

## **FIRST STEPS (BATH)**

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### **Policy to support Children and Families following a Bereavement.**

At First Steps Bath we believe that bereavement and loss are an inevitable part of living and growing and recognise that children and their families may experience grief and the loss of close family members or friends whilst attending our nurseries. We understand that this is not only a challenging time for families and staff, but it may also be a confusing time for young children, especially if they have little or no understanding of why their family is upset and why this person is no longer around.

We also recognise the impact a loss can have on our teams as well as the family directly and we want to be able to offer the right support at the right time whilst respecting individual wishes and feelings.

This policy outlines how First Steps Bath supports children, families, and staff during times of bereavement and loss. It aims to provide a compassionate, respectful, and culturally sensitive approach to grief, ensuring emotional wellbeing and continuity of care. We aim to support both the child and their family and will adapt the following procedure to suit their individual needs, culture, first language and family preferences:

- We ask that if there is a loss of a family member or close friend that the parents inform the centre as soon as they feel able to. This will enable us to support both the child and the family wherever we can and helps us to understand any potential changes in behaviour of a child who may be grieving themselves.
- The key person and/or the manager will talk with the family to ascertain what support is needed or wanted from the centre. This may be an informal discussion or a meeting away from the child to help calm a potentially upsetting situation.
- The child may need extra support or one-to-one care during this tough time. We will adapt our staffing arrangements, so the child is fully supported by the most appropriate member of staff on duty, where possible the child's key person
- We will be as flexible as possible to adapt the sessions the child and family may need during this time.
- We will respect and accommodate cultural, religious, and personal beliefs around death, mourning, and memorial practices. Staff will receive guidance on how to support families from diverse backgrounds.
- Staff experiencing bereavement may request compassionate leave. The amount of leave granted will depend on the relationship to the deceased and the individual circumstances. Managers will handle requests sensitively.
- We will adapt the above procedure as appropriate when a family pet dies to help the child to understand their loss and support their emotions through this time.

#### **Terminally ill child or member of staff.**

We recognise that the anticipated death of a member of our community, whilst exceedingly difficult to manage, enables us to establish appropriate communication with the family to support those likely to be most affected before and after the death. Our responsibility is to support families, children and our teams who must face the painful reality that someone close to them is terminally ill. When supporting children and families who are experiencing anticipatory grief, we will:

- Respect the feelings and always wishes of the parents/guardians/next-of-kin.
- Confirm the facts concerning the illness with members of staff.
- Allow everyone to talk about their feelings/how they are feeling.

The family should be contacted with appropriate support (See Appendix 1 for helpline numbers & websites)

- The family should be asked how much and what the child already knows/understands about what has happened.
- It should be explained to the family how the charity can be involved in the support of the child and the family.
- The importance of collaborating with the parents/carers to assess any changes in behaviour; eating and sleeping patterns may change and behaviour in the setting may deteriorate or the child may become withdrawn.
- Involve outside agencies as appropriate, if not already involved. It is important to make initial contact to ensure that the agencies are aware of our involvement.

### **Death of a child registered at a First Steps centre or member of First Steps Staff.**

We recognise that there may also be rare occasions when a death of a child or member of staff affects the centre team. This will be a challenging time for the staff team, children, and families. Appendix 1 gives details of agencies that may be able to offer further support and counselling if this occurs.

When the centre is informed of the death of a child the following action should be considered.

- Discussion should take place with the family and their wishes considered before decisions are taken on how and what to tell people within the organisation.
- Encourage staff to voice any concerns they have about telling the rest of the centre team & families.
- Consider the most appropriate way to communicate the news within organisation.
- Inform parents as soon as possible in the most appropriate way depending on the circumstances.
- Give the team and families opportunities to express their feelings at the time they are informed and over the following days and weeks.
- Avoid rumours, exaggerations, and embellishment of the event, by agreeing the facts which will be stated openly and honestly without assumptions or judgements.
- Remember that such news will be greeted with a mixture of emotions and feelings. Some may deny or disbelieve the announcement. Others may feel panic; some may show feelings of anger. There may well be tears and distress. Planned support will be available.
- Staff and children should be supported throughout the grieving period; anyone displaying signs of stress should be offered appropriate support. Counselling should be available if necessary.

- It is important that communication with the family comes from the senior management team and not from individual members of staff. Opportunities will be afforded for staff to pass on their condolences.

### **Informing Staff and Trustees of a death in the First Steps Community.**

- Wherever possible the SMT will have a discussion with the family involved, their wishes considered before decisions are taken on how and what to tell First Steps staff.
- All staff should be informed of a bereavement as soon as possible. If possible, a staff meeting will be arranged as soon as reasonably practicable. Absent staff will be identified, and arrangements will be made for SLT/MLT to contact them via telephone to inform them.
- The SMT will be prepared for staff reactions to this news. This may include visibly upset, feelings of anger, guilt.
- The SMT will be available to talk to a staff member, pupil, or family member.
- Advice and support services for families and staff will be available.
- Counselling will be available to all that it is necessary for Chief Executive, Service Manager and or Finance manager can refer staff to this service.
- Staff will make a formal request to the manager and request time off to attend the funeral or memorial service. Wherever possible staff will be released to attend, depending on circumstances.
- There will be no communication between staff on social media or other non-work-related forms of communication e.g. WhatsApp, text....

### **Funeral and Memorial services.**

Following the death of a child/member of staff/person from the community we will need to consider our involvement in any funeral and/or memorial services. We will need to plan/organise the following.

- The centre may be closed, or as many people as possible, released to attend a funeral or memorial service should it be appropriate, and they wish to do so.
- Representation from First Steps will attend if appropriate.
- Centre Staff may express a wish to attend or take part in the service; this should only be done once we have had the prior agreement from the deceased's family.
- After the service, staff should be encouraged to meet and express their thoughts and feelings as such services are important in the grieving process.

### **Links to other policies**

- Confidentiality and Data Protection Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Terms and Conditions of employment
- Staff Attendance and Wellbeing Policy

**Policy developed by SMT June 2024**

**Policy approved by the Board of Trustees: 17<sup>th</sup> July 2024 Links to other policies.**

## **Appendix 1**

Useful Websites and helpline numbers for dealing with loss and bereavement for parents, children, and staff.

- [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk) Mental Health information and support -0300 123 3393
- Employee Assistance Programme
- The Samaritans: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org) 0330 0945717
- Priory: [www.priorygroup.com](http://www.priorygroup.com) 0800 691 1481
- Child Bereavement UK: [www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org) 0800 0288840
- Cruse Bereavement Care: <https://www.cruse.org.uk> 0808 808 1677
- Winston's Wish [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk) 08452 030405
- Lullaby Trust: [www.lullabytrust.org.uk](http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk) 0808 8026868.

### **Books on bereavement**

- Granpa – John Burningham
- When dinosaurs die –L&M Brown
- Liplaps wish – Jonathan London and Sylvia Long
- The memory tree – Britta Teckentrup

Appendix 2.

### **A guide to inform Children:**

- Be honest and factual.
- Use clear language, use communication appropriate for each individual child.
- Expect questions.
- Recognise every death and reaction to it is unique.
- Allow time.
- Acknowledge that some will be better than others.

### **Suggested script:**

“I’ve got some really sad news to tell you today that might make you sad. (Name) died yesterday. This means that we won’t see (Name) again. We have lots of memories of (Name) that we can think about and we can celebrate those together.”

**Drawn up by SMT 2024**

**Approved by trustees November 2024**

**Reviewed by SMT March 2026**