

# Guidelines for Best Practice:

## Supporting parents of bereaved children and young people

These Guidelines for Best Practice have been developed by the Childhood Bereavement Network to provide organisations and individual practitioners with a baseline 'best practice' framework for support provided to parents of bereaved children<sup>1</sup>.

The Guidelines are additional to and should be used in conjunction with the CBN Belief Statement and the generic CBN Guidelines for Best Practice.

### Policy development

CBN promotes key principles for policy development:

1. It is recognised and acknowledged that a comprehensive policy and procedural framework promotes safe practice, confidence, clarity of purpose, high quality care and creativity.
2. Policies and procedures are developed in consultation with staff and service users, including children, to ensure they fit the local context and needs.
3. Risk assessments are carried out on all activities and services.
4. Adequate resources are allocated, including staff time, to enable the development, implementation and review of all policies and procedures, together with any subsequent updates.
5. All policies and procedures are reviewed regularly.

### Guidelines

**It is acknowledged that parents have the primary role in providing information, guidance and support to their bereaved children.**

- Parents are, therefore, positively empowered, supported and encouraged to play a key part in enabling their children to manage their grief and loss, in so far as they are able.
- Parents' skills, views and knowledge are respected.
- It is acknowledged that parenting is challenging, varied and long-term, and that parents and families will have a broad range of practical, emotional, social and financial needs.
- Parents are supported and provided with information to enable them to understand the grieving process as a normal response to bereavement and loss.
- The challenges inherent in family and other caring relationships - particularly during bereavement - are openly acknowledged. Sometimes, it may be necessary to challenge unhelpful beliefs, patterns of behaviour or coping styles.

### Family-centred care is embedded into policy and practice.

- A set of values and principles - developed in partnership with bereaved children and their parents - supports and provides guidance to staff and enables the delivery of a range of high-quality, accessible services.
- The importance of family focused assessment is acknowledged and staff have the appropriate supervision and training to make these assessments.
- Staff are provided with training and supervision to develop their skills and knowledge of the parenting role and how this is affected by bereavement and loss.
- Regular supervision is provided to enable staff to reflect upon and manage their work effectively and to develop their practice.

### A range of accessible and responsive services are offered to parents of bereaved children.

- The needs of bereaved families within the community are regularly assessed and a range of services offered that can respond to identified needs.
- Parents participate in the development, monitoring, evaluation and review of services. Parents from minority groups are proactively involved in this process.
- The needs of parents from minority groups within the community are proactively assessed and services provided that meet identified concerns and needs.
- Concise, clear information, in a range of formats and languages relevant to the catchment area, is easily available in the locations most frequented by parents. This information clearly signposts parents to local and/or national services that can provide guidance and support.
- There is consistent liaison and communication with any other agency, institution or practitioner with whom the family may be connected, with parental permission unless there are child protection issues.
- There are clear protocols for referral on to other agencies.
- There are different formats in which parents can praise, make suggestions or complain about the services provided to them.



## Childhood Bereavement Network

The Childhood Bereavement Network (CBN) is the subscription body for individuals and agencies working in the sphere of bereavement care for children in the UK.

CBN has approximately 300 subscribers. It seeks to ensure that all children and young people in the UK, together with their families and other caregivers, including professional carers, can easily access a choice of high-quality local, and national information, guidance and support to enable them to manage the impact of death on their lives.

CBN is supported by all the major bereavement care providers and is hosted by National Children's Bureau (NCB), the umbrella body for the children's sector in England and Northern Ireland. NCB promotes the voices, interests and well-being of all children and young people across every aspect of their lives and provides essential information on policy, research and best practice to its 4000+ members and other partners.

## These guidelines

The development of these Guidelines has been funded by The Parenting Fund as part of a partnership project with CBN subscriber Winston's Wish, a national charity for grieving children and their families. Overall, this project aims to improve and strategically extend the provision of high quality information, guidance & support services to parents of bereaved children.

CBN subscribers and other stakeholders, including parents of bereaved children, have been consulted as part of the development process.

Members of the seminar group which met in June 2005 to advise on the development of these Guidelines were:

- Sue Smith, Motor Neurone Disease Association (Chair)
- Anne Davies, Jigsaw4u
- Josie Dwyer, East Anglia's Children's Hospices
- Pam Firth, Isabel Hospice, Hertfordshire
- Elizabeth Fitzgerald, Brambles Trust Bereavement Service, Worcestershire
- Annie Kolbe, Child Death Helpline
- Linda Lovett-Darby, Poole Hospital NHS Trust
- Sacha Richardson, The Laura Centre, Leicester
- Anna Rickards, CAMHS, Essex Social Services;
- Donna Lunn, Marie Curie Cancer Care, Solihull Hospice
- Liz Rolls, University of Gloucestershire
- Phil Russell, The Rowans Hospice, Portsmouth
- Diane Thomas, Acorns Children's Hospice, West Midlands
- Tracey Wilson, United Lincolnshire Hospitals Trust.

## March 2006

<sup>1</sup> In these guidelines:

- the term 'parent' or 'parents' is used to describe any adult who is caring for and/or has parental responsibility for a bereaved child. For example, a widowed parent, grandparent, step-parent, foster carer, adoptive parent or legal guardian.
- the term 'child' or 'children' means any child or young person up to and including the age of eighteen years.
- the term 'staff' means both paid employees and unpaid volunteer workers.



United Lincolnshire Hospitals   
NHS Trust

Poole Hospital   
NHS Trust

 UNIVERSITY OF  
GLOUCESTERSHIRE  
at Cheltenham and Gloucester



  
Your local children's hospice

