



Children,

young people

and loss

I remember
my Dad and
the walks we
had together

Candle Child
Bereavement
Service

StChristopher's
More than just a hospice

St Christopher's has been providing bereavement counselling to patients' families for over 50 years. St Christopher's Candle Child Bereavement Service extends this support to all children, young people and their families in the south east London area, covering the boroughs of Croydon, Bromley, Lewisham, Southwark and Lambeth. Any parent, carer, teacher or healthcare professional can make a referral to the Candle Child Bereavement Service. Young people aged over 16 can refer themselves.

We also offer a specialist training, advice and consultancy service to schools and other agencies working with children facing bereavement.

The effects of bereavement

All of us face an enormous challenge when someone close to us dies or is very ill. At such times it can feel very hard to know how best to help children and young people affected by the loss.

Many adults try to protect children when a death occurs. We sometimes hope that by not talking about it we can shield children from sadness and pain. We may feel overwhelmed by our own feelings of grief and anxious about making things worse for the children by doing or saying 'the wrong thing'.

In fact, children always find out when something so important is happening and many feel hurt and left out if they have not been told directly. Attempts to protect children from the truth usually leave them confused and alone with their questions, fears and powerful feelings.

How to help children and young people

Just like adults, children react to death in different ways at different times. They may seem to be very sad, very naughty or not to care at all. They may have behaviour or concentration problems at school or home, difficulties with eating or sleeping and feel very anxious or guilty. It can sometimes be difficult to find a way of explaining what has happened, to cope with their questions and to manage their behaviour.

We cannot prevent children from feeling sad, angry or hurt but, if we talk to them and include them in what is going on, we can help them feel supported and understood.

What children and young people facing loss need

They need:

- information about what has happened and why – and what is likely to happen next
- reassurance that they are not to blame for what has happened and that they will be cared for
- an opportunity to express their feelings and to make choices about their involvement in rituals such as the funeral
- adults who share their feelings and allow children to offer comfort as well as receive it
- strategies to help them cope with changed circumstances.

What does Candle offer?

- Individual and family bereavement support to children, young people and families in Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham, Bromley and Croydon when someone close to them has died
- Group days and evenings for children and young people who attend the project. We have a monthly group for bereaved parents and a self help group for parents and carers
- Advice service for families, carers, professionals and anyone concerned about a child or young person facing bereavement
- Training, advice and consultancy for local schools and other professional agencies.

www.stchristophers.org.uk/candle

Other places to get help

Childhood Bereavement Network

Lots of information and a directory of services providing support for bereaved children.

www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

Winston's Wish

Practical support and guidance for families, professionals and anyone concerned about a grieving child.

Telephone **08088 020 021**

www.winstonswish.org.uk

Cruse

Cruse provides a telephone helpline and face-to-face support from trained volunteers.

www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

If you would like this information in a different format, such as audio tape, braille or large print, or in another language, please speak to the Communications Team on **020 8768 4500** or email **communications@stchristophers.org.uk**.

St Christopher's Hospice is a charity and our continued work is only made possible by your generous donations. Please consider making a one-off donation or becoming a regular donor. To find out more about how you can help, please visit **www.stchristophers.org.uk/donate**.

StChristopher's More than just a hospice

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51-59 Lawrie Park Road, Sydenham, London SE26 6DZ

Orpington site

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