The background is a solid blue color. In the lower-left corner, there are two large, detailed dandelion seed heads. One is taller and more upright, while the other is shorter and more rounded. Both have many fine, radiating lines representing the seeds. Scattered across the upper half of the image are several smaller, detached dandelion seeds, each with a long, thin stem and a feathery seed head. A faint, curved line, possibly representing a horizon or a path, runs diagonally across the middle of the image.

Support for people bereaved during **COVID-19 Pandemic**

This handbook contains information and advice on coping with bereavement during this uncertain time, and the services offering support still available to you in Coventry.

Introduction

Losing a loved one at any time can be extremely distressing and experiencing the death of someone special to you during this pandemic is likely to be even more traumatic. The usual ways we would work through what has happened, and the support we could normally expect from friends, family and colleagues may not be available as we would want and need.

The pandemic has changed the traditional ways we mark our grief. The loss of loved ones may be particularly severe, and grieving processes may be disrupted because of inability to carry out our usual grieving rites.

For the moment, it is not possible to come together and to gather in one location. It is not possible to have a large funeral. It may not be possible to receive the company of those who wish to offer condolences. However, we can support ourselves and each other in different ways.

Don't struggle alone. There are many organisations who offer support to adults and children locally and nationally. Their usual way of offering face-to-face support may not be available but they are offering online and telephone support (please check the provider's websites for up to date information).



Help and Support

It is important that we make time to allow ourselves to grieve. There are no rights and wrongs, but there are some things that you could do that might be helpful.

People who are bereaved may experience; shock, anger, guilt, sadness, relief, talk to people about how you are feeling, they may be feeling the same way as you. Some people like to keep this private, but if possible, it is helpful to share your feelings with friends and relatives.

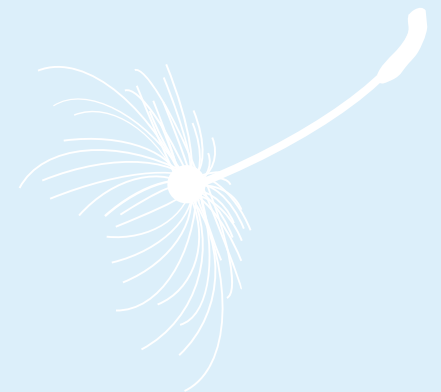
Sometimes people think that they will get fed up with you or they don't want to hear it, if you don't have anyone to talk to there are organisations that will support you during this time, such as:

- **Cruse Coventry and Warwickshire**, for support or information please call: **024 7667 0714** or use the National Freephone Helpline **0808 808 1677**. Cruse offer support, advice and information to children, young people and adults when someone

dies. Opening hours are **Monday-Friday 9.30am-5pm** (excluding bank holidays), with extended hours on **Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings**, when open until **8pm**. Or visit www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/coronavirus-dealing-bereavement-and-grief

- **Self-help books on Bereavement and Grief for Adults** are available as e-books and e-audio from Coventry Libraries. Find and access these via www.reading-well.org.uk/books/books-on-prescription/mental-health
- **Advice, information and resources after suicide** www.supportaftersuicide.org.uk

It is also important to look after your **wellbeing**. Following a loss, it is natural to feel like your whole life has been disrupted. This may mean that you experience disrupted sleep (sleeping too much or too little), eating unhealthily, or for some people using substances, such as alcohol or drugs - all of which are likely to make your mental health poorer. For information about mental health and wellbeing support services in Coventry visit www.coventry.gov.uk/mentalhealth



Supporting Children

Frightening events widely reported in the media, such as the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic, can cause children to worry about themselves and others. It is normal for children to feel unsettled when something scary is happening or has happened, and many will be upset, sad or fearful at times. Children who have been bereaved are likely to show a stronger reaction and may worry that they or someone they know will die.

If you are recently bereaved and have young children, explain to them what has happened in a way that is appropriate for their age while remaining factual. Use language such as 'the person has died' rather than they have 'gone to sleep' or 'passed away' because these are terms that children can misunderstand and think the person is coming back or going to wake up. Encourage them to tell you how they are feeling. This may be by talking or it may be through play, making pictures or objects. Children will experience the same emotional response as adults, so if their behaviour seems unusual or they don't seem to be reacting emotionally, they may be feeling a sense of shock or disbelief.

Keep checking in with them about how they are feeling and share with them your own thoughts and feelings. Sharing positive memories can often encourage children to feel safe to talk about the person who has died.

