

Name of meeting: Cabinet

Date: 17th October 2017

Title of report: Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel – Bereavement Support in Schools Findings Report

Purpose of report

To present the findings report of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel – Bereavement Support in Schools and request that Cabinet approve a response to the recommendations of the Panel.

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	No
Key Decision - Is it in the Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports?)	No
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	No
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name	n/a
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance IT and Transactional Services?	n/a
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning Support?	Julie Muscroft
Cabinet member portfolio	Community Cohesion & Schools

Electoral [wards](#) affected: All Ward

Councillors consulted: N/A

Public or private: Public

1. **Summary**

1.1 The decision to look into the bereavement support available for children and young people in school was borne out of concerns that were brought to the attention of Cllr Burke. Initial enquires revealed that there did not seem to be a consistent approach to support provided to young people experiencing bereavement. It also highlighted that some schools had a bereavement policy in place, while others did not.

1.2 An initial phase of activity took place and the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel decided that a Task Group should be set up to undertake a focus piece of work to explore this issue in more detail.

1.3 The Task Group sought to understand the role schools play in providing support or signposting children and young people going through bereavement, to appropriate services.

1.4 There was a preliminary phase of work undertaken between July 2013 and September 2014 and in September 2014, a general opportunity was provided for members of the public to comment on the work of the task group and provide comments regarding their experience of the issue.

1.5 Due to other work programme priorities, this issue was then put on hold whilst other emerging priorities were addressed.

1.6 The issue was then re-visited in 2016 and included within the 2016/17 priorities for the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee. Cllr Burke, in his role as the Scrutiny Lead Member for Children and Young People, lead on the progression of the task and arranged a number of further evidence gathering meetings

1.7 Appended to this report is the findings report of the Scrutiny Panel. A summary of the recommendations arising from the investigation is set out on page 20 of the report.

1.8 An action plan is appended to the Findings report at pages 31 to 35 and includes responses from the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Cohesion and Schools.

2. **Information required to take a decision**

Not applicable

3. **Implications for the Council**

3.1 **Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP)**

There are no specific implications for the Council at this time.

3.2 **Economic Resilience (ER)**

There are no specific implications for the Council at this time.

3.3 **Improving Outcomes for Children**

There are no specific implications for the Council at this time.

3.4 Reducing demand of services

There are no specific implications for the Council at this time.

3.5 Other (eg Legal/Financial or Human Resources)

There are no specific implications for the Council at this time.

4. Consultees and their opinions

N/A

5. Next steps

Following the presentation of the report at Cabinet, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee will consider monitoring requirements to ensure agreed recommendations are implemented.

6. Officer recommendations and reasons

That the Cabinet note the findings of the Ad-Hoc Scrutiny Panel – Bereavement Support in Schools and the response on the recommendations from the relevant Cabinet Member.

7. Cabinet portfolio holder's recommendations

N/A

8. Contact officer

Alaina McGlade – Governance & Democratic Engagement Officer Tel: 01484 221000,
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9. Background Papers and History of Decisions

N/A

10. Service Director responsible

Julie Muscroft – Service Director, Legal Governance and Commissioning

**Report of
Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel
- Bereavement Support**

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April 2017

CONTENTS	PAGE NO
1. Rationale for the review	5
2. Terms of reference and methodology	5
3. Background Information	8
4. Term of Reference 1	14
5. Term of Reference 2	16
6. Term of Reference 3	18
7. Summary of Evidence Received	19
8. Recommendations	20
9. Appendix 1 – Summary of Background Information Sources	21
10. Appendix 2 – Bereavement Support Survey	22
11. Appendix 3 – Draft Policy Template	23
12. Action Plan (including response to recommendations)	31

1. RATIONALE FOR THE REVIEW

1.1 The decision to look into the bereavement support available for children and young people in school was borne out of concerns that were brought to the attention of Cllr Burke. Initial enquires revealed that there did not seem to be a consistent approach to support provided to young people experiencing bereavement. It also highlighted that some schools had a bereavement policy in place, while others did not.

An initial phase of activity took place and the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel decided that a Task Group should be set up to undertake a focus piece of work to explore this issue in more detail.

The Task Group sought to understand the role schools play in providing support or signposting children and young people going through bereavement, to appropriate services.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE & METHODOLOGY

2.1 Membership of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel

Councillor Cahal Burke (Chair)

Councillor Donna Bellamy

Reverend Richard Burge - Statutory Scrutiny Co-optee

Margaret Dobson – Voluntary Co-optee (appointment expired during the completion of the Task Group)

2.2 Terms of Reference of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel

The approved terms of reference of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel – Bereavement Support are set out below:

1. To understand the role and responsibility of schools when supporting children and young people going through bereavement including any statutory guidance.
2. To contribute to the development of local guidance to be used by schools across Kirklees when supporting children and young people going through bereavement.
3. To examine proposals to promote the guidance within schools.

