

Give us a break!

Information for
parents and carers

A programme for
young people who
have experienced
loss, change or
bereavement



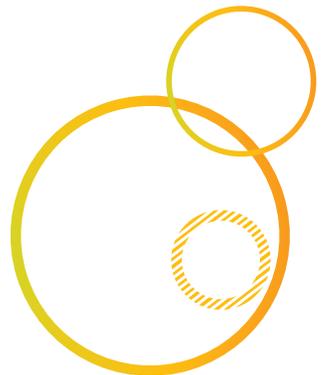
Introduction

Losing someone significant through bereavement or through family break-up can be a very difficult experience for children and young people.

As a parent or carer, it is not always easy to know how to support your child through the changes that such significant losses bring. It can be especially hard for you if the loss has involved the death of someone who was close to you, or if the loss involved a separation or divorce between you and your partner.

This booklet has four sections.

1. The first section aims to give you some information on Give us a break! Give us a break is a programme designed to support children and young people who have experienced changes in their lives, brought on by the loss of someone significant through life events such as bereavement or family break-up.
2. The second section aims to provide you with information about possible reactions your child may have in response to these changes.
3. The third section provides you with some ideas to help you support your child through these difficult times.
4. The fourth section aims to give you some information on where you can go as a parent or carer for further advice and support.



1. Information on Give us a break! - Frequently Asked Questions



Q: Who is Give us a break for?

A Young people aged 10-14 who have experienced any kind of negative change or loss in their lives and are showing signs of difficulties in managing the emotional consequences.

Q: Who runs Give us a break?

A It can be run by healthcare staff, teachers, social workers, home school partnership workers, educational psychologists, and other staff who been trained in the Give us a break programme.

Q: What happens in the programme?

A A maximum of 6 young people meet for 8 one hour weekly sessions within a school or health care environment

A The group sessions are usually led by two staff

A Throughout the group sessions, young people have the opportunity to:

- Tell their story and speak about their feelings.
- Learn to understand the changes in their lives and how they feel about them.
- Gain support from other young people who have been through similar experiences.
- Take part in work which uses a 'solution focused' approach. This involves young people identifying their strengths and drawing upon these to help manage the changes. It uses goal setting to help young people move towards the future.

Q: How will parents and carers be kept informed about how young people are getting on in the programme?



A Before the programme begins

Parents and carers will be contacted for permission for their child to take part in the programme before the programme begins.

Contact may be by telephone call, or through a home visit by one of the programme staff depending on what is most convenient for parents and carers.

At this time, more information about the programme can be gained from programme staff.

You may be asked to complete a short questionnaire about your child, or to answer some questions over the phone.

A During the programme

During the programme, parents and carers may wish to show an interest in the course by contacting programme staff and helping with any tasks set.

It is important however, to understand that the programme gives young people an opportunity to speak in confidence about loss and changes in their lives. This means that some young people may wish their experiences to be kept confidential from anyone outside the programme.

A After the programme

The facilitators will contact you again, to give you some feedback and to find out how you think your child has responded to Give us a break.

Q: What can parents and carers do to support young people during the programme?

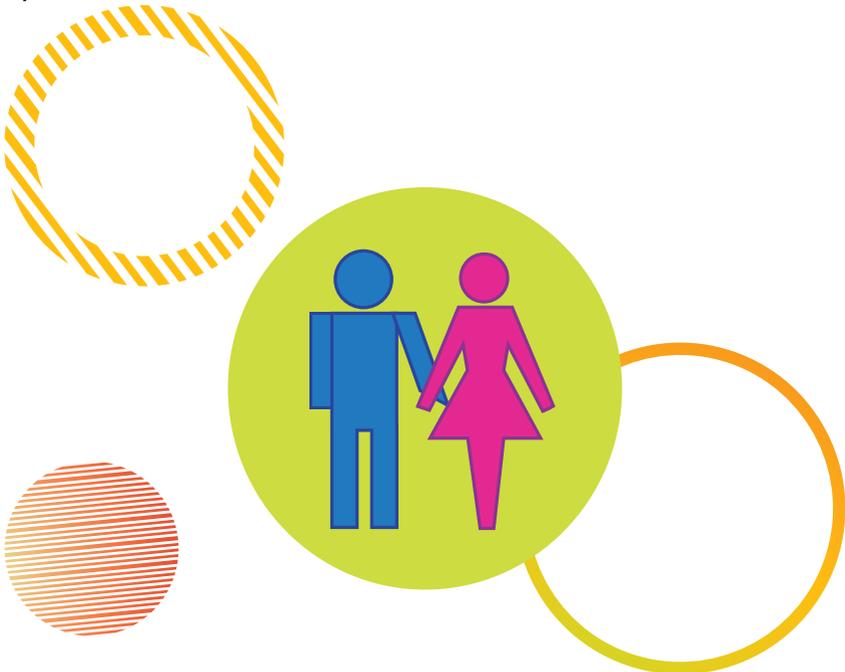
Speaking about loss and negative change can be difficult for some young people.

