

INSIGHT

THE CHILDREN AND FAMILY NEWSLETTER



Welcome

Welcome to the second edition of Insight.

We have created this newsletter to connect with schools within our community, as we work closely with many schools in supporting pre- and post-bereaved children and young people.

Stella and I will aim to email this newsletter to you on a quarterly basis.

We will include items on service and service delivery in regard to supporting children and young people with grief, loss and bereavement, any up-and-coming events that the children and young people we support are accessing and tips and resources that may be of support to you in supporting children and young people with grief, loss and bereavement. We know that sometimes the diagnosis and death of a loved one can also bring up other issues, such as abuse, various mental health needs, and basic needs such as loss of home, and we will touch on these as well.

If there are any topics or suggestions you would like to see, please do get in touch with us.

We hope it will be of use to you, your parents and your students.

Saint Francis Hospice will be celebrating its 40th Year in 2024. The Hospice welcomes all people regardless of race, age, gender, sexual orientation, faith belief or disability, who have been diagnosed with a serious illness, who are living in Havering, Brentwood, Barking and Dagenham, Redbridge or West Essex.

Our people are at the heart of what we do. We are the therapists, nurses and doctors helping and caring for people, offering experienced, compassionate advice and support.

Together, we are Saint Francis Hospice here for you.

We believe that everyone has the right to be the person they are, to live without fear or prejudice.

We believe that our Hospice is a better place to receive care, to work and volunteer when we all feel included, respected and welcomed.

We value the strength that comes with difference and the positive contribution that diversity and neurodiversity bring to our community.

We are committed to inclusivity and our approach is rooted in our Vision, Mission and Values.

MEET THE TEAM



STELLA
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My work with Saint Francis Hospice started 14 years ago, as a volunteer counsellor and then moving on to working with families and children. I use creative ways to help our children and families open and talk through their individual experiences of grief, and loss. Time given is of essence for our young clients to process the change to their lives.



PETER
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I joined the Family and Individual Support Services Team at Saint Francis Hospice this September as a Child and Family Therapist. Prior to my role, I was their Volunteer Bereavement Counsellor for 4 years. I have previously worked as a counsellor in schools, colleges, with the NSPCC and Childline.

How we support

At school, at the Hospice, at Home.

Our support offers.

Sometimes it is helpful for children or young people to speak to someone outside of their family. To acknowledge their loved one who is dying, to share their memories of the person who has died, to explore how they are feeling about their loss, to ask and get answers to their questions and to explore how their family may have changed.

One of our family therapists can meet with the children/young person and their family at the Hospice, home or at their school.

They can:

- ♥ Talk with the children/young person about issues related to loss, grief, and bereavement.
- ♥ Offer group support for children/young people whose loved one has died.
- ♥ Offering individual counselling sessions to children/young people at the Hospice, school or at home.
- ♥ Work creatively through artwork, journaling, expression, communication and play either as a family group, individually or with the child.
- ♥ Give guidance on strategies and coping techniques.
- ♥ Assist in creating lasting memories, such as journals, letters, cards, and memory boxes.
- ♥ Liaise with their teachers or college tutors to help them to assist where appropriate. To combat isolation and build on their support network.

Children and young people are supported both individually and as a family, from diagnosis through to bereavement. As family therapists we can support parents in delivering difficult news and preparing the children and adults both practically and emotionally for the death. We support children from 4-19 years of age, and will act as an advocate for the child, when working with schools and colleges.

We would be very happy to meet with you to introduce our services and any training/support we can offer.

HOW IT ALL WORKS

You might wonder how we support our children and families, and we hope below will give you some insight. The Family & Individual Support Team is gratefully funded by City Bridge Investment for the next five years. Here is some statistical information of the work we are doing, to give an overview of the year April 2023-March 2024

We supported 119 children. These children ranged from 4 years old to 19 years old and over.

Under 4	1
Age 5-9	36
10-15	39
16-18	24
19 and over	19
Total	119

We supported the parents of the children we saw, and family members and connected relations wherever we could, seeing them individually, meeting them at the Hospice or their homes and being available to advise or signpost if needed across our team, including social workers and psychotherapists and pastoral support.

In December 2023 we took 11 children to Queen's theatre for a Dick Whittington Pantomime, with a night filled with fun and special memories. In April we took another 10 children to Laser Mayhem in Ongar to have fun and adventure with children aged 8 to 18.

We now have 2 on site children groups planned, one for 4-year-old to 13 years old which began in March 24 and one for 14 years old to 18 years old, which will begin in the next few months, these are held after school on the first and second Tuesday of each month. This is also a great opportunity for the parents who bring the children to sit and talk to each other and share their stories and feelings.

Support For you and your pupils

Useful tips for bereaved relatives

We thought it might be useful at this time of year to add a few tips and talk about Grief generally. Grief is a natural reaction to loss. People experience grief or emotional pain when they lose someone or something important to them. There can be many different emotions to deal with, the anger, the guilt, the sadness, the crying, the list can be exhausting at this most vulnerable time. It can be likened to a fingerprint, no two people being the same. People will support in the best way they can, but it's so personal and people can genuinely not know what to do for the best. These suggestions have been taken from us and other sources for you to use yourself or to pass onto those that you feel might need them.

