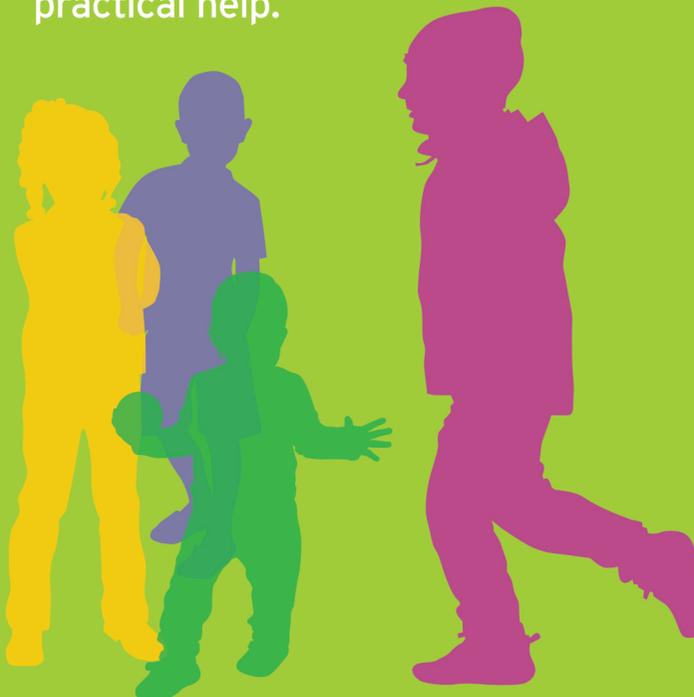


Experiencing the death of someone you love is like being parachuted into a strange land where you have no map and don't know the language. Navigating your own way – let alone helping a child find a way – through this land of pain and loss can be difficult.

Bereaved children need to be acknowledged, understood and held, both physically and emotionally. Whatever role you may play in a bereaved child's life, you can help them to express and share their sorrow by your support, encouragement and practical help.



## About Cruse Bereavement Care

Cruse Bereavement Care is the leading national charity providing bereavement support services in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Our services are provided by trained volunteers and are confidential and free.

Our website has further information on how to support your child and includes a special section for military families. Details of our services and local branches can be found on the website or by contacting our National Helpline.

[www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)

tel: **0844 477 9400** or email: [helpline@cruse.org.uk](mailto:helpline@cruse.org.uk)

## Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland

For details of services and local branches in Scotland please see our website or telephone our National Helpline.

[www.crusescotland.org.uk](http://www.crusescotland.org.uk)

tel: **0845 600 2227**

## RD4U

Cruse has a website specially for bereaved children and young people. Your child may find it comforting to share the experiences of other bereaved children and young people.

[www.RD4U.org.uk](http://www.RD4U.org.uk)

### Cruse Central Office

tel: 0208 939 9530  
email: [info@cruse.org.uk](mailto:info@cruse.org.uk)

### Cruse Northern Ireland

tel: 028 9079 2419  
email: [northernireland@cruse.org.uk](mailto:northernireland@cruse.org.uk)

### Cruse Wales

tel: 029 2088 6913  
email: [crusecymru@cruse.org.uk](mailto:crusecymru@cruse.org.uk)

### Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland

tel: 0845 600 2227  
email: [info@crusescotland.org.uk](mailto:info@crusescotland.org.uk)

## Widows Associations

Meeting other bereaved service parents can be very reassuring. Each service has a widows' association for the partners of people who die in service – their details are below.

Naval & Marines Widows Association  
[www.rnrwidowsassociation.org.uk](http://www.rnrwidowsassociation.org.uk)

Army Widows Association  
[www.armywidows.org.uk](http://www.armywidows.org.uk)

RAF Widows Association  
[www.rafwidowsassociation.org.uk](http://www.rafwidowsassociation.org.uk)

## Bereavement in the Military Family

# Supporting bereaved children and young people in military families



 Cruse  
Bereavement  
Care

*Somewhere to turn when someone dies*

## Information for parents and carers

The death of someone close is often devastating and life changing. Grief is unique and no two children will grieve in the same way.

## Expressions of grief

### Younger children

Younger children may demonstrate their grief by:

- Inability to sleep soundly
- Reverting to earlier years
- Complaining of physical pains – sometimes reflecting where the child is hurting emotionally
- Searching – looking for the person who has died

### Older children and young adults

Older children may experience emotions that can feel strong and over-powering and these may result in:

- Withdrawal from family, friends and peers
- School / college refusal
- Frustration, angry outbursts or physical violence
- Poor concentration
- Increase / decrease in appetite
- Substance misuse

### The loss of service accommodation

If the family are moving out of service accommodation following the death of your partner, your child will probably be feeling anxious and insecure.

Leaving their home, familiar surroundings, friends and school while they are trying to make sense of their bereavement can increase children's feelings of loss and grief.

## Operational death

Young people who have lost someone who were often away from home can take longer to accept the reality of the death.

The child may hope that their loved one will return, even when they have been told about the death. This may result in delayed shock as the child clings to the belief that the person who has died will return.

Operational deaths can attract media attention and intrusion. The child might become angry or upset and feel that their loved one is 'public property'.

They should be told about the death as soon as possible, and by someone they know and trust. Explain using words that they can understand and be prepared to answer any questions honestly.

## Attending ceremonies

Repatriation ceremonies and homecoming parades may be involved following an operational death. Explain what these are to the child in advance and what will happen – let your child decide whether or not they attend.

It can be helpful for children to participate as it offers them a chance to say goodbye, but if they don't want to respect their wishes.

If your child does want to attend, make sure that they know they can change their mind at any time. If you cannot be with them, make sure that they are with someone they know and trust so that they feel safe and can leave if they need to. This applies equally to funerals and cremations.



## How can I support my grieving child?

### Remember to:

- Be honest and explain in a way your child will be able to understand
- Encourage your child to talk about the death and how they are feeling
- Remember that (if you have more than one child) your children may grieve differently
- Challenge aggressive or violent behaviour; explain that it is OK to feel angry but it isn't OK to hurt other people or themselves
- Reassure your child that you will be there for them, to listen to them and talk things through as and when they need
- Help your child to say goodbye in the way they would like to
- Remember that your child is a child and try not to burden them with adult roles; try to keep routines such as mealtimes and bedtime the same as before the death, as this will help to promote feelings of security and a sense of normality.

### Try not to:

- Use euphemisms for death such as 'Daddy has gone to sleep'
- Constantly ask your child how they are feeling
- Be upset or alarmed when children alternate between play and grief; children don't have the emotional reserves to grieve continuously and will need respite through play.
- Keep your child away from school; the routine and normality of school may help
- Be too concerned if your child wets the bed or sucks their thumb; as they come to terms with the death such behaviours should disappear
- Assume you know their wishes about attending the funeral or cremation; talk to them about this
- Forget to take care of yourself and your needs; you are grieving too and may need support