On the day of group sessions, young people may feel tired when they get home. They may wish to tell you about their experiences in the group, or they may wish to say very little.

Being sensitive to the needs of your child will be crucial at this time. Be there for them if they wish to speak, but also be respectful of their need for space and privacy.

This is important throughout the programme but especially in weeks 2 and 3 when members are encouraged to share their experiences of loss with the group. They may be particularly tired emotionally and will need your understanding.

Learning about common reactions to bereavement or family break-up and how to support your child more generally through these times, will also be helpful.



2. Reactions of children and young people

- Here are some of the reactions which may be shown by children or young people who have lost someone significant through bereavement:

Shock/numbness	Disbelief	Fear/anxiety	Anger
No reaction	Guilt	Avoidance	Sadness and crying
Sleep difficulties	Longing	Confusion	Loss of appetite
Physical complaints - e.g. upset stomach		Reluctance to talk	

- Many of these reactions may also be seen in children or young people who have experienced family break-up. For example: they may feel shocked that parents have decided to separate; they may be particularly upset if one parent has left the family home abruptly; they may long for parents to reunite.

It is important to remember that:

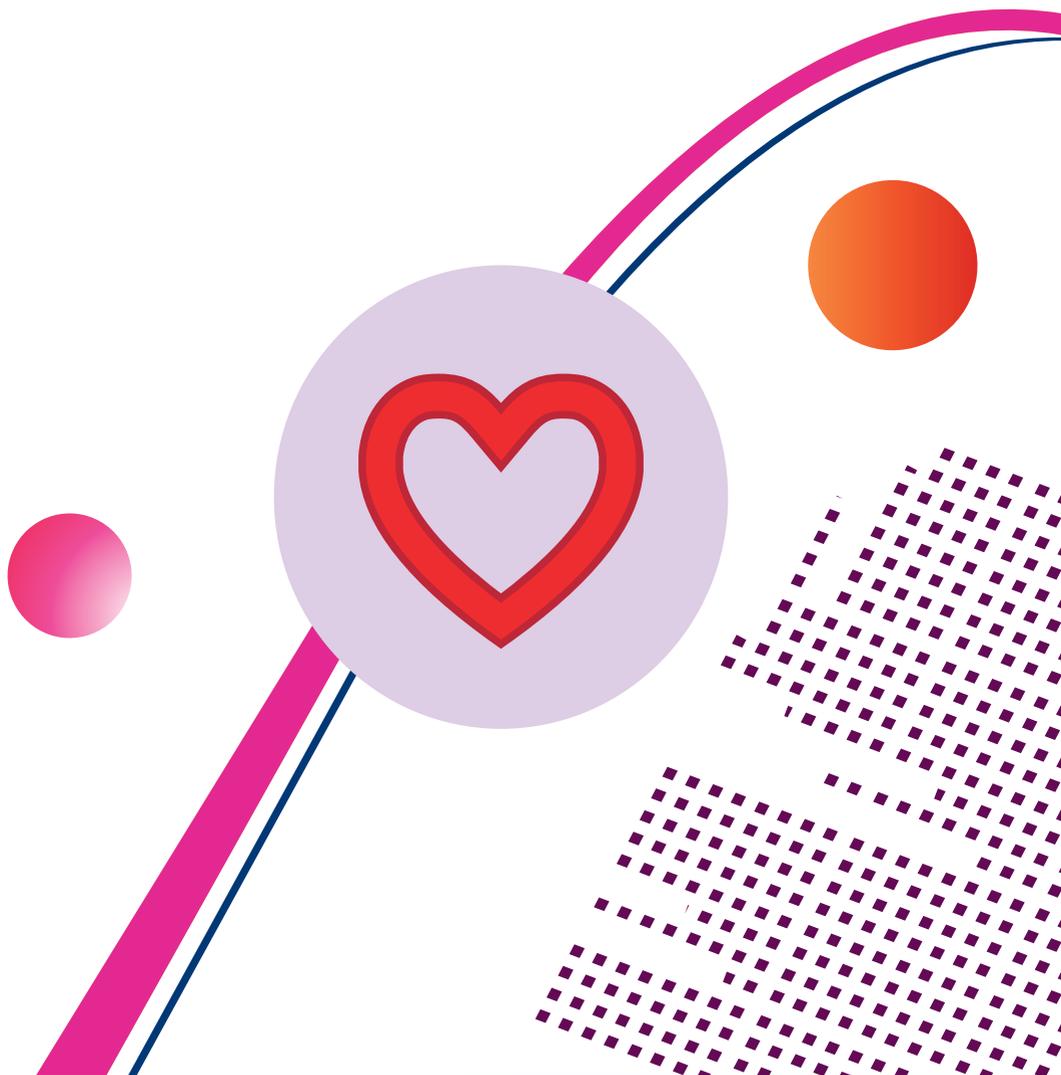
- Reactions may vary from child to child. Reactions may be influenced by factors such as: the age of the child; their personal experience of bereavement or family break-up in the past; the support networks available to them; the circumstances surrounding the death or family break-up and parental adjustment to the change.
- The reactions children and young people show, such as those outlined above, are often normal. However, your child may require extra help in dealing with the change if reactions persist over a long period of time, or prevent your child returning to a normal way of life.

