

# LIVING GRIEF

Let's talk about grief...

## Help during your bereavement

An introduction to bereavement services at St Elizabeth Hospice

### Who can use the service and what do we offer?

At St Elizabeth Hospice, bereavement services are part of the wider work of the emotional and spiritual wellbeing team. We offer bereavement support to anybody in East Suffolk bereaved by a progressive illness or COVID-19.

After a bereavement, some people find it helpful to talk about their loss, either one-to-one or in a group. Others may seek practical advice. Some find it helpful to visit the hospice.



## When will I be able to access support?

Formal bereavement support is not generally offered until 8-12 weeks after the death of your relative or friend. This is because the first weeks after a death are generally taken up with the immediate feelings of loss which are normal and may include numbness, sadness, anger, fear and anguish.

You may also have a funeral to prepare for and practical things to attend to. Sometimes family and friends are around you more than usual and your most natural source of support in these early weeks will be from those who know you best. During times of social isolation, because of the coronavirus pandemic, we can provide support earlier than this if needed as it may be harder to access support from friends and family.

Our emotional and spiritual wellbeing team do not routinely make telephone contact with everyone who has been bereaved. Usually, people themselves know best what support they might benefit from and when.

By giving you information, we hope to encourage you to contact us yourself.

We will be very pleased to hear from you. Sometimes your nurse or GP may be particularly concerned about you. In these circumstances, they may refer you to our service with your consent.

The emotional and spiritual wellbeing team will contact you to offer support. Of course you do not have to accept the offer.

## LivingGrief Sessions

A few weeks after the death of your relative or friend, we will write to the person(s) named as next of kin inviting them to a bereavement information session. We can only do so if you have been named as either next of kin or the main carer and we have complete address details for you.

Please help us to support you and your family or friends by providing us with details and sharing with family members the information we send.

When it is possible to meet in person, the sessions will take place at the hospice. During periods of social isolation, we are offering this as an online session via Zoom. These sessions offer you a chance to hear more about what you may expect to experience in your bereavement, meet with other people in a similar situation and to talk together in a small group if you wish to. You might want to talk about difficulties you have had and how you have been coping.

Anyone over the age of 18 years is very welcome. The session is not suitable for younger children.

## One-to-one bereavement support

One-to-one bereavement support provides an opportunity to talk about the consequences of your loss in confidence with someone who will be able to listen to your experience of grief.

One-to-one support can help you think through any changes you may need to make and find a way to a new life that includes remembering the person who has died in the way that you want.

Every loss is very personal and no two people experience it in the same way. Many people find that it helps to talk with someone who is not part of their family or close circle of friends. Creative counselling and music therapy are also available for those who prefer a non-verbal medium through which to explore their feelings.

Sometimes people over the month following their loss find that at first they do not want support but then later change their mind. If this happens to you, please contact us.

## Who would you see for one-to-one support?

All members of the emotional and spiritual wellbeing team are trained and accredited professionals and include counsellors, social workers, creative arts therapists and ordained clergy. In addition, we have a small number of carefully selected skilled and trained volunteers who also have professional training.

St Elizabeth Hospice also supports counselling students on placement who may offer one-to-one bereavement support as part of their placement.

For those who may need a listening ear, rather than formal bereavement counselling, we have a number of bereavement volunteers who can offer supportive phone calls where needed.

## How long does the one-to-one support last?

Your bereavement worker will have an initial meeting, with you which will last about an hour. At the end of this first meeting you will normally decide together how to proceed.

Every person is different so generally we find that it is not helpful to prescribe a set number of sessions but to allow you and your worker to negotiate this together.

Some people find they need only a few sessions whilst others wish to attend regular sessions for a longer time. When the support ends, it may be appropriate to access one of the other forms of support, such as one of our groups.

In light of the recent outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK, the government has placed restrictions on social contact which have had an impact on how the emotional wellbeing team supports those who need it.

During this uncertain time, where face to face appointments are not possible, the emotional wellbeing team will be offering continued support via telephone and video calls to patients and family members who access our emotional support service.

If you prefer to wait for emotional support at the hospice, you will be kept on our waiting list and when appointments become available we will get in contact to arrange a meeting. We are unable to give information as to when this will be.

## Bereavement groups

### 6 week bereavement group

When we are able to meet in person, you can also join a bereavement group which meets once a week over six weeks. The groups are facilitated by emotional and spiritual wellbeing team members and run twice a year. There are up to 12 people in each group.

