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| **Informing Children and Young People in Small Groups about a Death**  Guidance for Essex Schools and Education Settings  **Essex Educational Psychology**  September 2024 |

## **Preparation**

Information about circumstance of the death to be shared with all staff, there needs to be clarity about what information can be shared with the children and young people (CYP), e.g. what is in the public domain, what has been agreed by the family.

If any member of staff feels unable to tell their class, they need to know that this is okay and alternative arrangements should be made.

Be aware of children/young people who have recently been bereaved or who have experienced loss (circles of vulnerability)

Whole school to be told at the same time, preferably in small class groups – as early as possible after the event.

Make a decision about whether this is appropriate depending on how close the children were to the person who died, or whether to proceed with your usual lesson.

### **With class/group (including some suggested wording):-**

*“I need to share some sad news with you all. ….(brief description of who/position in the school) has died. “*

* Only give information about the cause of death if this is known to be accurate. If it is unexpected death it is accurate to label it as this.
* Use age appropriate, simple and clear language, avoid euphemisms.
* If children ask questions, be clear about what information can be shared with them.
* Answer questions open and honestly. It is okay to say *‘I don’t know’* or *‘We don’t know yet’* or *‘Maybe we will be able to find out later’*.
* Acknowledge that different people will react/feel differently.
* All possible responses are fine.
* Tell children they should talk to someone if they feel really upset, worried, anxious, can’t sleep, etc.
* Say that it is also okay to be happy and have fun.
* Encourage pupils to take care of/look after each other – and be aware of other’s feelings.
* Allow children to talk about the person who died.
* Consider facilitating means of expressing feelings such as painting, drawing, writing, etc.

*“There will be opportunities for us all to have time to think, talk and remember … in our own way. We will talk to you again at some point about how we want to do this.”*

*“School will continue as normal*.” Talk about any exceptions and arrangements, e.g. support available for pupils who are very upset and how to access this support.

*“You will get a letter to take home to your parents/carers at the end of the day.”*

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