

Cold Ash Pre-school: Bereavement Policy

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Health

The Provider must promote the good health and wellbeing of staff, children and visitors attending the setting.

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Information and Records

Providers must maintain records and obtain and share information to ensure the safe and efficient management of the setting, and to help ensure the needs of all children are met.

Policy Statement:

Within the Cold Ash Pre-school community there will be times when we have, in setting, bereaved children who are struggling with their loss, or sometimes the death of a member of staff or a child from the setting, which may have an impact on the whole pre-school community.

Whilst we would hope to not encounter such circumstances, we have to remember every death and the circumstances in which it occurs is different and this policy is in place to make sure we deal with each situation professionally, sensitively and compassionately.

On most occasions, support and understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of their family and friends may be all that is needed. As a pre-school, we will work with the families to support the children/families and staff in the best way possible and with the support of the local authority if this is required.

Referral to other services and agencies (West Berkshire Educational Psychology Service) will not be offered immediately as grief is a natural process and can take time and is completely normal. If the grief continues to be overwhelming, then additional support will be advised.

Our Aim:

Most Children and adults can be effectively supported through bereavement and loss by those with whom they already have a relationship. However, we want to make sure pre-school staff and others have the skills to respond effectively and confidently to a death in the pre-school community. It is extremely important that we recognise that everyone experiences bereavement and grief differently and that there is no right or wrong way to do it.

Therefore it is our aim:

- To provide appropriate support to children and/or staff before (where applicable), during and after a bereavement.
- To provide a safe and calm environment for children and staff.
- To ensure there is effective communication between home and pre-school and to provide parents with information on how to access other support (if it is required).
- To work with the local authority and other agencies as/if applicable.

The role of the leadership team:

- To be aware of/oversee the support required and provided, liaising with external agencies as appropriate.
- To be the first point of contact for the family/child concerned.
- To respond to media enquiries if required.
- To ensure staff have read the bereavement policy and are able to support a family/child or staff member through their grief.
- To contact the local authority and other agencies as/if appropriate.
- To signpost families to other agencies/means of support.

The role of the staff:

- To help provide a safe and calm environment for all.
- To act as a 'trusted adult' to support children and proactively enable them to have the time and space to talk.
- To help monitor the wellbeing of the children, identify concerns, and escalate where additional support may be required.
- To ensure any safeguarding concerns are shared with the Designated Safety Lead (DSL).

Death of a child:

In most circumstances the family will notify Cold Ash Pre-school as soon as possible. If the death of the child has occurred during a school holiday because the pre-school will be shut, the family may contact a staff member that they are familiar with. The staff member must then contact the pre-school Leader, or if they are unavailable the pre-school deputy, to share the information. With agreement of the family, the information will be shared with remaining staff members, the committee and the wider pre-school if requested by the parents/guardians. This needs to be carried out in a sensitive and supportive manner.

Staff may need to support the other children in pre-school and answer any questions honestly in an age-appropriate way, whilst trying to avoid creating any extra worry or anxiety. Working closely with parents/guardians during this time is extremely important. Staff may wish to attend the funeral and this should be discussed with the bereaved family.

If a child dies at pre-school:

Any member of staff concerned about a child's health should notify a senior member of staff immediately (All staff are first aid trained and receive recurrent training every 3 years). An ambulance will be called if the situation is deemed serious by an available member of staff. The parents/guardians will also be notified at this time and may be advised to meet the ambulance at hospital. In this instance a member of staff will accompany the child to hospital. The chairperson will be notified of any situation deemed necessary to call the emergency services. Staff members not involved with the situation will take the rest of the children to another area whilst the unwell child is being attended to.

Staff may be required to perform emergency life-saving procedures/CPR to the child whilst waiting for the ambulance to arrive. Once the ambulance arrives they will take over the care of the child and will decide on any further actions. The pre-school will notify the Local Authority if there is a death in the pre-school at the earliest opportunity. All members of staff will adhere to the confidentiality policy and refer any questions or enquiries to the Leader or the Chairperson.

Support for Staff:

Following the death of a child in pre-school, staff may require extra support. This may be a quiet area for reflection or time when all staff can sit and share their thoughts. All information shared during these times will remain confidential. If further support is required we will access local bereavement support groups or get advice from the Local Authority or the Early Years Alliance.

It is important that the pre-school are made aware of significant dates where children or staff may need extra support e.g. Birthdays, Mothers Day, Fathers Day etc.

Support for the family:

The Leader or Chairperson should speak to the family as soon as possible and offer support. A letter of condolence will also be sent. If appropriate a collection for flowers should be organised and if agreed with the family, staff members should attend the funeral if they wish. Lines of communication should remain open as a support system to the family until they no longer need it.

Death of a member of staff:

Most of the above information applies to the death of a member of staff. If all other staff members wish to attend the funeral, the pre-school will shut for the day to allow this to happen.

Procedure following a bereavement:

- Wherever possible (and if deemed appropriate), the Leader/key worker will attempt to make contact with the bereaved family before taking any other action. This is to ensure any information that is communicated to the staff, pre-school families, wider community and possibly the media is factual, avoids rumour or confusion and is in line with the family's wishes. If it is not possible to make contact with the family, and news of the death is already in the public arena, the Leader and Chairperson will need to manage this and will do so by taking advice from the local authority.
- The Leader will inform staff of any death and agree how information will be shared with children and their families. This information will need to be shared in a supportive and age-appropriate way.
- Staff will be informed of the typical responses to bereavement and how to manage this.

- The Leader will notify all parents/guardians/carers/other settings of the death and will offer advice on how to support their child/children/staff, should they be affected. If the media require information, a statement will be compiled by the leadership team with advice from the local authority if required.
- All staff will monitor the wellbeing of the children and each other, identifying concerns and providing support if required.
- Keep the lines of communication open, if appropriate work with the families/staff members to create a plan moving forward, it may be that continuing to attend pre-school is in the best interest of the child that is grieving, a transition plan may need to be drawn up etc.
- If a bereaved child returns to setting, liaise with the family to ensure everyone knows what has been discussed with the child, so there is no confusing/conflicting information given to them. Children need to have their grief acknowledged and to be comforted when distressed.
- Staff that require advice or support can contact West Berkshire Educational Psychology Staff Support Helpline via telephone number 01635503590
- See Cold Ash Pre-school Dependents policy for information on time off for staff members who have suffered a bereavement.

Useful Websites Offering Support:

For Children and young people:

www.winstonwish.org/coronavirus

www.daisydream.org.uk - Daisy's Dream

www.facebook.com/seesawcharity (Oxfordshire bereavement charity)

www.childbereavement.org - Child Bereavement UK

For Adults:

www.bereavementcareandsupport.co.uk - Bereavement Care

www.cruse.org.uk - Cruse Bereavement Counselling