3. Supporting children and young people

Parents and carers can support children and young people by:

- Speaking openly about what has happened in a way that makes sense to your child. If your child has experienced bereavement, use the words 'death' and 'died'. Phrases such as 'passed away' can be confusing.
- Provide accurate information about the loss. This helps children and young people to understand the situation and prevent them from 'inventing' causes or explanations.
- Keep the channels of communication open – whether by talking, by text, or letters and so on.
- Listen to your child and reassure him or her that there are no right and wrong feelings.
- Remind your child that he or she is not to blame.
- Expect your child to go to school – re-establishing routines, familiar situations and maintaining friendships are important.
- Try not to hide your feelings – it can be helpful for your child to see that is it ok to be upset.
- Help your child to have fun and laugh sometimes.
- Encourage your child to seek support in others, including peers.

- If your child has experienced bereavement, talk to them about the funeral and think about how they might be included. Keep memories alive by talking about and remembering the person, especially on anniversaries.
- If your child is dealing with family break-up, talk to them about the separation and try to include their views in decisions that affect them. It can also help to try and maintain reliable contact with those who have left the family home.



4. Where can parents and carers go for extra support?

Caring for a child who has been through the experience of bereavement or family break-up can be overwhelming for parents and carers.

It is therefore important that parents and carers also seek support for their own feelings if they feel it necessary.

Talking to friends and family might be the first step in doing this.

There are also a range of organisations and websites that provide helpful advice and which can be contacted for further support. Some of these are listed below:

For those caring for children and young people who are bereaved:

- **Cruse Bereavement Care**
This is a national charity which provides support and offers information about bereavement.
The day by day helpline telephone number is: 0870 167 1677
Website: www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk
- **Child Bereavement Network (CBN)**
CBN is a national, multi-federation of organisations and individuals who work with bereaved children and young people. The website contains a section for parents and carers.
Telephone: 020 7843 6309
Website: www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk
- **Winston's Wish**
Winston's Wish is a charity which offers practical support and advice for families, professionals and anyone concerned about a child or young person who has been bereaved. There is a section for parents and carers on the website and information for parents and carers to download.
The telephone number for the national helpline is: 08452 03 04 05
Website: www.winstonswish.org.uk

For those caring for children and young people who are dealing with family break-up:

- **Divorce Aid**

This is run by an independent group of professionals and provides advice, support and information on many aspects of divorce. There are sections on the website for parents, children and young people.

Website: www.divorceaid.co.uk

- **One Parent Families Scotland**

One Parent Families Scotland is a national voluntary organisation, which offers a telephone help-line for lone parents amongst other supports. Telephone helpline: 0808 801 0323

Website: www.opfs.org.uk

For advice generally:

- **The Samaritans**

The Samaritans provides confidential support for anyone in the UK and Ireland. The service is available 24 hours a day.

Telephone: 08457 90 90 90

Website: www.samaritans.org

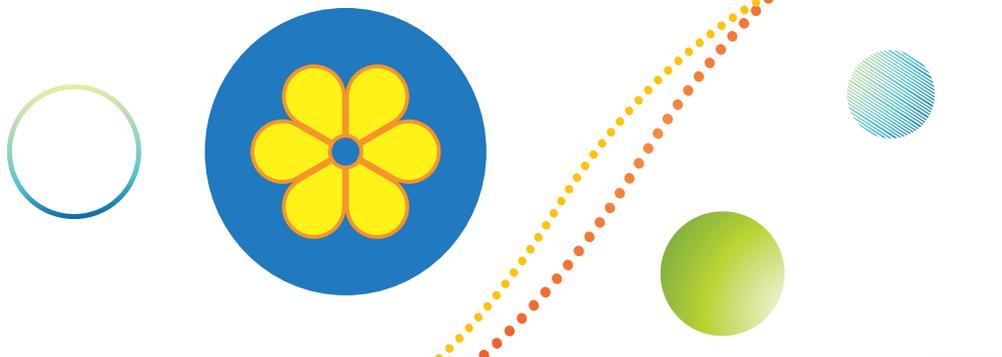
- **Parentline Plus**

Parentline Plus is a national charity that works with and for parents.

Telephone: 0808 800 2222

Website: www.parentlineplus.org.uk

- **Family GP**



For more information or if you want this information in a different format or language please email enquiries@slcpsych.org.uk

www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk