

INSIGHT

THE CHILDREN AND FAMILY NEWSLETTER

Saint
Francis
Hospice
Caring for you

The only education in grief that any of us ever gets is a crash course - Gail Cladwell

At Saint Francis Hospice, one of our passions is to reach out to our colleagues in all institutions, most important being in the education sector. We know first-hand how important and vital it is to talk about grief, and loss, from as early as school age. We know one vital component to this is to support our teachers, teacher assistants and other leads via training and guidance. Exploration and learning about grief should not be a reactive process, we can plan and have a pro-active approach. As the quote said, this shouldn't be a crash course.

We work with children from the age of 4 years to 19 years, providing pre and post bereavement support. We advocate for all children, as they too are grieving and experience loss. Sometimes they don't have the tools, or language to express what these emotions are, which can confuse the adults around them. It's important they get the safe space to tell their story and what's happening around them. It's even more important that as the adults, we give them the time to listen and learn.

"Anyone old enough to love, is old enough to grieve" Alan D Wolfelt

These sessions take place, in the hospice, the home or at the school. We know how important it is to link in with schools and see first hand the vital need to support and equip staff so that they can support children who are grieving.

We are pleased that The Campion School feel the same about grief, loss and bereavement as we do at the hospice. They reached out to us, to provide training to their staff.

We provided an introduction to grief, loss and bereavement to all staff across the departments. We were able to better understand the needs of the pupils at The Campion School. We could see there were resources for the pupils and the care and attention given to their wellbeing by the school.

What was required was identifying, not only grief for the pupils, but how we as adults understand and carry our own grief or understanding of grief, what tools we need to identify behaviours, and how to best navigate an emotional conversation.

How different deaths impact our emotions, from end-of-life care to death by suicide.

We value our relationship with The Campion School. The school was looking to start a group for bereaved students, and we were able to extend the support and advise and guide the beginning of starting a group.

Our aim is to connect with our schools and provide training and support, guidance, help with any bereavement policies or standards. We would love to hear from you, do reach out and give us a call or email. We look forward to working and collaborating with you.



CASE STUDY

Bereavement sessions for the loss of Grandma

Child: Female, Primary school age.

I received a referral for a young child in year 1. Client A was becoming very angry, both at home and at school. Her mum reached out to our service and asked for bereavement counselling support.

At our first meeting, she was unsure if she would come with me, so I invited mum to come with us. Client A soon settled in our children's room. She was excited at seeing so much variety with our creative materials. This helped to open up a dialogue where she expressed her wish to make something for her grandma.

Once the work began, she slowly opened up about how 'sad' she was feeling and showed concerns for her mum's sadness. My young client wanted to know if she 'could make mum feel better?' And when would she stop feeling so sad about grandma.

We continued our work on a weekly basis, and as each week passed, she gained more confidence and started to feel better about her loss. Every week she would spend time making a special 'gift' in memory of her grandma.

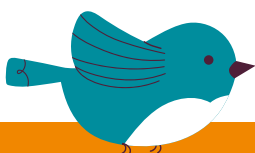
Mum informed me that she now keeps a large folder for her 'Art work' as a memory of coming to the hospice and giving her child the space to work through her sad feelings. (Grief)

I invited Client A to our children's group for our special monthly meetings, which she enjoyed. It proved to be very helpful for her to be with other children, helping her to recognise that there are other young children who have experienced a similar loss. She noted how they supported her and enjoyed being part of this friendly young group.

As the weeks went on I recognised that Client A had reached a safe place with her sadness. She now had a better understanding of the 'normality of missing a close relative that she had and still loves'.

At the end of the year, we started to work on an ending, as this helps the child understand that 'her work has now completed and that she is ready to move on. The ending also helped her mum to see the change in her young daughter and she appreciated the work that had supported her child.

Stella





Farewell to Stella Christou - Child and Family Therapist

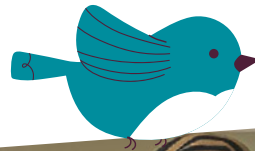
We said a sad goodbye to Stella, our colleague and friend who has supported our children's counselling service, at the end of this month.

Stella has been with us for over 20 years and now it is her time to embark on her next adventure - retirement.

Some of you may know Stella, as she has been in schools to see children, and supported school training for many years on grief, loss and bereavement.

We say a huge thank you to Stella for all her work, commitment, dedication, and care, and she will be missed by many.

A few of Stella's colleagues pictured on her leaving day, many others were there.





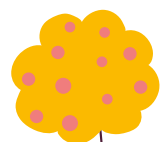
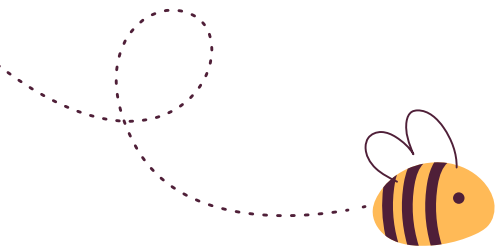
SPRING POEM

The Voice of Spring

*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
Promised sweet autumn fruit.*



MEET THE TEAM



STELLA
stellachristou@sfh.org.uk

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 up and talk through their individual experiences of grief, and loss. Time is of essence for our young clients to process the change to their lives.



PETER
peterbartlam@sfh.org.uk

I joined the Family and Individual Support Services Team at Saint Francis Hospice in September 2023 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.