line resource in place.
- Review and Monitoring processes in place.
- Working group to act as a forum to feedback on local & national activity and/or opportunities in relation to loss and bereavement.
- Sharing of good practice at a local and national level.



Working Group Members

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Access Stats

The Whole School Approach to Supporting Loss & Bereavement Toolkit can be found on the Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief website

www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk/content/online_resources/

From March to July 2015 this resource has been downloaded 865 times.