- ♥ If there is support around you, friends, family, and groups, try the support and keep an open mind.
- ♥ Do what's right for you and try not to feel pressured into doing things you are not comfortable with.
- ♥ If you are alone, and there seems like there is no support, look at some of the support services available to you. We will list some below for your reference.
- ♥ Spend the day somewhere else in a different environment, if you are able to so.
- ♥ Go for a drive or a walk.
- ♥ Get out in the great outdoors and take in nature and feel what's around you.
- ♥ Visit some places that maybe you have wanted to visit before.
- ♥ If you don't feel like going out, put on a film or music and feel ok, just to take it easy and relax as best you can. Sometimes doing nothing can be therapeutic.

OrangeLine 01708 758649

Friendly Faces 01708 758649

Cruse Bereavement 0808 808 1677

Samaritans 116 123

Child Bereavement UK 0800 028 8840

HOW IT ALL WORKS

- We receive our referrals through self-referral, people contact us directly to enquire about our support. We receive referrals from our colleagues who are working with the families and require support for the children. We receive requests direct from the people we care for on our ward.
- Weekly, as a team we discuss how the team can support across all issues, we will then:
- Contact the family and arrange to see the family and the children ASAP, normally within days, depending on the immediate needs and urgency. We will arrange a suitable venue and time, which could be a home visit, a school visit or a visit to us at the hospice.
- We will assess the needs of the children and family and the frequency of our support, and this is always on a one-to-one basis, which can progress to our group support, which is age specific and by invite only taking each child's needs into account.
- These sessions will continue until we are at a place where we feel the family and the children are able to proceed confidently.
- We will advise where we can ways in which the parents can proceed with written information and other support avenues if they feel in need. We don't stop our support there, if there is further support required the families are free to call to discuss.

Aside to the above we will visit schools and organisations in order to support teachers, staff, in Bereavement and help them to support their children and families. There can in certain circumstances be a cost applied to that, and that is negotiated on a one-to-one basis.

Useful tips for bereaved children

- ♥ Any reaction to bereavement is normal and ok and healthy.
- ♥ Children need permission to feel angry, sad, guilty or frightened after a death.
- ♥ Feelings of grief for children can be new and frightening.
- ♥ Offer your support by just being there to give them a space to talk and be heard.
- ♥ Children may feel confused and just need support to work with somebody and unravel those feelings.
- ♥ Many children have a strong desire to share stories of the person that has died.
- ♥ It can help reading children's books about grief as they can approach it in a more general way.

A few suggestions are:

- ♥ The invisible string.
- ♥ When Dinosaurs Die.
- ♥ The huge bag of worries.

Events

Past and present events.

December saw the opening of our counselling room. It is well positioned within the hospice. A light and airy room looking out on our lovely grounds. The room is bright and colorful and has all the accessories needed to support the therapy session. Children and young people can draw, paint and use what they need to express their feelings as they feel best. The room is themed around the seaside and reflects those places of fun and relaxation.



The Voice of Spring

Mary Howitt

(date unknown)

I am coming, I am coming!
Hark! The honey bee is humming;
See, the lark is soaring high
In the blue and sunny sky,
And the gnats are on the wing
Wheeling round in airy ring.

Listen! New-born lambs are bleating,
And the cawing rooks are meeting
In the elms - a noisy crowd.
All the birds are singing loud,
And the first white butterfly
In the sunshine dances by.

Look around you, look around!
Flowers in all the fields abound,
Every running stream is bright,
All the orchard trees are white,
And each small and waving shoot
Promises sweet autumn fruit.

We took a group of Children and some of their family to see Dick Whittington in pantomime at the Queens theatre. It was a fun performance with lots of laughter and time for everyone just to enjoy the moment with friends around them, with family for some of them, and other children at different stages in their grief to share if they wanted to and to normalise some of their feelings.

We know the value of children in similar situations getting together and connecting with one another. Outings like this give permission for them to do this and connect with each other. Our next outing at the end of April will be at Laser Mayhem in Ongar a great place to have some outdoor fun and use up energy in a positive way, lots of excitement and healthy competition.



We were delighted to start our children's group in March for 4 to 13 year olds, with a second group due to start in May for 14 to 19 year olds. These groups run for 6 months and are tailored to work with the individual needs of the children and young adults and encourage creative thinking and activity through art and drama focused on an agreed theme. The groups are once a month on the first and second Tuesday of the month and are run after school hours.



We thought it would be fitting to end this edition with a peaceful and reflective poem. If you would like to make any suggestions regarding future editions, please do not hesitate in emailing us at familysupportservices@sfh.org.uk.

We hope you had a lovely Easter and enjoyed any holidays and time together with friends and loved ones. Take care.

Stella & Peter

Spring

I love spring
spring is new
it's new blades of grass
it's rain on a lass
it's violets and rain
its a wood scented lane
it's a new bird song
its days growing long
its a tree in bud and puddles
of mud
it's birds in a tree and buzz
from a bee
it's kites in the sky
it's spring. That's why
I love spring.

- Author Unknown-