

INSIGHT

THE CHILDREN AND FAMILY NEWSLETTER

Saint
Francis
Hospice
Caring for you

Welcome

Welcome to the first 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.

CASE STUDY

THE BRAVERY OF TWO LITTLE BOYS

I met my young clients with a referral from the father of Adam & Ben*. They were aged 6 and 8 years old and recently their mother had died, she had a cancer diagnosis.

I organised to meet the boys, on a weekly basis, at their school. I would see them individually and if they needed each other, I would provide the space for them to come in together.

On one occasion they both came in and looked distressed, and when I explored what was going on for them, they explained that they were tired of other children poking them in the back and asking about their mum. They decided that the best solution was for them to go individually to their prospective class and tell their peers what had happened during their summer break.

I had the agreement from their teacher's giving permission for the boys to stand in front of the class and tell them their story of their experience with their mum. They asked if I could be in the room whilst they told their story.



Support during Christmas period

Useful tips for bereaved relatives

We thought it might be useful at this meaningful time of year to add a few tips. We know that not all families celebrate Christmas, but it is a time for many when families come together. When a family member is no longer with us, it hits homes how great the loss is for us. 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.

- Stick to some of your normal Christmas/festive traditions to pay tribute to the person that has died. It's ok to set up a space for that person.
- Do what's right for you and try not to feel pressured into doing things you are not comfortable with.
- If you are alone, make your own new Christmas/festive traditions.
- Spend the day somewhere else.
- Go for a drive.
- Get out in the great outdoors.
- Visit some events, museums etc.
- Put on Christmas PJs and have a lazy day.

Useful tips for bereaved children

- Any reaction to Christmas is normal, ok and healthy.
- Children need permission to feel angry, sad, guilty or frightened about celebrating Christmas after a death.
- Christmas can rekindle feelings of grief for children.
- Involve your children in Christmas planning.
- Many children benefit from predictable routines, normal Christmas routines.
- 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.

CASE STUDY CONT'D

These are their words:

"I want to tell you what happened to my mum. At the beginning of the summer my mum told us that she has been diagnosed with cancer. We thought she would get better, but she died at the end of August.

I am very sad that this happened and I'm trying to be brave at school and at home."

There was a silence in the room, and the children finally understood what their friend was coping with at home.

I stayed in the classroom to talk to children who needed support from listening to them and supporting them in understanding what had just been disclosed.

**Names have been changed to respect confidentiality.*

Plans for December and year 2024

December sees 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 colourful 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.

We will be taking a group of our children to a local pantomime and to have a day of fun, to escape and for some to have the theatre experience. This year we have Dick Whittington booked and we are sure the kids will enjoy the day. We will let you know in our next edition how it went. We have another trip booked in February where we will be taking another group of children to a local play park.

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.



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.

Please take care and we wish you a lovely Christmas and festive season and a peaceful New Year.

Stella & Peter

Christmas Without You

Although it's sad to reminisce
On Christmases we knew.
This year I shall celebrate
In memory of you.
I will put aside my sorrow
With every unshed tear
And concentrate on all the love
We shared when you were here.
Our time together taught me
What Christmas time is for,
And that's what I'll remember
Until we meet once more.

