

ASK ME: EDUCATION

**A NEW APPROACH
TO SUPPORTING
BEREAVED STUDENTS**



**WINSTON'S
WISH **WW****

Giving hope to grieving children

ABOUT WINSTON'S WISH

- Winston's Wish is the UK's first childhood bereavement charity providing accessible digital grief support service for children and young people (up to 25) who are bereaved or facing the death of someone important to them. We provide help no matter how long the person has been living with grief or who they are bereaved of.
- We reach and impact the lives of over **90,000** bereaved children and young people every year.
- We provide direct support services to children and young people, as well as advice, guidance and training for the adults supporting them.
- We have a team of over **100 Youth Ambassadors** between the ages of 8 and 25 who use their living experience of grief to help shape our services, our communications and our campaigns – including Ask Me: Education.

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TALK GRIEF™

The Youth-Led Grief Network

FOR 13 – 25 YEAR OLDS

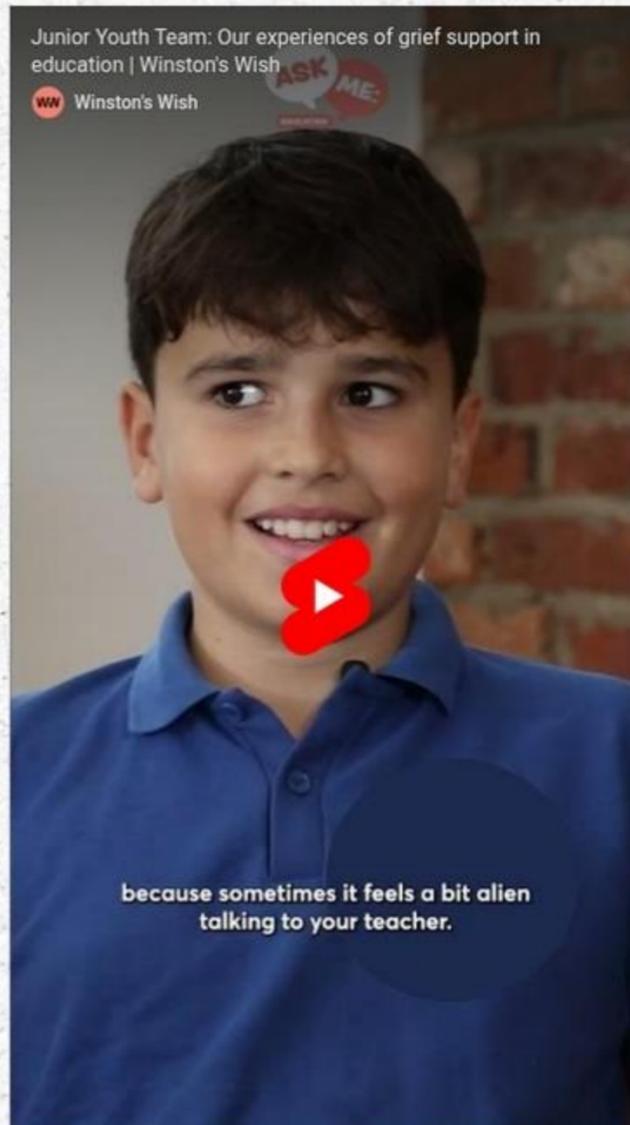
talkgrief.org



MY OWN EXPERIENCE
AS A BEREAVED YOUNG
PERSON IN EDUCATION



EXPERIENCES OF OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE ON THE WINSTON'S WISH YOUTH TEAM



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THE EFFECT OF BEREAVEMENT ON EDUCATION

- Children/adolescents who have experienced the death of a parent have significantly lower probabilities of completing all levels of education (compulsory, high school, vocational, university) compared to those who had not lost a parent.
- Bereaved children show lower attainment and aspirations for continued learning.
- Bereaved children are at risk of changed friendships, isolation and disadvantage.
- Parentally bereaved young people's GCSE scores were an average of half a grade lower than their non-bereaved peers.
- Research shows that children who have experienced a close bereavement have lower than average GCSE scores.

