

Further Information

The book "Somebody has Died Suddenly" is available from the website www.amyandtom.org.htm. This website also has useful information for bereaved families and carers.

There is information on a number of websites, which you may find helpful. These include:

www.gcbn.org.uk

www.cruisebereavementcare.org.uk

www.winstonswish.org.uk

www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

Grampian Child Bereavement Networks website lists books for children about bereavement.

Grampian Child Bereavement Network

C/O MHA
1, Alford Place
Aberdeen AB10 1YD
www.gcbn.org.uk

Telephone 01224 594099

*Our answering machine is available at all times.
The telephone is manned on a part time basis.*

Email: gcbn@mhberdeen.org.uk

Website: www.gcbn.org.uk

Facebook www.facebook.com/grampianchildbereavement

**"Grampian Child Bereavement Network
is a dedicated resource offering a range
of services to support bereaved children
and young people"**

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Supporting Bereaved Children and
Young People in Grampian

Information for Parents and Carers

Viewing the Body and
Attending the Funeral

This leaflet provides information and guidance about children and young people viewing the body of a loved one who has died, and also about attending the funeral.

There are no right or wrong ways of approaching these events, but they need careful consideration, taking into account the age and wishes of the child or young person.

Viewing the body

For adults, viewing the body is a very personal decision. Some adults do not wish to view a loved one's body and prefer to remember the person as they were when they were alive. Family traditions and expectations may play a part in this. The decision for a child to view the body of a loved one needs careful and sensitive consideration.

It is important that the child is supported to understand what has happened (within their abilities) and prepared for what the body will look like. The nature of the death and any possible changes to the person, they knew and loved, such as a disfigurement through accident need to be considered and whether this may cause confusion or increase anxiety for the child.

Some families will have the body of the loved one home whereas for other families, the body will rest at a funeral parlour. Rituals such as Wakes may include the children. Whatever way the family choose, it is important to explain to the children what is happening and why. Try to keep them informed and involved as much as possible in the process and support them to make helpful choices.

Depending on the age and stage of the child or young person, it is helpful to discuss these issues with them so that they can make an informed choice about whether they wish to see the body and who might accompany them.

If the body is resting at the funeral home, it may help to discuss a child viewing the body with staff, who will have experience of supporting families and children with this.

Attending the funeral

The parent or carer will have to consider whether the child or young person attends the funeral. They may also need to balance what they can manage, particularly if it is a very close loss for them, alongside the desire to protect the child and do what is best for them.

Attending the funeral can be helpful to the child or young person although some people are concerned that witnessing the grief of adult mourners can increase the child's distress. Whilst it is a personal decision, being involved in the funeral can provide the child with evidence of the completion of the ritual of death. It also includes them in the family event, allows them to understand that it is okay for them (and others) to be upset and provides the opportunity for a goodbye with the family.

The decision for a child or young person not to attend needs to be explained and considered with them as appropriate to their age and understanding. This can reduce potential later upset about having been excluded. Not being a part of the opportunity to say goodbye can increase denial of the death. If the child does not attend the funeral it may be helpful to arrange some special time or event for them to say goodbye properly.

If the child or young person does wish to attend the funeral, it can be helpful to arrange for a close friend or relative to be their 'buddy' for the day. This can leave close mourners freer to express emotions and be supported in a way that is helpful to them with the reassurance that the child or young person is being cared for and their needs are being met.

It is important for the child or young person to know what will happen at the funeral and to have clear information about this. Ministers or funeral directors may be able to help explain things.

Children and young people can find it helpful to contribute to the funeral in some way. This may be something simple, choosing their own flowers, writing a card or adding a special memory for the Minister to speak about. All these things can bring a sense of the child being included in the funeral and acknowledges their relationship to the deceased person.