To assist with their findings in relation to the Terms of Reference set out above, the Task Group identified the below issues as additional lines of enquiry:

- A. The role of the Children's Emotional Wellbeing Service (CHEWS) in supporting children going through bereavement and do they undertake work in schools.
- B. The role of the Educational Psychology Service in supporting schools/young people going through bereavement, including information on the structure of the department and its work.
- C. Is there a dedicated officer within the department that deals with bereavement issues?
- D. How would the service be accessed?
- E. What support is available for children and young people going through bereavement?
- F. The policy that has been developed, how will this be disseminated across schools in Kirklees and will it include Academies, etc.

The Task Group was supported by Alaina McGlade and Jenny Bryce-Chan from the Governance and Democratic Engagement Team.

2.3 How the work was carried out:

The Panel used a range of methods to gather the evidence that has been used to inform this report. There was a preliminary phase of work undertaken between July 2013 and September 2014, where the Panel held a number of planning and evidence gathering meetings with the following people:

Val Flintoff – Education Officer

Jayne Whitton – Principal Educational Psychologist

Leslie Vegeris – Educational Psychologist

Yvonne white – Northorpe Hall – Service Manager – Children's Emotional Wellbeing Service (CHEWS)

In September 2014, a general opportunity was provided for members of the public to comment on the work of the task group and provide comments regarding their experience of the issue.

Due to other work programme priorities, this issue was then put on hold whilst other emerging priorities were addressed.

The issue was then re-visited in 2016 and included within the 2016/17 priorities for the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee. Cllr Burke, in his role as the Scrutiny Lead Member for Children and Young People, lead on the progression of the task and arranged a number of further evidence gathering meetings with the following people:

Jayne Whitton – Principal Educational Psychologist

Yvonne white – Northorpe Hall – Service Manager CHEWS

Michelle Ross – Children and Young People’s Engagement Officer

3 Youth Council representatives

Joseph Dennison – Chaplain, All Saints Catholic College

Kate O’Neil – Head of R.E. & Chaplaincy Manager, All Saints Catholic College

Bernice Manifold – Cover Supervisor, All Saints Catholic College

8 pupils from All Saints Catholic College

Lois Ward, Anglican Ordinand

Chris Minchin, Anglican Ordinand

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As part of the research, the Panel looked at significant statistical information relating to child bereavement.

3.1 Statistics

- Every 22 minutes in the UK a child under the age of 18 is bereaved of a parent, leaving 111 children bereaved of a parent every single day. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend or other significant person.*
- 10,133 babies, children and young people (up to the age of 25), died in the UK in 2015.*
- 1 in 29 pupils has been bereaved of a parent or sibling – that is a child in every class.*
- 1 in 10 phone calls to the Child Bereavement UK (CBUK) helpline is from a school and they had over 4000 visits to the school section of their website in 2015.*
- Only 1 in 10 British adults, bereaved by a child, said their school was very supportive at the time of their bereavement.**
- A survey of primary schools in Hull found that over 70% had a child on roll who had been bereaved of someone important to them in the last two years (Holland, 1993). All schools will be affected by bereavement at some point.
- Currently, 41 schools have attended training provided by the Educational Psychology team on Bereavement Support out of a possible 179 (23%).

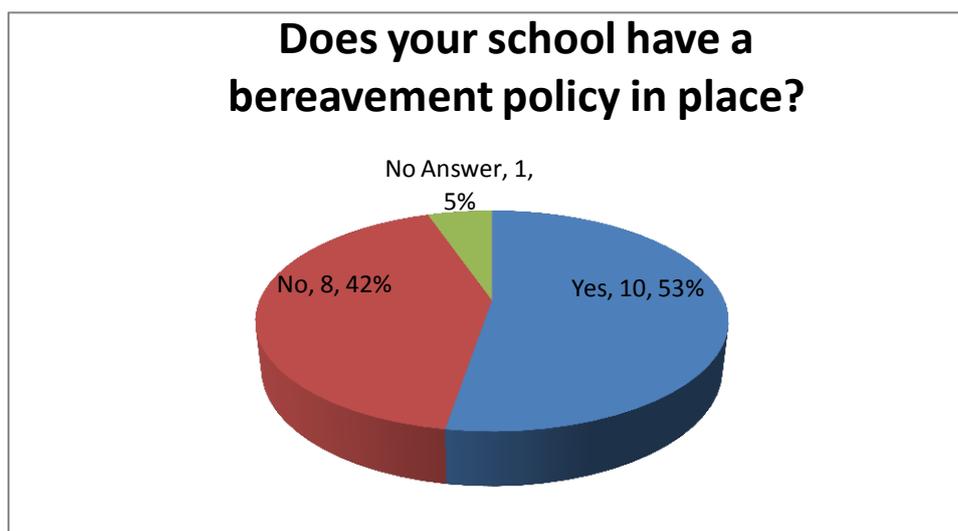
*(Child Bereavement UK Research Statistics)

** (Child Bereavement UK Omnibus Survey, YouGov, 2016)

3.2 Survey Results

3.2.1 In November 2016, a survey (attached at Appendix 2) was distributed to all schools across Kirklees through the Heads Up information system, requesting schools to advise on the current bereavement support available within schools and whether there are trained staff available within school.