¹ Burrell, L.V., Mehlum, L. & Qin, P. (2020).

² Long-term impact of childhood bereavement Preliminary analysis of the 1970 British Cohort Study (BCS70)

³ Paul, S. et al. (2020)

⁴ Abdelnoor & Hollins, 2004 cited in CBN Policy Briefing (2021)

⁵ Curriculum and Assessment Review, Department for Education (2024)

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YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCE OF BEING BEREAVED WHILE IN EDUCATION

In a survey of over 300 bereaved children and young people (aged 8 to 25):

- **Four out of five** grieving students say they aren't being supported in education.
- **72%** said they did not feel adequately supported whilst in education.
- **72%** said they were not asked what support they needed.
- **79%** rated the support they received during education a 5 out of 10 or less.

"They (school) never spoke to you about it (bereavement) or asked how they could help. They focused on grades."

- When asked if they knew of or were made aware of a school bereavement policy, 97% of parents / carers of bereaved students answered 'no'.

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BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THIS WAY.....

Supportive teacher relationships are shown to buffer the negative effects of grief, especially when they:

- Validate the child's emotions.
- Maintain academic expectations with flexibility.
- Provide stability and routine.

(Dyregrov, A. (2008))

Schools that implement bereavement programmes see:

- Increased emotional regulation in pupils.
- Improved classroom behaviour and learning engagement.
- Better long-term academic performance compared to peers without support.

(Holland, J. (2008))



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ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL

Bereavement training and programmes are not currently mandatory in UK schools, colleges or universities.

Until now, bereavement policies have been the default response—a uniform, standardised approach designed to ensure every grieving student receives the same support.

But this off-the-shelf, one-size-fits-all model, while easy to administer, often reduces care to a tick-box exercise and can make an already painful experience even harder.

Grief is deeply personal, and no two students will navigate it in the same way. That's why it's essential to ask them directly:

WHAT DO YOU NEED?

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

WHAT CAN THE SCHOOL, COLLEGE, OR UNIVERSITY DO TO HELP?

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IT'S TIME FOR CHANGE



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ASK ME: EDUCATION

Encouraging education professionals and students to work together to create support plans that make them feel safe, supported and reflect their individual needs.

Equipping educators with skills, confidence and tools support bereaved students to thrive academically and beyond.

Bereaved students across the UK are asking you to join them by:

- 1) Signing the Ask Me: Education Manifesto.
- 2) Tearing up policy and ditching one-size-fits-all solutions in favour of offering personalised, compassionate and collaborative support through the Implementing the Ask Me Bereavement Plan.
- 3) Making a commitment to ask bereaved students what they need, never assuming what's best.

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ASK ME:

Educators Manifesto

for Supporting Bereaved Students

I will treat bereaved students with empathy always and ask them how they want to handle their grief, never assuming or deciding what's best for them.

ASK ME:

EDUCATION

3
I commit to **communicate.**

Even when I don't have the perfect words, I won't stay silent, and I will never treat grief as a taboo. I'll communicate with bereaved students on their terms and in the way that suits them. I'll share what needs to be shared with colleagues, so they don't have to explain their bereavement again and again.

4
I commit to **understanding grief.**

I will keep learning about grief; how it can look, feel and change. Whether their grief is recent or years past, I will pay attention and be ready to respond with understanding, not assumptions.

5
I commit to **being flexible.**

I will make space for grief – with deadlines, lesson topics, attendance, expectations, and my approach. I know that flexibility isn't about lowering standards; it's about creating the conditions where bereaved students can feel safe enough to succeed.

6
I commit to **making support visible and available.**

From spaces to trusted people, from tools to time out, I will make sure bereaved students know what is there for them – and that it's available whenever they need it.

