We only offer very limited support in Pre Bereavement situations. Our Pre Bereavement support is predominantly family focused rather than any individual support. Support is only offered in circumstances where a terminal diagnosis has been given or is likely.

When someone is living with an anticipated death their world will feel uncertain and unpredictable. At this point in time it is important to help the child to feel things are as predictable as they can be around the uncertainty i.e. help them by letting them know who is picking them up from school today. Help to provide some structure and routine around the things in life that are changing.

Encourage parents and carers to give the child age appropriate explanations about the situation. For younger children this information should be a little at a time, enough to satisfy their curiosity at the moment and information that can be built on over time. We are always happy to give telephone advice to families and professionals about what to tell children and when to tell them.

What is happening may feel very big for the child/young person. By rushing in to tell them they need counselling you may accidentally give them the feeling that this is so big they could not possibly cope with it without professional help. The child/young person really needs to know that those within their everyday support network can help them to cope with this wherever possible.

We understand that many adults don’t always feel confident when talking to a child about such a sensitive subject but we believe that children and young people are best supported with their everyday emotions and worries by those around them. We are always happy to provide advice and guidance to parents/carers and professionals and to help you support the child’s needs. We may be able to offer additional staff training for your setting/agency.

We would always want to try and work with parents/carers and professionals in the first instance to give guidance and advice on how best to support a child with the information, involvement and everyday support they may need.

Whilst our work with parents, carers and professionals can have a positive impact, our involvement directly with a child when someone is seriously ill can at times be more unhelpful at this stage as we represent bereavement. This could imply there really is no hope left which a child/young person may find too overwhelming, too soon. We are also aware that it can be more helpful for us to be available to support in the future with moving towards more positive times rather than us being associated with the very difficult time and being given bad news.

With serious illness we recognise that each family’s circumstances are unique. We would look at each situation on a case by case basis.

When we receive your referral we will call the parents/carers as soon as we can to introduce ourselves and talk through what has been happening for them and their child/children. In many cases we may simply offer telephone support to parents and carers to help them through some difficult times with their children, give them ideas, resources and more often than not – a listening ear and reassurance.