The groups provide a chance both to learn from others and to share your experiences in a safe and supportive environment. We find that group members sometimes get to know each other well and some continue to meet informally after the six sessions have ended. Groups run on the day/time at St Elizabeth Hospice.

### Drop in group

This is an open group for all bereaved friends and family and is held at the hospice on the second Tuesday of every month. Referral is via the emotional and spiritual wellbeing team. This is an informal way to access support and most find it helpful over six to nine months.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic in the UK, the emotional wellbeing team are currently unable to offer group work at the hospice or in the community. If you wish to attend any groups in the future, please get in contact and we can add you to our waiting list. When normal hospice services resume, we will contact you and invite you to the next available group. We are, however, able to offer online bereavement groups which enable people to talk and share experiences together.

### **Additional useful contacts when someone has died:**

Bereavement Advice Centre - 0800 634 9494 [bereavementadvice.org](http://bereavementadvice.org)

Benefits GOV.uk - [www.gov.uk/browse/benefits](http://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits)

There are also local community groups who may be able to help you at this time. Details are available on our website - [stelizabethhospice.org.uk](http://stelizabethhospice.org.uk).

### **How can I contact the emotional and spiritual wellbeing team for bereavement support?**

You can contact us via the emotional and spiritual wellbeing enquiry line on 0300 303 5196 or [emotionalwellbeing@stelizabethhospice.org.uk](mailto:emotionalwellbeing@stelizabethhospice.org.uk).

The emotional and spiritual wellbeing enquiry line is staffed Monday to Friday 9am – 4pm and all staff are trained and experienced in talking about issues in bereavement. Outside these hours you can leave us a message and we will return your call as soon as we can. Sometimes a one-off conversation on the phone is all you need. Contact the enquiry line on 0300 303 5196 or [emotionalwellbeing@stelizabethhospice.org.uk](mailto:emotionalwellbeing@stelizabethhospice.org.uk).

### **Bereavement support for children - 565 Service**

Through our 565 Service, we offer guidance and support for parents in how to best support the children in their care cope with the death of a loved one. This may be in a telephone conversation, a family meeting to talk about the 'big' issues or directing parents to other appropriate support services.

We encourage family members to call us if they have worries or concerns regarding their children.

Whatever your role is, sometimes we can only offer so much support to a child. If, after a period of time, a child is finding it hard to adjust to bereavement, if they are feeling sad or angry all the time, having trouble with sleeping or eating or struggling with school and friends, it may be time to get them further support.

The 565 Service accepts referrals for young people aged 5 – 18 who have experienced the loss of a loved one who was under the medical care of St Elizabeth Hospice.

We offer a confidential space for young people to make sense of their loss and encourage the development of their own ways of expressing emotions.

The support we offer is graded by the age of the young person:

- For children aged 5-8 years old, we offer support and guidance to parents in how to talk about death and dying with young children, what to expect in grief behaviour and explore ways of expressing emotions.
- For children aged 8-12 years old, we offer online parent and child sessions, giving opportunities to express emotions together using guided activities sent you via email or in the post. Where children prefer to have emotional support to parents, we offer letter or email correspondence with a trained member of staff or with other young people looking for support.
- For young people aged 13-18, we offer telephone and online counselling sessions depending on which they feel most comfortable with.

To make a referral to 565 Service, please contact us on our emotional and spiritual wellbeing enquiry line, 0300 303 5196 or [emotionalwellbeing@stelizabethhospice.org.uk](mailto:emotionalwellbeing@stelizabethhospice.org.uk).

# How much **does it cost?**

All emotional and spiritual wellbeing services at St Elizabeth Hospice are free. St Elizabeth Hospice is a registered charity and relies on gifts and donations to carry out its work. Because of people's generosity we are able to offer bereavement support free of charge to the relatives and friends of hospice patients.

## **Tell us** what you think

Hearing about your experience of St Elizabeth Hospice can help us to improve our services and provide better care and support for those who need it.

To make a comment or complaint, or to compliment us on something we've done well, please write to us or visit [stelizabethhospice.org.uk](http://stelizabethhospice.org.uk)

## Contact **us**

**0300 303 5196**

**[emotionalwellbeing@stelizabethhospice.org.uk](mailto:emotionalwellbeing@stelizabethhospice.org.uk)**

**[stelizabethhospice.org.uk](http://stelizabethhospice.org.uk)**

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