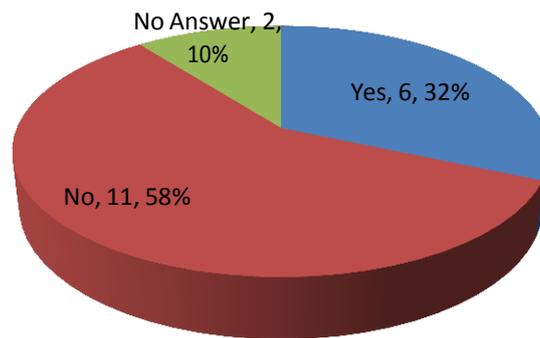
3.2.2 Nineteen schools responded to the request; three of the responses were from High Schools and sixteen from primary schools.



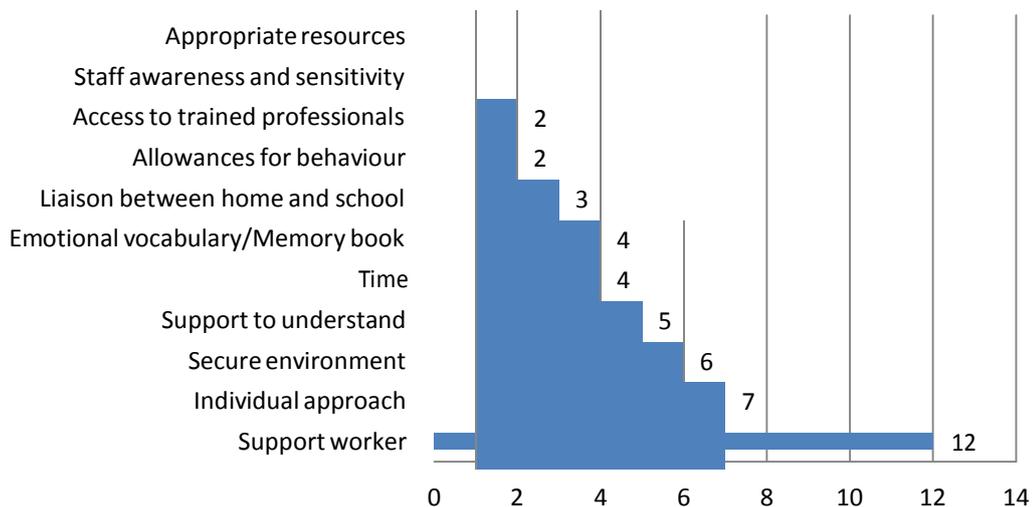
Staff specifically trained?



Attending the training session - January 2017?



3 most important factors when supporting young people through bereavement



3.3 Support already provided to schools

As part of the investigation, the Task Group considered the support already provided across the district.

3.3.1 Northorpe Hall

3.3.1.1 Through the Children's Emotional Wellbeing Service (CHEWS) service at Northorpe Hall, support is provided where emotions are impacting on day to day functioning.

3.3.1.2 Northorpe Hall operates an open telephone referral and support line, ASK CAMHS, where anyone can call for advice or support, including schools and families. Support wouldn't be offered immediately after a bereavement as the natural grieving process needs to take place. A period of disruption to emotions and behaviour after bereavement is expected and this is classed as a normal response. Support would therefore be offered where this disruption does not rectify after a couple of months after the bereavement, as at this point it may have developed to an emotional health concern rather than a normal response.

3.3.2 Educational Psychology Team

3.3.2.1 Educational Psychologists (EPs) also have a key role in supporting schools, children and young people across a wide range of needs and have expertise in children and young people's emotional and mental health and events which can affect positive mental health, including bereavement.

3.3.2.2 Every school has a contact EP and this person will normally respond to requests for support. Depending upon the specific circumstances surrounding the bereavement and the extent of the impact upon the school and wider community, other team members will be available to provide a package of support as appropriate.

3.3.2.3 The EP Team offer support and guidance to Head Teachers and senior school leaders around how best they can meet the needs of the children and young people in their care.

3.3.2.4 Research suggests that children and young people find it more beneficial (and recover from distress more) speaking with familiar people who they will have an on-going relationship or contact with. As such, EPs work alongside key members of school staff with the aim of enabling and supporting them to be able to support their students and families of their school community. Research does not promote a need for counselling in the immediacy of a traumatic experience.

3.3.2.5 EPs support schools to recognise those children most at risk of requiring specific support following bereavement and provide support and advice to those staff involved with such children and young people.

3.3.2.6 The EP Team offer guidance on how to support the staff within school, including recognising and managing their own emotional needs as well as how they can meet the needs of their pupils. Depending on the situation, this may include opportunities for adults, either individually or in small groups, to share their feelings and experiences in order to promote their own wellbeing at emotionally difficult times.

3.4 Experiences of Young People

3.4.1 The Chair of the Ad-Hoc Panel met with 3 representatives of the Kirklees Youth Council on Thursday 23rd February 2017, all of whom were in attendance at secondary schools within Kirklees. Each of the young people in attendance had an experience of bereavement and the support provided to themselves and friends within the school environment.

