



NHS Education for Scotland

Transcript of 'Helping Children who are Bereaved; The Impact of Language and Practice (NES Bereavement Conference, 2019)' video – Sonya Richardson.

So, I'm Sonya Richardson, and my title is Lead Bereavement Support Worker for Richmond's Hope. What it's all about, the entire organisation supports bereaved children, four to eighteen years, and my remit is basically providing the clinical supervision for the programme, as well as seeing some of the clients.

The challenge for the children is that, usually, they're not heard. A place is given to the parents, but not very much for the children, and I think there is an increasing awareness of the need for children to be actually involved in the bereavement support.

What did your workshop at the conference cover?

So, the topic was actually to embrace bereavement for the children and how to cope with that, and how to be aware of what our own obstacles are when we talk to children who have been bereaved. The one, I would say, most salient point that I would like people to take with them is that we have our own hang-ups when it comes to meeting bereaved children.

We need to make the distinction between what is proper grief or normal grief, and what is complex grief, and things that are absolutely key to helping children deal with their bereavement would be - being direct, having an honest conversation with them, using language that is relevant rather than something that's a little bit too abstract, including the children in the funeral process or in the bereavement, if they can be involved in there, and giving them choices.

What is the bigger picture?

The bigger picture would be that children are part of Scotland, and there are a lot of medical and mental health professionals who are being placed with or facing bereaved children who may not have the knowledge on how to approach the subject. And I think that just providing them training will really open the doors for that to happen now. Don't avoid death. It's going to happen to everybody. It's happening all the time, so don't avoid it, because it's part of life.

The film was produced in March 2020 and can be found at www.sad.scot.nhs.uk or <https://vimeo.com/393646145>

For more information visit www.sad.scot.nhs.uk or contact supportarounddeath@nes.scot.nhs.uk

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