1
I commit to **giving bereaved students choice.**

I will ask, listen and give them choice about how they want to be supported in their grief. I'll ditch the one-size-fits-all approach, because I recognise that each student will grieve differently. I will work with the student to understand their needs and check in regularly to understand how they might change as they move through their education. I'll keep offering choice – to speak, to stay silent, to change their mind.

2
I commit to **leading with empathy.**

Before anything, I am human, and I will commit to treat students with kindness, compassion and empathy regardless of the challenges grief can cause. I will recognise that grief comes into the classroom and touches every part of their lives. With empathy, I can build trust and create the safety they need to learn, grow, and thrive academically and beyond.



Scan here for more information on the Ask Me: Education campaign

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Registered Charity Number 1061359
(England and Wales), SC041140 (Scotland)

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ASK ME: EDUCATION BEREAVEMENT PLAN

The ASK Me: Bereavement Plan is designed to offer young people the space to **share their experiences of loss** and explore what could be done to support them in your education setting. This is a **dynamic document** designed to grow with the young person and, with regular review, follow them throughout their education.

Our implementor guides are designed to **help adults to understand** how the bereavement plan works and to offer some suggestions about getting started, but allowing enough flexibility to shape it around the young person and complete it in their own way, at their **own pace**.



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ASK ME: EDUCATION BEREAVEMENT PLAN

WINSTON'S WISH WW **ASK ME**

Ask Me: Education Child Booklet

This is a space for the child to share and express how they feel and what they would like adults to know. This can also be a space for adults working with the child to note any observations or interactions. **This can be a creative conversation, using drawing, communication aids or anything else the child is familiar with.**

Date created: Date for review:

Plan for:

Created with:

Your key contact(s):

Who has died, or is dying?
A space to explore what the child may want to share, who is in their family and who supports them.





Support is immediately available on weekdays (excluding bank holidays) from 8am to 8pm
08088 020 021 ask@winstonswish.org winstonswish.org

WINSTON'S WISH WW **ASK ME**

Ask Me: Education Bereavement Plan for Early Years and KS1

This plan is for Early Years and Key Stage 1 education staff to complete with the Parent or Carer of the child. As much as possible we would advise that children are included in this conversation, and given as much choice as possible in how their bereavement is supported. We would encourage you to use the child booklet to give the child space to contribute. This can be a creative conversation, using drawing, communication aids or anything else the child is familiar with. **You do not need to complete every section, and should be led by the child and their adult.** Education professionals can use the 'Implementors Guide' to support the conversation. This plan will adapt and change throughout the child's education journey and a child (or their family) should be able to make any changes at any time.

Date created: Date for review:

Plan for:

Created with:

Your key contact(s):

Who has died or is dying?
A space to share their name, their relationship to the child, how they died or their illness and anything else you'd like to share.



Home life: A space to talk about who is at home and how everyone is feeling, and any important beliefs the child has (culture, religion and spirituality).

Support is immediately available on weekdays (excluding bank holidays) from 8am to 8pm
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WINSTON'S WISH WW **ASK ME**

Ask Me: Education Bereavement Plan for KS2+

This is your plan - You don't have to answer all of these sections, just answer what you can, when you can. Keep coming back to it to make changes or when there are new things that you'd like people to know and support you with. This can be a creative space for you to express yourself and your needs.

Date created: Date for review:

Plan for:

Created with:

Your key contact(s):

Who has died or is dying?
A space to share their name, their relationship to you, how they died or their illness and anything else you'd like to share.

Home life:
A space to talk about who is at home and how everyone is feeling, and any important beliefs the child has (culture, religion and spirituality).

Who supports me outside of education?
A space to share who you go to for support and help.