3.4.2 The Ad-Hoc Panel had previously determined the questions that would be put to the young people:

- *What types of loss, change and bereavement have young people in your school experienced?*
- *What understanding do these young people have of these life events when they happen to them? [What kind of 'stories' do they tell themselves and/or other people about what these events mean]?*
- *How have these life events affected them and the people around them?*
- *What ways do children in school express their feelings about loss, and bereavement and what might assist them to do this in a way that is helpful to them?*
- *Who supports pupils when they experience loss, change or bereavement in school? How well do these people understand the experience of these pupils? How do they access this support and what does it look like? What else could be done to help?*
- *What opportunities are there for pupils to share their experiences of loss, change or bereavement?*

3.4.3 Richard Burge, Task Group member also met with another group of young people at All Saints Catholic College on Thursday 16th March 2017 and put the same questions to this group.

3.4.4 All of the young people shared similar views on the impacts of a bereavement and the support they felt would best address the situation. They outlined that they felt that:

- Honest explanations regarding the situation should be provided, using age appropriate, sensitive language;
- Support provided by a stranger (e.g. a qualified practitioner) would be poorly attended— because of the lack of familiarity as well as the perception of other pupils;
- Familiar adults with knowledge of relationships should be available for support, rather than strangers;

- Support sessions should not be offered on request as requests will very rarely be made due to the stigma attached to attending these sessions – the sessions should just be advertised at a set time and should take place, regardless of anticipated attendance rates;
 - Schools should acknowledge that sometimes, young people prefer to support each other and make private spaces available, as necessary;
 - Schools should acknowledge that the death of the affected person and the subsequent funeral is not the end of the situation – suffering can be experienced months and even years later and this should not be overlooked;
 - Traditions and practical arrangements relating to funerals should be covered within relevant lessons to provide young people with an understanding of what to expect.
 - Bereavement information should be considered when planning classroom based activities on special occasions such as Mother’s Day and the preferences of the young person should be acknowledged;
 - Bereavement information should transfer with the pupil throughout their education so that future support can be provided if required.
- 3.4.5 The young people at All Saints Catholic College had access to their on-site church on a regular basis and they felt that themed opportunities for “time to remember” often helped pupils deal with grief in a positive way.
- 3.4.6 The Task Group noted that the regular use of religious vocabulary within a faith school seemed to assist pupils in accepting the difficult language used when discussing bereavement issues.
- 3.4.7 It also became apparent to the Task Group that there was a natural community support network integrated within the ethos of the faith school that seemed to be enhanced by their shared religious beliefs.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS

1. A honest, age appropriate response regarding the situation is appreciated by young people;
2. Support provided to young people should be undertaken by a familiar adult who is aware of the circumstances and the relationships involved;
3. Support sessions should not be offered on request as young people don't like to make an issue or identify that they maybe require extra support; instead, support sessions should be advertised for a particular time and take place, regardless of requests to attend;
4. Schools should allow time and make use of the fact that young people tend to prefer to comfort each other and allow young people time to share common experiences;
5. Bereavement information should be transferred to feeder schools and other local schools so that there is awareness throughout a young person's education as support or consideration of the bereavement may be required in the future;
6. There was a slight contradictory view to the CBUK guidance, relating to the language that should be used when addressing young people; although the young people felt being honest about the situation was important, they felt that the use of clear language such as "death" and "die" felt abrupt, emotionless and almost disrespectful. They preferred softer descriptions such as "passed away" as they felt this description maintained the sensitivity required whilst still providing clarity.
7. They did however agree that misleading language such as "gone to sleep" or "gone away" should be avoided, although they understood the sentiments surrounding the use of this language;
8. Young People appreciated their access to the chaplain at the faith school as they felt it was easier to talk to this person because even though they were familiar and part of the school community, the chaplain also maintained an independent role, separate of the teaching staff.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE

4.1 TOR 1 - To understand the role and responsibility of schools when supporting children and young people going through bereavement including any statutory guidance.

- 4.1.1 According to the statistics, every school in the UK will deal with a form of bereavement so it would seem appropriate for each school to have a policy to enable them to be prepared.
- 4.1.2 Research suggests that MOST children will be significantly helped by a supportive school environment and understanding social circle. SOME children may benefit from group work or one to one with a familiar adult. A FEW children may require further referral to psychological services or health practitioners. (NICE 2004)
- 4.1.3 This therefore suggests that a significant amount of support to a young person will be carried out within school, by school staff.
- 4.1.4 CBUK state that, just by carrying on with their usual day-to-day activities, schools can do a huge amount to support a grieving child. CBUK also advise that with the right help and support, most children and young people will not require help or a 'bereavement expert'.
- 4.1.5 It is important for young people to be surrounded by people who care; the understanding of familiar and trusted adults will normally be the main support mechanism required and also the preferred option of the young person.
- 4.1.6 It is because of these reasons that it is beneficial for schools to outline staff roles within a bereavement policy and the information that will be considered when identifying who will undertake the "familiar adult" role. The familiar adult requires considering on an individual basis as the adult required to provide support will differ on a case by case basis; therefore the relationships between the adults and young people is a key consideration for schools.
- 4.1.7 Schools should be aware that research undertaken by CBUK also suggests that honest and clear language around death will help prevent distress and misunderstanding.
- 4.1.8 Another consideration that schools should be aware of when providing support is that religious and cultural beliefs will also impact upon the way death is discussed, and schools will need to ensure that the wishes of the family are clearly understood. Schools need to understand that the individual beliefs of families may differ to the approach generally taken by the school.