Coventry Educational Psychology Service

(EPS) can offer support to parents, head teachers and school leadership teams to manage bereavement and loss within their community. There are various guides available to help you talk to young people and support them to understand the bereavement, see advice and guidance on pages 10-11. For more information visit www.coventry.gov.uk/edpsych

Telephone support and drop ins can be organised in partnership with your child's school. Please phone **024 7678 8400** or email EducationalPsychologyService@coventry.gov.uk

The following organisations can support bereaved children during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- **Child Bereavement UK** have information and a video about ways to support bereaved children during difficult times www.childbereavementuk.org/coronavirus-supporting-children_
- **Winston's Wish** provides therapeutic

support to bereaved children and young people by phone and email, along with online resources and training for professionals. From parents to teachers, everyone and anyone who is supporting a grieving child can call our Freephone National Helpline on **08088 020 021** between **9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday** www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus

- **Guy's Gift** offer tailored support for bereaved children and young people aged between 5 and 25 and based in Coventry and Warwickshire. For more information, email info@guysgift.co.uk or call **0845 467 3035**. Their telephone line is open every **Tuesday afternoon 12.30-4.30pm** and **all day Wednesday and Thursday 8.30am-4.30pm** www.guysgift.co.uk

Looking after your wellbeing is important, and mental health support for children and young people is available:

- **Rise** provides emotional wellbeing and mental health services for children and young people www.cwrise.com **The Rise Navigation Hub** operates **Monday-Friday** between **8.00am and 6.00pm** and is for referrals from professionals working with children and young people up to the age of 17. During COVID-19 they are also accepting referrals from parents/carers. Please call **0300 200 2021**.



What to do when someone dies

For practical information about the COVID-19 Pathway for Care of the Deceased in Coventry visit www.coventry.gov.uk/deaths

This website contains information about:

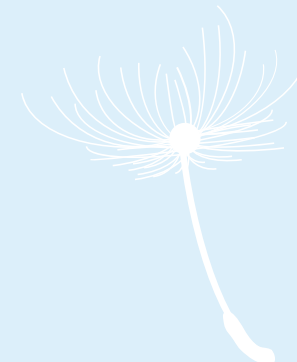
- **Registering a death**
- **Funeral guidance**
- **Bereavement Support**

Local Hospital Bereavement Services can offer practical support following the death of a loved one:

- University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire (UHCW)
www.uhcw.nhs.uk/caring-for-you/bereavement-services/
- North Warwickshire (George Eliot Hospital) -
www.geh.nhs.uk/directory-of-services/specialties-and-services/b/bereavement-services-at-george-eliot-hospital/bereavement-help-and-support/

- South Warwickshire (South Warwickshire Foundation NHS Trust)
www.swft.nhs.uk/our-services/adults-out-hospital-services/bereavement-service

The Government has worked with Faith leaders and published guidance for care of the deceased with suspected or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)
www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased/guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased-with-suspected-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19





Saying goodbye

For many of us, not being able to follow our usual rituals before and following the death of a loved one can intensify our distress.

Our sense of helplessness and guilt can be magnified. Where possible find ways, with those closest to your loved one, to remember them. If holding a funeral is not possible, organise a time when you can all share a telephone call or use an app to connect with each other to read a poem that describes how you are feeling, share memories of the person, or say a prayer. If this isn't possible, sometimes having a picture or an object that you helps you feels closer to them can be reassuring, listen to a special piece of music, or write a letter to mark saying good bye. Remember that a service of remembrance can be held once the pandemic is over.

For information about making funeral arrangements:

- **The National Federation of Funeral Directors** have provided information for funeral directors and members of the public on funeral arrangements
www.nafdcovid19.org.uk/

Guidance for Faith Groups:

- **Church of England** guidance for churches
www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches#na
- **The Muslim Council of Britain** has been working with Public Health England to best plan for facilitating the burial of Muslims who pass away during the pandemic
www.mcb.org.uk/community/covid-19-muslim-burial-resources/



Supporting other people

Starting the conversation – Whether you are a family member, friendly neighbour, charity volunteer or a professional, you are undertaking an important role that is very helpful and rewarding. Research tells us that straightforward kindness and loving behaviours at this time can be a big help. You do not need to be a professional, nor have significant training, to assist someone bereaved by COVID-19 in basic but helpful ways.