Support is immediately available on weekdays (excluding bank holidays) from 8am to 8pm
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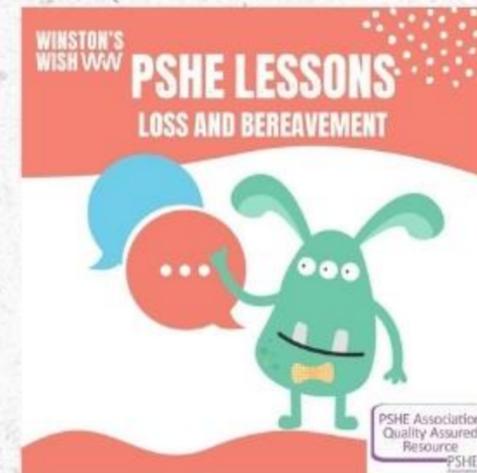


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SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

- **Access to free information and resources at winstonswish.org**
 - What do children understand about death
 - Helping a bereaved child return to school
 - How can exam results day impact grieving young people?
- **Free PSHE lesson plans on loss and bereavement** (currently for key stages 1 to 4)
- **Spotlight Sessions**
Three hour training spotlighting various topics including Autism, Suicide etc
- **Study Days:**
 - Introduction to Childhood Bereavement
 - Complicated Grief, Sudden Death and Trauma
 - Anticipatory Grief



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SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

- **Rapid Response Training**

Usually delivered within the first week to month of a bereavement within the school community.

- **Bespoke Training**

- Tailored to your needs and requirements
- Online or in-person

"[I now have a] better understanding of the process of grief in children, how it can fluctuate and ways to manage and support this in the classroom. It was clear that [the trainer] understood the practicalities of offering this support in schools."

"[I've learnt the] activities I can use to support children and the language that would be appropriate for children at different stages of development."

"It was helpful to learn the theories, activities, hearing the voice of the child who have experienced bereavement and listening to different experiences and ideas."

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EARLY IMPLEMENTERS

And it's already being embraced in educational establishments across the UK.

Providing young people with space to explore their grief and not to be judged for how they respond is key to what we seek to do in our schools. No two people experience bereavement the same and so we have to let them (the students) communicate with us what they feel they need. We want to always be pursuing the best for our students, and being part of this [Ask Me: Education] gives us the opportunity to do this.

Mr D Greenshields, Vice Principal, Emmanuel College

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“

One thing I've learned about working with young people is that they operate best when you give them a voice and allow them to be part of something. This is why I'm fully behind the 'Ask Me' campaign, because I believe it will allow educational professionals to be part of a movement which will allow children to grieve in a way that works best for them; I know that we will become better by working with these youngsters and will ensure we have the right training to help children feel supported through the most difficult period of their childhood.

”

Chris Edwards, Headmaster, Brighton Hill Community School

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HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Sign the manifesto:
winstonswish.org/askme



ASK ME:

Educators Manifesto for bereaved students

A commitment to **giving bereaved students choice**

A commitment to **leading with empathy**

A commitment to **communicate**

A commitment to **understanding grief**

A commitment to **being flexible**

A commitment to **making support visible and available**

Grief doesn't have to erase their potential.
With the right support in education,
bereaved students can thrive
academically, emotionally, and beyond.

winstonswish.org/askme



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Share the campaign
with your communities:
winstonswish.org/askme

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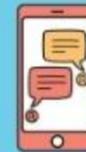
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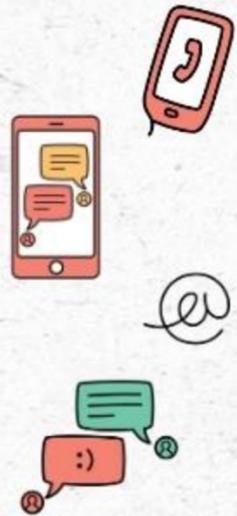


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GRIEF SUPPORT

If you need immediate grief support or advice, please reach out to the Winston's Wish bereavement team:



- Call 08088 020 021
- Text or WhatsApp 07418 341 800
- Email ask@winstonswish.org
- Live chat at winstonswish.org

Someone is available to speak with between 8am and 8pm, Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays).





winstonswish.org/askme

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