TASK GROUP VIEWS

1. The Task Group acknowledged that there isn't any statutory guidance applicable to this issue but that Kirklees had developed their own guidance document to refer to.
2. A school with a proactive response to the situation will be more successful in providing the support required.
3. A policy designed to fit the needs of each individual school and their cohort will significantly assist a school in being prepared for a sudden bereavement occurrence.
4. The policy should be flexible enough to allow the views and wishes of the bereaved family to influence the resulting actions.
5. Included within the policy should also be a list, identifying the staff responsible for initiating the procedures, a communications policy that includes both communication between staff members, the family affected and also the media(where applicable) and a set of template letters to avoid emotional letters being drafted at a time of upset and anguish
6. It is important for each school to understand that every individual will deal with bereavement differently and that different types of support will be required for different lengths of time. Training on bereavement support for staff that will be involved in supporting children affected will assist staff in identifying the correct, individual levels of support required.
7. Schools should aim to use clear, honest language when communicating with young people but should also find out what the young person has been told at home.
8. Support after the bereavement is also important and anticipating key events i.e. Mother's Day, Father's Day etc, which could trigger emotional responses from bereaved children, should be considered when planning classroom based exercises.

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE

5.1 TOR 2 - To contribute to the development of local guidance to be used by schools across Kirklees when supporting children and young people going through bereavement.

- 5.1.1 Advice on the Child Bereavement UK website reads “A school which takes time to formalise a response before a critical incident or tragedy occurs, will be much better placed to cope should it ever have to be put into practice. However, every school is different and every situation unique. What is deemed appropriate will vary.”
- 5.1.2 During the initial phase of work, a guidance document on developing a bereavement support policy was drafted by the Educational Psychology Team and issued to all schools within Kirklees.
- 5.1.3 This document was again distributed to schools in November 2016, along with details of a training session that was taking place on bereavement support.
- 5.1.4 The Task Group reviewed the guidance document, whilst considering the advice from Child Bereavement UK;
- “The policy should be viewed more as a framework to work around rather than something prescriptive.”
- 5.1.5 The Task Group noted that schools do not currently have access to a policy template which they can adapt to meet the requirements of their individual school. The Task Group felt that schools would benefit from a draft policy template being available, alongside the guidance document to assist them in developing a policy appropriate to the needs of their individual school.
- 5.1.6 The Task Group considered the advice from Child Bereavement UK regarding template letters being available for use by schools at the time of a bereavement and felt this was an important element to be included within a draft policy template.
- 5.1.7 The Task Group noted that within the guidance document, there is a brief reference to the fact that cultural and religious beliefs should be considered. Within each religion, there are often variations in understanding, interpretation and customs relating to the arrangements undertaken immediately after a death has occurred and that these arrangements will often impact on a number of considerations and actions to be taken by the school.
- 5.1.8 As mentioned previously, a familiar adult would usually be the most appropriate person to provide support within school and this requirement

should be outlined in the guidance issued to schools.

- 5.1.9 As part of this outline, a list of roles and responsibilities is also useful to ensure staff are aware of their duties, especially in the case of a sudden or unexpected bereavement.
- 5.1.10 The Educational Psychology team provide training for schools on Bereavement support. The next training session is due to take place in May 2017.
- 5.1.11 The Educational Psychology team have advised that a review of bereavement support will take place at Easter 2017 and the revisions will have been finalised and ready for prior to the training session. The review will incorporate to findings of this Task Group report in addition to amendments to the guidance document issued to schools.

TASK GROUP VIEWS

1. The Task Group noted that the advice from Child Bereavement UK stated that the guidance document issued to schools should be more of a framework. They felt a draft policy template document should be produced to sit alongside the guidance document to provide an easy to follow structure that assists schools in developing their own policy.
2. The Task Group felt that the advice from Child Bereavement UK regarding template letters being available for use by schools at the time of bereavement was important to avoid mistakes being made due to drafting the letters at a time of grief.
3. The Task Group felt that different requirements of different religions and cultures should be addressed by schools and therefore a paragraph to advise schools should be included within the guidance document.
4. The Task Group considered the fact that everyone processes grief differently and in addition, deal with grief differently dependent on age. Because of this, they felt that there would be some differences in approach between primary and secondary schools and therefore felt that, as part of the review in April 2017, the benefit of drafting separate policy drafts for primary and secondary schools should be investigated.
5. A common message that came from young people was that approaches to supporting bereaved children need to be appropriate to their circumstances, including age and stage of development as well as degree of distress and the family support available outside of school.
6. Taking all of the above into account, the Task Group considered the information available on the CBUK website and developed a draft policy template (attached at Appendix 3) –they feel this initial draft of a policy template should contribute to the bereavement support review being undertaken by the Educational Psychology team in April 2017.