Talking to someone who is grieving can be difficult – you may be worried about getting in touch with the person or not be sure what to say. But the support of friends and family can help the person feel supported and loved.

If you know of someone who has recently lost somebody close to them then please reach out and let them know that you are thinking of them during this time.

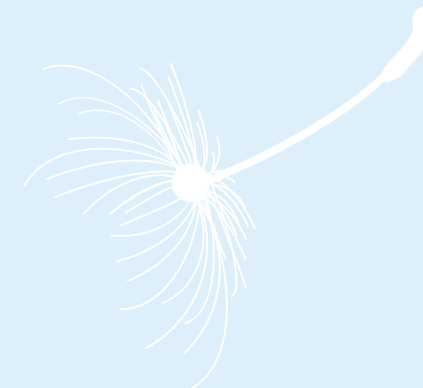
Support for those who work with bereaved people, the **National Bereavement Alliance** will be keeping this page updated every day with information to help bereavement services across the country respond to the current situation www.nationalbereavementalliance.org.uk/covid-19/



For Carers

If you provide help for someone, such as family, friends, or neighbours who couldn't cope without you it is important to know how to help them as best you can, and to look after your own health and wellbeing. In Warwickshire, the following services may be able to help you:

- **Care Companion**
a free 24/7 online tool full of information to support carers and their cared-for, also providing COVID-19 updates from reliable sources. Registering sets up a confidential profile to access all information tailored to your circumstances.
- **Carers Trust**
Support carers across Coventry and Warwickshire
- **Sudden** have published COVID-19 bereavement advice if you are caring for someone bereaved
www.suddendeath.org/covid-19-bereavement/advice-for-carers
- If you care for people with dementia, please visit the www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/help-dementia-care/end-life-care
- **Local hospices** can offer bereavement advice and support. Some are extending their offer of support to those who have not previously used their services. Please visit individual hospice websites for more information and for ways to get in touch.
- **Marie Curie Telephone Bereavement Support** line **0800 090 2309** is a free national listening support service for people who have been bereaved due to terminal illness.



Support for the vulnerable

The person who died may have been your partner or carer, and you may have been left without practical or emotional support at a time when you need it most.

If your bereavement leaves you isolated without support from family, friends or neighbours, Coventry City Council is here to help. We can help you with emotional, financial and practical support, such as:

- food and essential household goods parcels
- medication delivery
- community groups
- financial support
- mental health and wellbeing advice
- local volunteer networks
- housing support
- health and social care information

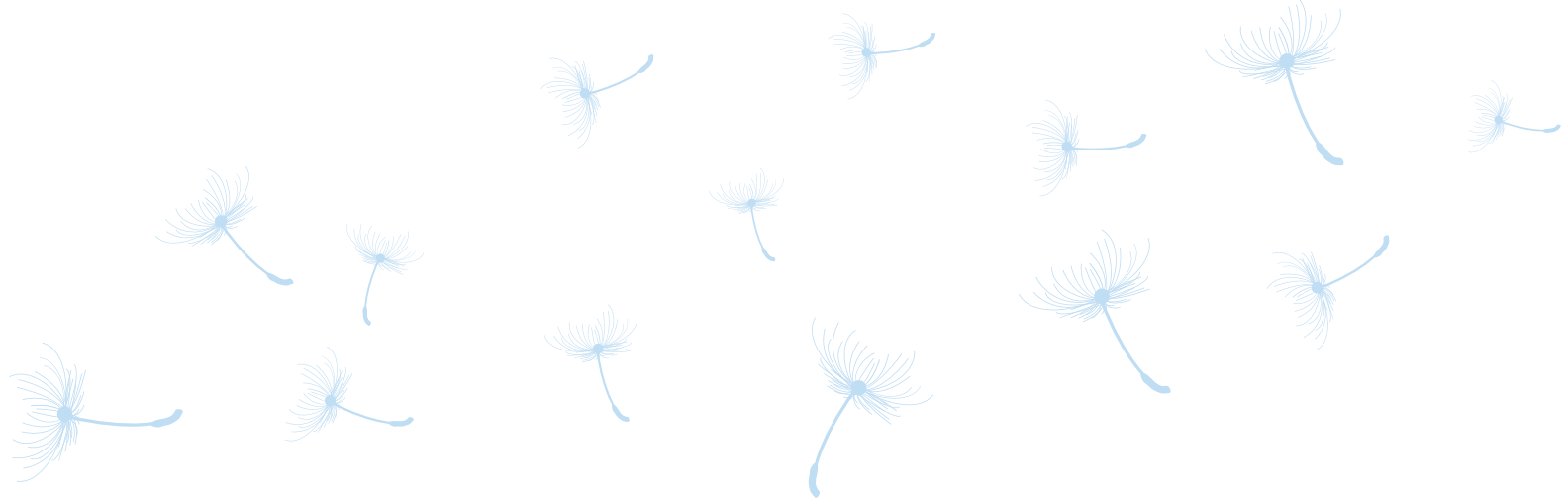
Further information is available from:

www.coventry.gov.uk/coronaviruscommunity

Or call **0808 583 4333**

Further information and support are also available from:

- NHS - Grief after bereavement or loss
www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/coping-with-bereavement/
- NHS - Bereavement and young people
www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/bereavement-and-young-people/



What can we say to our children

A guide for parents, relatives and friends following a serious or traumatic event.

All those involved in the incident will have been affected in some way, though each person's experiences of the event will be personal and therefore different.

You may have thoughts and feelings which you have not experienced before. Children are likely to experience similar kinds of thoughts and feelings.

This is a normal reaction to a traumatic event and these emotions may last for some time.

Behaviours you might expect from children

Children may have a need for support in coming to terms with traumatic events, but they might not be able to express feelings when they cannot find words. Young children in particular, often show their feelings through behaviour.

These behaviours might include:

- increased misbehaviour, aggression and 'younger' behaviour;
- becoming more withdrawn;
- lots of 'pretend' play including desire to act out details of what took place in the original incident.
- sleep disturbance, including bad dreams, fear of being alone, and fear of the dark; clinginess, including a desire to sleep with parents;
- difficulty concentrating, especially on school work. Children might forget things or have toileting accidents;
- heightened alertness to danger, including sensitivity to loud noises;
- change in appetite;

- fears for own safety or the safety of family and friends;
- reluctance to talk. Older children in particular may choose not to talk for fear of upsetting family or friends;
- being easily upset by everyday events; and
- unwillingness to take part in school activities.

Advice on helping children cope

Here are some ideas that might be useful to you as a parent, relative or friend in helping children cope at a time of stress:

- try to answer questions as honestly and accurately as you can in words your children will understand;
- maintain familiar routines and structures as these provide a sense of security;
- be patient and calm, if possible. Your child may behave in a 'younger' way and may become difficult to manage. This is natural;

continued overleaf >>>



continued ...

- allow children opportunities to talk about their feelings and let them know it is OK to cry. Do not hide your own feelings from your children. It's OK for children to see you are upset. Explain, in simple terms, that everyone gets upset by such events;
- try to treat your children in your usual way. You may wish to be especially protective. This is a natural reaction but in the longer term being too protective can make your child feel insecure;
- be ready to listen, but do not be upset if your children choose not to talk. They might express their feelings in another way, through play or in their behaviour;
- and
- make time for yourself and make sure that you have other adults available to talk over your feelings and concerns. Your child will benefit from this.

Helping children cope with their feelings

Some of the ideas given below can be shared with your children and might help them understand their feelings a little better. It will be important to express these ideas in words your child will understand.

- This was a terrible event and what you are feeling is quite normal.
- In the early stages you may have been in shock and felt confused and helpless. You may also have felt scared and sad.
- As you thought about what happened you may have felt angry with yourself, with the school or with others. You may even have felt guilt and shame.
- Often physical reactions follow such events e.g. tiredness, sleeplessness, bad dreams, headaches and short temper.
- Try not to bottle up your feelings. Crying is natural and often gives relief.

- You may need to have time on your own for private thoughts – explain to your family and friends, they will understand.
- Accidents are more likely to occur when you are under stress. Please be careful and take your time.

Where you can get help

Children's reactions to what has happened will vary a great deal. For some, the feelings of distress will be short lived as they and the people around them gradually adjust to the tragedy. For others, the reaction may be more severe and long lasting. There will also be those who seem to have recovered but who begin to suffer later on.

Some children and their parents might benefit from talking to someone outside the family.

If you want further help please contact your child's school or:

024 7678 8400
educationalpsychologyservice@coventry.gov.uk



*Grief is the last act of love we give to those we love.
Where there is deep grief, there is always great love.*

This handbook has been created by:

