

What we can say to our children when something dreadful has happened

A Guide for Parents/Carers, Relatives and Friends

HOW YOU CAN HELP CHILDREN YOU KNOW

Here are some ideas that might be of help to you as a parent/carer, relative or friend.

- ◆ Try to answer questions as honestly and accurately as you can in words your children will understand
- ◆ Maintain familiar routines and structures. These provide a sense of security
- ◆ Be patient and calm, if possible. Your child or children you have contact with, may behave in a 'younger' way and may become difficult to manage. This is natural
- ◆ 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 is 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 a 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

Make time for yourself and make sure that you have other adults with whom you can talk over your feelings and concerns. Your children will benefit from this.

WHERE YOU CAN GET HELP

Children's reactions to what 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 reactions 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/carers might benefit from talking to someone outside the family.

What the school/setting and the Local Authority can do:

- Staff will try to understand and help
- Staff will be helped and supported by Local Authority specialists where required

If you want help, please contact:

- * ***School (01925 636414)***
- * ***Your local Doctor***
- * ***The Wellbeing Centre (01925 843853)***
- * ***St Elphin's Church (01925 635020)***
- * ***Samaritans (01925 235000)***