6. TERMS OF REFERENCE

6.1 TOR 3 - To examine proposals to promote the guidance within schools.

- 6.1.1 The guidance document was created by the Educational Psychology team in 2013 and advertised internally to schools in September 2013.
- 6.1.2 It was again advertised on the “Heads Up” system in November 2016 along with the Task Group survey attached at Appendix 2 of this report and an advertisement for the next training session that was to take place at Cliffe House on Tuesday 17th January 2017.
- 6.1.3 In addition to official training sessions put on by the Educational Psychology team, specific requests are also regularly dealt with on an individual basis. Going forward, the Educational Psychology team have advised that they would have the capacity to continue to provide two training sessions per school year as a minimum.
- 6.1.4 They have also advised that, going forward; details of the reviewed guidance will be distributed to all schools in summer term 2017 and referenced at subsequent training sessions.

TASK GROUP VIEWS

1. The Task Group noted that the Educational Psychology Team have a current training programme that is offered to schools for a small fee. The Task Group felt this training should continue to be offered regularly and felt that additional promotion of the training should be targeted at schools that have not previously attended a training session.
2. The Task Group felt that as part of the promotion of the training, a brief, one side of A4 “facts sheet”, including the statistics from CBUK website, would be helpful to demonstrate the importance of the issue and to clearly emphasise how likely it is that a school will be required to deal with an incident of bereavement.
3. Young People felt that it would be beneficial to include feedback from young people in the area as part of the revised training package. The Task Group felt investigation into the possibility of a short feedback video being created by a mixture of local young people would be worthwhile.

7. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE RECEIVED

7.1 Key Themes to be considered by schools

- 7.1.1 1 in 29 pupils has been bereaved of a parent or sibling – given that this statistically equates to a child in every class, it is likely that every school will be required to support a bereaved child.
- 7.1.2 To prepare for bereavement occurrences, a policy relevant to the needs of each individual school will assist a school to respond appropriately and provide an effective and well managed approach.
- 7.1.3 Use age appropriate language when communicating with young people. 'Helpful' euphemisms can often confuse children, especially younger children.
- 7.1.4 Consider how the long term needs of the bereaved will be met, including the future impact on pupils, and ways in which support can be provided;
- 7.1.5 Consider the individual and cultural needs of the bereaved.
- 7.1.6 Having a suitable trained staff member in bereavement support will assist in a school being aware of all of the above issues.
- 7.1.7 Promotion of training available to schools is important to ensure schools are aware of the issues they may face when dealing with a bereavement.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Set out below is a complete list of the recommendations made by the Panel. The response to the recommendations is summarised in the attached action plan.

1. That the draft policy framework developed by the Task Group (attached at Appendix 3) be incorporated into the review of the guidance for schools (2013) by the Educational Psychology team.
2. That the reviewed guidance documents be distributed to schools prior to September 2017 and be reinforced with a continued offer of training sessions for schools, delivered on at least an annual basis.
3. That, as part of the review in April 2017, the benefit of drafting separate policy drafts for primary and secondary schools be investigated.
4. That the Educational Psychology team continue to promote the guidance within all schools on at least an annual basis and encourage schools to develop a bereavement support policy that meets the individual needs of each school.
5.
 - a) That increased awareness of the importance of providing the correct support following a significant bereavement be committed to by the Educational Psychology Team and regularly communicated to schools;
 - b) The compilation of a fact sheet will assist in the communication of the key facts, questions and statistics relevant to bereavement incidents.
6. That specific advice be relayed to schools to suggest that the individual pupil information shared between schools at points of transition should include details of any significant bereavement experiences suffered by a child.

Summary of background information sources

- a) <http://childbereavementuk.org/about-us>
- b) <http://childbereavementuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Schools-Presentation-Redacted.pdf?noredir=true>
- c) Holland, J (1993). 'Child bereavement in Humberside', *Educational Research*, 35, 3, 289–297
- d) <http://www.leicestershirehealthyschools.org.uk>
- e) <http://www.cruse.org.uk/for-schools/bereavement-policy>

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT SURVEY

Name of School:

Q1 Does your school have a bereavement policy in place?Yes No

a) If yes, when was this policy last reviewed?

b) If no,

i. Do you plan to put a policy in place and if so by when?

ii. Will you be attending the training session on Tuesday 17th January 2017 at Cliffe House (as advertised on Heads Up) to support you with this?Yes No **Q2 What support does the school provide for children/young people going through bereavement?**

Q3 Do you have staff specifically trained to provide support to children/young people going through bereavement and loss?Yes No **Q4 What do you consider to be the 3 most important factors when supporting children/young people going through bereavement and loss?**

1.

2.

3.

Draft Policy for Schools dealing with bereavement



Approved by Governors.....

To be reviewed.....

April 2017

[INSERT SCHOOL NAME] School

Bereavement Policy

School Background:

Provide overview of school's aims and ethos (take from school website)

1. Rationale:

In the event of a sudden or unexpected bereavement school staff may feel considerable anxiety about knowing how to best respond. This is understandable in a culture where death is seldom openly discussed.

