



Balloons Referral Criteria for One-to-One Post Bereavement Grief Support

In order to ensure our Grief Support Services are in the best interests of the children, young people and young adults (C&YP) referred to us, and to assist agencies and individuals when referring a child or young person to Balloons, we have our own referral criteria.

We can only accept referrals for children and young people aged 5-25 in our geographical area, which is Exeter, Mid & East Devon.

We will **always** liaise with the referrer on the telephone **before** we send out our referral forms to ensure that the referral is appropriate and to answer any questions that the referrer has.

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 of course more than happy to chat anything through with you if that's helpful and if you have further questions after the initial conversation.

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

It is always preferable for a loved one to assist C&YP, and Balloons is happy to support parents and carers via the telephone or email to do this. However, Balloons understands that this is not always possible. Sometimes C&YP require a neutral person to assist them to express what it is that they are really feeling, thinking and believing.

When this is perceived to be the case, we then require the referrer to call Balloons on 01392 826064 to discuss the presenting details in more detail, and to get up to date information on our current referral processes and paperwork.

We start taking referrals approximately 10-12 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.

Balloons Grief Support Workers

The Balloons Grief Support Workers are highly skilled and motivated volunteers, trained and experienced in the field of grief. They are **not** generic counsellors or psychotherapists.

Our one-to-one grief support model

We offer a bespoke intervention for each child/young person, which responds to their needs, concerns, issues and interests.

It's not possible therefore to say exactly what each intervention will cover, but in broad terms we offer approximately **4-6 grief-focussed sessions**, usually once a week, using C&YP-friendly communication tools.

Topics related to the child/young person's grief that might be covered in the sessions could include:

- telling the story
- managing anxiety
- managing anger
- building self-esteem
- managing sleep disturbance
- building memories

We use a combination of arts and crafts activities, games, talking interventions, activity sheets etc., but again this is adapted to the needs and interests of the individual child/young person.

Typically, this work takes place at school, but we are happy to discuss the possibility of delivering grief support in other settings such as a GP surgery or a youth club. Please note that we can only provide grief support in an environment that has a private, quiet and non-interrupted space for us to work in, and which has someone present and acting in-loco parentis.

It is very important to note that we can only work in environments where appropriate levels of cleaning have taken place, which are well ventilated, and which enable appropriate social distancing measures. We can discuss this in more detail with you when you contact us to make the referral.

Please note that we are unable to support C&YP...

- Until at least 10 to 12 weeks have passed since the bereavement
- Under the age of five, although we may be able to advise carers and workers on how to work with this age group
- Who do not wish to explore their grief. (*Note that in order to help the child/young person to decide if they do want grief support, you might want to share the description of what it is as set out above on this form, so that they can make an informed decision*)
- 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
- Where the trauma surrounding the bereavement is so significant that the level of support required is beyond the expertise of Balloons, 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 (we are always happy to discuss this further)
- Who do not have anyone outside of Balloons who can be generally supportive whilst they are exploring their grief. (Teachers, extended and close family, as well as organisations such as young carers support organisations are completely acceptable as 'general support'.)
- Who are experiencing abuse and neglect, as this requires different and very specialist support
- Who have life-threatening coping mechanisms
- Who are suicidal
- 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. We are always happy to talk about this further.
- Who do not have effective behaviour management plans in place where there is challenging behaviour. We will need to have sight of relevant behaviour management plans as part of the referral process. We are always happy to talk about this further

Please also note that we cannot accept a referral where there is an inquest pending on the cause of death.

We hope this information assists you in assessing whether or not **Balloons** is the appropriate service for the C&YP you are requiring support for.

If you are left in any doubt, please contact us on 01392 826064, and in any case, we always need to talk to you before you make your referral