



Balloons

Supporting bereaved children and young people in Exeter, East and Mid Devon

Referral criteria for One-To-One Pre Bereavement Grief Support

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 more than happy to chat anything through with you if that's helpful.

There will always be a level of emotional response to the imminent death of someone significant. This is completely normal. However, sometimes children and young people may struggle with uncertainty of the pre-bereavement phase and have questions to ask and issues to discuss.

It is always preferable for a loved one or trusted familiar adult to support a child or young person. We are happy to help parents, carers and anyone working with a child or young person via the telephone or email to do this.

However, we understand that this is not always possible, or that sometimes children and young people can benefit from having someone neutral to help them express what it is that they are really feeling, thinking and believing.

If this is the case, please read on for our criteria, then call us on 01392 982570 to discuss making a referral.

We take pre-bereavement referrals once the dying person is in the palliative care stage.

Our Way of Working (One-to-One)

Our grief support is delivered by Balloons Grief Support Workers (GSWs) who are highly skilled and motivated volunteers, trained and experienced in the field of grief. They come from all walks of life and are not generic counsellors or psychotherapists.

We offer bespoke support for each child/young person, which responds to their needs, concerns, issues and interests. It's not possible therefore to say exactly what each that work will cover, but in broad terms we offer approximately 2 to 3 anticipatory grief-focussed sessions, usually once a week.

Topics related to the child/young person's anticipatory grief that might be covered in the sessions could include – telling their story, managing uncertainty and anxiety, managing anger and building self-esteem.

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.

If the child/young person wants it, we try to have what we call a 'death acknowledgement' session following the death of their loved one. If they still need some further support, we can then take a referral after 12-weeks for our post-bereavement support.

Typically, this work takes place at school/college. We can also deliver grief support at the Balloons office in Exeter, but a trusted adult needs to stay in the building during sessions. Please note that we can only provide pre-bereavement support in an environment that has a private, quiet and non-interrupted space for us to work in.

OUR CRITERIA:

We can accept referrals:

- For children and young people aged 5-25 in our geographical area, which is Exeter, Mid & East Devon.
- From parents, carers and professionals working with children as well as self-referrals from over-18s.
- Only when the child or young person wants to explore their anticipatory grief. In order to help the child/young person to decide if they want support, we suggest you share the description of what it is with them.
- Once the dying person is in the palliative care stage.

We cannot accept referrals

- For children and young people who are under the age of five, although we may be able to advise carers and workers on how to work with this age group.
- Who are receiving another form of therapeutic support (for example CAMHS, school counsellor etc).
- When anticipatory grief is not the dominant concern but is a component of multiple issues.
- Where the trauma surrounding the imminent bereavement is so significant that the level of support required is beyond the expertise of Balloons volunteers. In these circumstances, a trauma specialist service might be more appropriate.
- Who are experiencing abuse and neglect, as this requires different and very specialist support.
- Who have life-threatening coping mechanisms or are suicidal.
- Where there is challenging behaviour with no effective behaviour management plans in place. If relevant, we will need to have sight of any behaviour management plans as part of the referral process. This is to safeguard our volunteers as well as the children and young people.

Please note it is important that children and young people have someone outside of Balloons who can be generally supportive whilst they are exploring their anticipatory grief as it can be emotionally challenging e.g. Teachers, extended and close family, as well as organisations such as young carers support organisations.