Every 22 minutes in the UK a parent of dependent children dies, leaving about 41,000 bereaved children each year. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend or other significant person, and, sadly, around 12,000 children die in the UK each year.

Within our school community there will almost always be some recently bereaved children who are struggling with their own situation – or sometimes the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a pupil. We would hope to not encounter such circumstances, but the statistical inevitability of such an occurrence implies the necessity of having a Bereavement Policy in place in order that we might be proactive, rather than reactive, when responding to these sensitive situations.

As children spend a significant amount of their time at school, teachers and staff members will be the primary source of care and support. Bereaved children may see school as a safe haven away from the turmoil of emotions at home and may look to trusted staff members for help. Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support some children – or staff – require, though referral to more specialist support should be a consideration where the impact of grief is more complex. Additional information and resources can be accessed at www.childbereavement.org.uk

The purpose of the Bereavement Policy is to help everyone involved at a time when there may be shock, upset and confusion, ensuring that there is as little disruption as possible, effective communication takes place and each member of the school community is supported to help them through a very difficult time.

2. Objectives:

The core intentions of the policy are:

- To support pupils and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after bereavement
- To enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between school, family and community.
- To identify key staff within school and LA, and clarify the pathway of support.
- The Children Act 1989 aimed to ensure that the welfare of the child was paramount, working in partnership with parents to protect the child from harm (http://www.careandthelaw.org.uk/eng/b_section2). All intentions of this policy endorse that aim as we endeavour to counter any adverse effects of bereavement and maintain pupils' emotional well-being.

3. The role of the governing body

- To approve policy and ensure its implementation, to be reviewed annually.

4. The role of the head teacher

- To monitor progress and liaise with external agencies.
- To respond to media enquiries.
- To be first point of contact for family/child concerned.
- To keep the governing body fully informed.
- To identify the person responsible to have bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff.
- To identify the person responsible for recognising complex grief and make referrals to external agencies, as appropriate.
- In the absence of the Head Teacher, a designated lead should already have been identified.

5. The role of the LA

- To advise and support staff. Consult on referral pathways and identification of complex grief.

6. Individual roles & responsibilities

Complete narrative relevant to individual school

7. Child new to the school

Before children join the school, we find out as much as possible about every child, to tailor the academic, social and emotional teaching in school to match their needs. Parents should be asked about any previous changes that might have profoundly affected their child (divorce, bereavement etc), in order for appropriate support to be in place for the child.

8. The first few days

Schools to outline their approach to this area

9. The funeral

Schools to outline their approach to this area

10. Support for staff

Schools to outline their approach to this area

11. Support for pupils

Schools to outline their approach to this area

12. Remembering

Schools to outline their approach to this area

13. Procedures: in the event of the death of a child or staff member

1. Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Head teacher and their wishes respected in communicating with others. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations.
2. Staff should be informed before pupils and be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance.
3. It is essential that all staff - including those in the front office - are informed straightaway, ideally before pupils.
4. Pupils who are affected should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them.
5. A letter to all school families affected should be composed at the earliest opportunity and a decision made as to whom, and how, it should be distributed.
6. The school should be aware that the school timetable may need a degree of flexibility to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of children affected by the situation. However, minimal disruption to the timetable also offers a sense of security and familiarity.
7. Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate.
8. In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for funeral attendance may be clarified, with the consideration of full or partial school closure in some circumstances.
9. Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Head Teacher.
10. School should be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life so information should be recorded and shared with relevant people, particularly at transition points.

14. Suggested templates for letter to parents:

Template of a letter informing parents of the death of a member of staff

Dear Parent/ Carer

I am sorry to have to tell you that a much-loved member of our staff [NAME] has died. Your child's [Class Teacher/Form Tutor/Head of Year] had the sad task of informing the children of his/her tragic death.

[NAME] has been a [teacher/teaching assistant etc] at this school for a number of years. Our thoughts are with their family at this time and in an effort to try to respond to his/her death in a positive way, all the children have been informed. Many of the children will have been quite distressed at the news, but we are very aware that factual information and emotional support are the best means of helping children deal with bereavement. I am sure there will be many parents who are also saddened by the news.

As you know, when someone dies it is normal for family and friends to experience many different feelings, and children are likely to ask questions about the death, which we will answer in an age-appropriate way in school, but if you feel you would like more support and advice yourself, please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

I am sorry to be the bearer of sad news, but I appreciate an occurrence like this impacts the whole school community. I am so grateful for the thriving partnership we have with parents and trust that we, together, will be able to guide and support the children through what may be, for many, a very new experience in their lives.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

***Think about sharing details of the funeral or a collective worship/ remembrance session**

Template of a letter informing parents of the death of a pupil

Before sending a letter home to parents about the death of a pupil, permission must be gained from the child's parents.

The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed by the parents and school.

Dear Parent/ Carer

Your child's [class teacher/form tutor etc] had the sad task of informing the children that [NAME], a pupil in [CLASS] has sadly died as a result of an ongoing illness/ tragic accident etc. He/She was a very popular member of the class and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her.

