



# Strategic Plan 2022 - 2025

**Our strategic plan for supporting  
bereaved children and young people  
across Exeter, East and Mid Devon.**

# About us



For over 14 years Balloons has been supporting pre and post bereaved children and young people, and their families across Exeter, East and Mid Devon.

**Our Vision:** That bereaved children and young people have somewhere to turn when someone significant in their lives dies.

**Our Mission:** To support bereaved children and young people in our area when someone significant in their lives dies. To work alongside their families and the professionals who care for them to further enhance the support they receive.

We have only been able to do this important work thanks to our wonderful staff, volunteers, supporters and donors.

# Our recent achievements



In 2022 we:

- Responded to over 650 enquiries regarding pre and post-bereavement support
- Supported 113 children and young people through 1:1 grief support with our team of dedicated volunteer Grief Support Workers:
  - 15 of these were pre bereavement cases and 98 post bereavement
  - The ages have ranged from 5 – 23, with the majority of work being with 6 – 16 year olds
  - 55% of our 1:1 work has been when a parent or primary carer dies, 28% where grandparents have died. We have also supported children where a sibling, friend, or other relative has died
  - Illness remained the main cause of death for nearly 60% of our work, followed by sudden death, 35%, and a small number of cases where there has been suicide or an accident.
- Undertook 6 coaching cases to enable professionals to in turn support grieving pupils
- Sent out 246 care packages to bereaved children and young people
- Had 16 new Grief Support Workers starting to volunteer with us following their training - taking us to a total of 35
- Delivered childhood grief training to 158 professionals
- Ran 4 activity days attended by 67 children and parents/carers. A wellbeing day at the Donkey Sanctuary, a visit to a funfair, a driving experience and a trip to the pantomime

# Our impact



**Outcomes:** We monitor the outcomes of our work with children and young people, looking at changes in a range of areas including self esteem, educational attainment, anger management, wellbeing at home, confidence, social networks and anxiety management. On average, those we worked with reported improvements in all these areas.

**Feedback:** We seek feedback from schools, parents and carers:

- ‘The impact your Grief Support Worker and her sessions have had on Y is amazing, he looked forward to his sessions with her and he has started to talk about his mum with other adults in the school which is a huge step forward for him. A huge thank you for all your support’ (School Staff)
- ‘She really valued having someone to talk to and someone to listen, being able to celebrate his life and discuss how they would honour it.’ (School Staff)
- ‘Our daughter has found the sessions with your Grief Support Worker really helpful and we can see a real difference in her. She was delighted to show us her memory boxes and managed to speak to us without breaking down which was so lovely. We loved the memory boxes and will keep them forever’ (Parent)
- ‘We would like to thank the Grief Support Worker and the Balloons charity for the amazing help and support they offered my son and myself. He loved his sessions with his grief support worker, they have been invaluable to him. It has really helped him to talk about the loss of his feelings surrounding it all... From the first call I made I was supported and reassured. Thank you to everyone at Balloons.’ (Parent)

**Impact on volunteers:** Our volunteers also tell us that they gain so much from being Grief Support Workers:

- ‘I like going into schools and it’s such a privilege to work with these young people and give them help and support on their journey. You might be helping them with their anxiety, or anger, or low self-esteem. You validate their feelings and provide them with the opportunity to talk about their grief and the person they have lost. The work is so rewarding for me.’ (GSW Volunteer)

# Our new strategy



Over the last few years, a lot has changed.

The impact of the pandemic is still being felt in our work through both increased demand for support, whilst at the same time a smaller volunteer team as a result of life changes for so many following the pandemic.

Like many organisations we also face the increased challenges with funding which have been impacted by increased demand against the backdrop of increasing costs and the cost-of-living crisis.

Our strategy and subsequent team priorities set out our focus and ambitions over the coming three years to enable us to reach and support more bereaved children, young people and their families.

# Strategic Priorities



The following are the strategic priorities agreed by the board for the coming 3 years. Each year an operational plan is developed with targets for the coming year against each of the three priority areas

To support bereaved children, young people (CYP) and families and improve their outcomes

To generate income to sustain and develop our services

To grow our people (staff, volunteers and trustee board)

## HOW WE'LL ACHIEVE THEM

Delivering direct and indirect support to CYP and their families pre and post bereavement

Diversifying income streams in the short, medium and long term, developing and delivering on an annual fundraising strategy

Supporting and investing in our people

To develop our infrastructure and systems to enable us to deliver on the strategic priorities

# Would you like to get involved?



We can't do this alone. Without the support of the many wonderful people across our community we wouldn't be where we are today. We want to look forward and see how we can do more and do it even better!

If you'd like to know more, or want to join us on this journey by hearing our updates, volunteering or supporting us financially – we'd love to hear from you!

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