As you know, when someone dies it is normal for family and friends to experience many different feelings, and children are likely to ask questions about the death, which we will answer in an age-appropriate way in school.

I am sorry to be the bearer of sad news, but I appreciate an occurrence like this impacts the whole school community. I am so grateful for the thriving partnership we have with parents and trust that we, together, will be able to guide and support the children through what may be, for many, a very new experience in their lives. However, if you feel you would like more support and advice yourself, please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Template of a letter to bereaved parents

Dear [NAME]

We are so very sorry to hear of [NAME'S] death. There are no words to express the sadness of losing a child and our thoughts are with you in the anguish you must be experiencing at this current time.

[He/She] was a much loved member of our school family. Clearly, as a school community, they will be greatly missed and we are doing our best to offer comfort and support to [his/her] friends and classmates.

If we can do anything to help as you plan [NAME'S] funeral service or other memorial opportunities, please let us know. We will be writing out to the parents of pupil's within school to advise them of [NAME'S] death and will share the content of the letter with your family prior to its distribution. In the meantime, if you would like us to include any specific details regarding the funeral, please let us know.

Be assured that you are in our thoughts at this very sad time and do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of support in any way.

With sympathy,

Headteacher

***Think about a collective event and consider whether this letter is the right moment to discuss with family**

SCRUTINY ACTION PLAN

Project: Ad-Hoc Scrutiny Panel – Bereavement Support

Lead Governance Officer: Alaina McGlade

No.	Recommendation	Directorate and Cabinet Member asked to coordinate the response to the recommendation?	FOR COMPLETION			
			Do you accept the recommendation? If no, please explain why.	How will it be implemented?	Who will be responsible for implementation?	What is the estimated timescale for implementation?
1	That the draft policy framework developed by the Task Group (attached at Appendix 3 to the report) be incorporated into the review of the guidance for schools (2013) by the Educational Psychology team.	Guidance to schools on responding to bereavement and advice on developing a policy was developed and circulated to all schools by the educational psychology team in 2013. The Task Group developed a draft policy framework to add to the guidance for schools to use when developing their own policies. This will be added to the guidance which is currently being revised.	YES	The Task Group developed a draft policy framework to add to the guidance for schools to use when developing their own policies. This will be added to the guidance which is currently being revised.	Jayne Whitton, Principle Educational Psychologist	By 1 st November 2017

2	That the reviewed guidance documents be distributed to schools prior to September 2017 and be reinforced with a continued offer of training sessions for schools, delivered on at least an annual basis.	The training offered previously to schools will be repeated on at least an annual basis. This training builds schools' understanding further in relation to the impact of bereavement upon children and young people and how they can provide effective support.	YES	The training offered previously to schools will be repeated on at least an annual basis.	Jayne Whitton, Principle Educational Psychologist	By 1 st November 2017 (The original agreement of September 2017 has been delayed due to capacity issues)
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3	That, as part of the review in April 2017, the benefit of drafting separate policy drafts for primary and secondary schools be investigated.	The benefit of having separate policies for primary and secondary schools will be considered.	YES	The Educational Psychology Team will consider whether it is deemed necessary to establish separate policies for primary and secondary schools.	Jayne Whitton, Principle Educational Psychologist	By 1 st November 2017 (The original agreement of September 2017 has been delayed due to capacity issues)
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4	That the Educational Psychology team continues to promote the guidance within all schools on at least an annual basis and encourage schools to develop a bereavement support policy that meets the individual needs of each school.	Given that the Educational Psychology both developed the guidance and also have regular contact with all schools, they are ideally placed to promote the guidance and need for a bereavement policy. This will happen at least annually.	YES	The guidance will be shared with schools on at least an annual basis.	Jayne Whitton, Principle Educational Psychologist	Before the end of the 2017/18 school year
5	f) That increased awareness of the importance of providing the correct support following a significant bereavement be committed to by the Educational Psychology Team and regularly communicated to schools;	The Educational Psychology team will promote the guidance and offer training at least annually. They will also provide advice to schools following a bereavement.	YES	Training and guidance will be offered to schools on at least an annual basis.	Jayne Whitton, Principle Educational Psychologist	At the start of the 2018/19 school year

5	b) The compilation of a fact sheet will assist in the communication of the key facts, questions and statistics relevant to bereavement incidents.	This will be developed and added to the flier promoting the training –to get across to schools the prevalence of bereavement.	YES	A fact sheet will be incorporated within the flier that is issued when training is made available to schools – this will happen on at least an annual basis.	Jayne Whitton, Principle Educational Psychologist	At the start of the 2018/19 school year
6	That specific advice be relayed to schools to suggest that the individual pupil information shared between schools at points of transition should include details of any significant bereavement experiences suffered by a child.	This will be appropriately enhanced in the updated guidance and also reinforced in the training sessions.	YES	The advice will be incorporated into the updated guidance and also included within the training sessions.	Jayne Whitton, Principle Educational Psychologist	At the start of the 2018/19 school year