

Death, dying and bereavement: a practical approach to education and support in schools

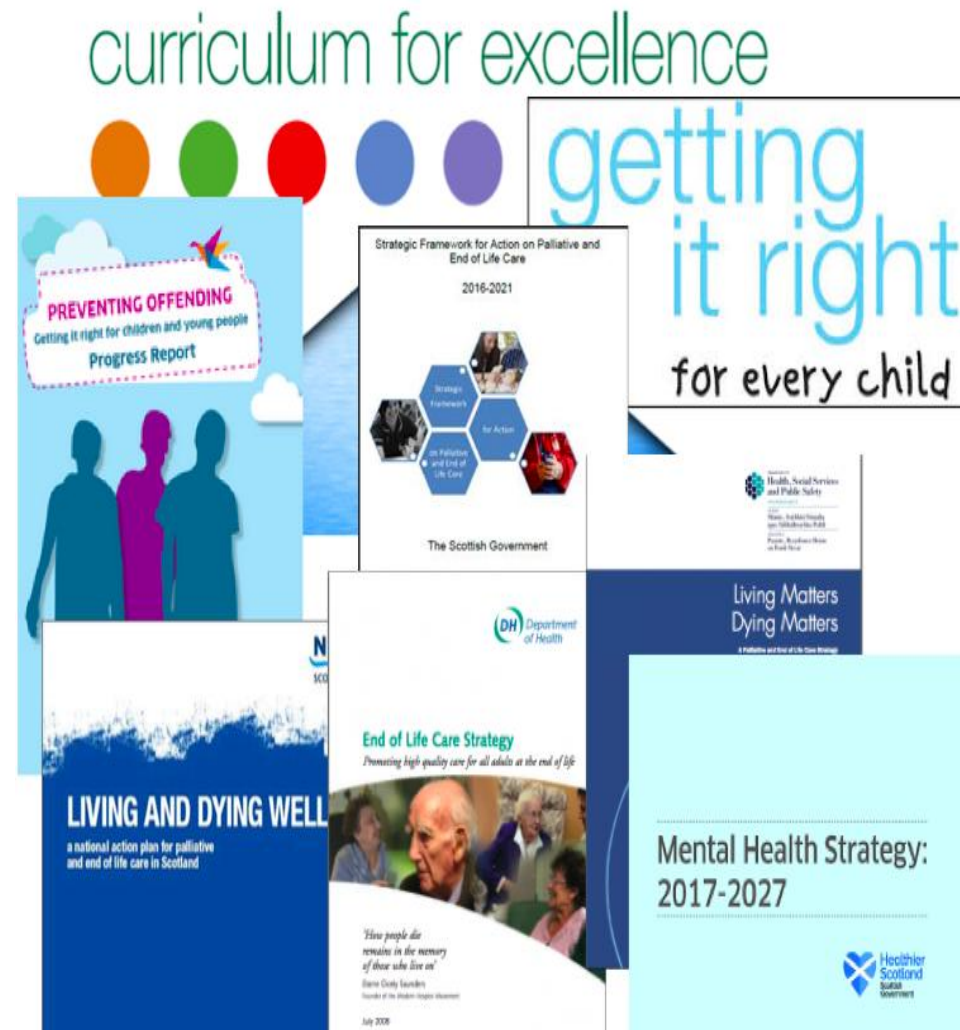
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Context

- Universality of experience
- Relevance to UK policy framework
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- Based on research



The professional experience



The children's experience



A practical approach

- A death and grief education programme: The Resilience Project
- Bereavement training for whole school communities
- A bereavement policy

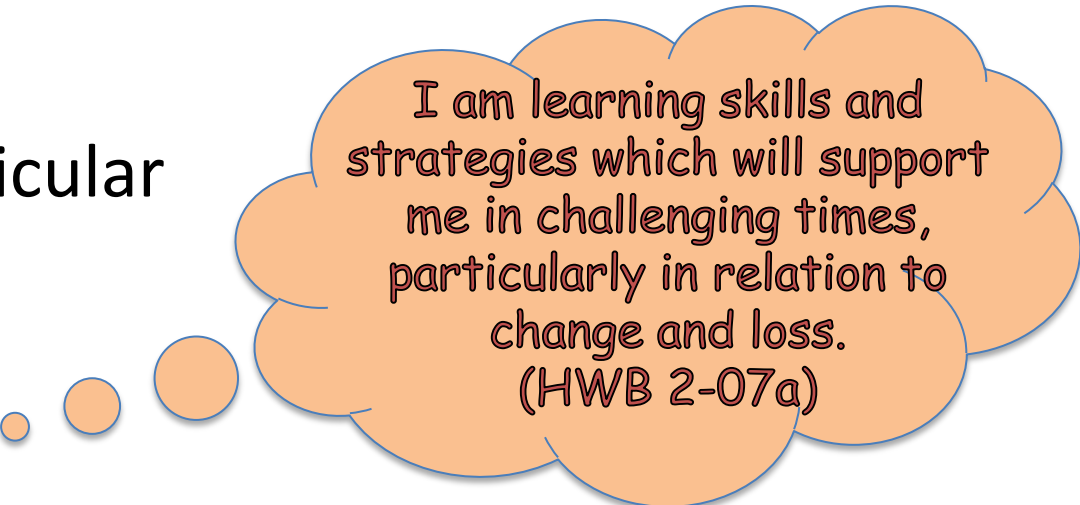
A **proactive** and **reactive** response to death and bereavement in school communities

Curriculum development: The Resilience Programme

- Whole schools programme: from nursery to P7 detailing 'Learning Intentions', 'Success Criteria', 'Suggested Activities'
- Cross-curricular
- Four focus weeks across the school year
 1. Transition
 2. Remembrance
 3. New Life
 4. Go Yellow

The Resilience Project: Learning about death and bereavement

- From P6 (9 years) to P7 (12 years)
 - Detailed lesson plans
 - Cross – curricular
 - Strong links with Curriculum for Excellence
- Addresses children's questions about death, dying and bereavement
- Fits into existing curricular



I am learning skills and strategies which will support me in challenging times, particularly in relation to change and loss.
(HWB 2-07a)

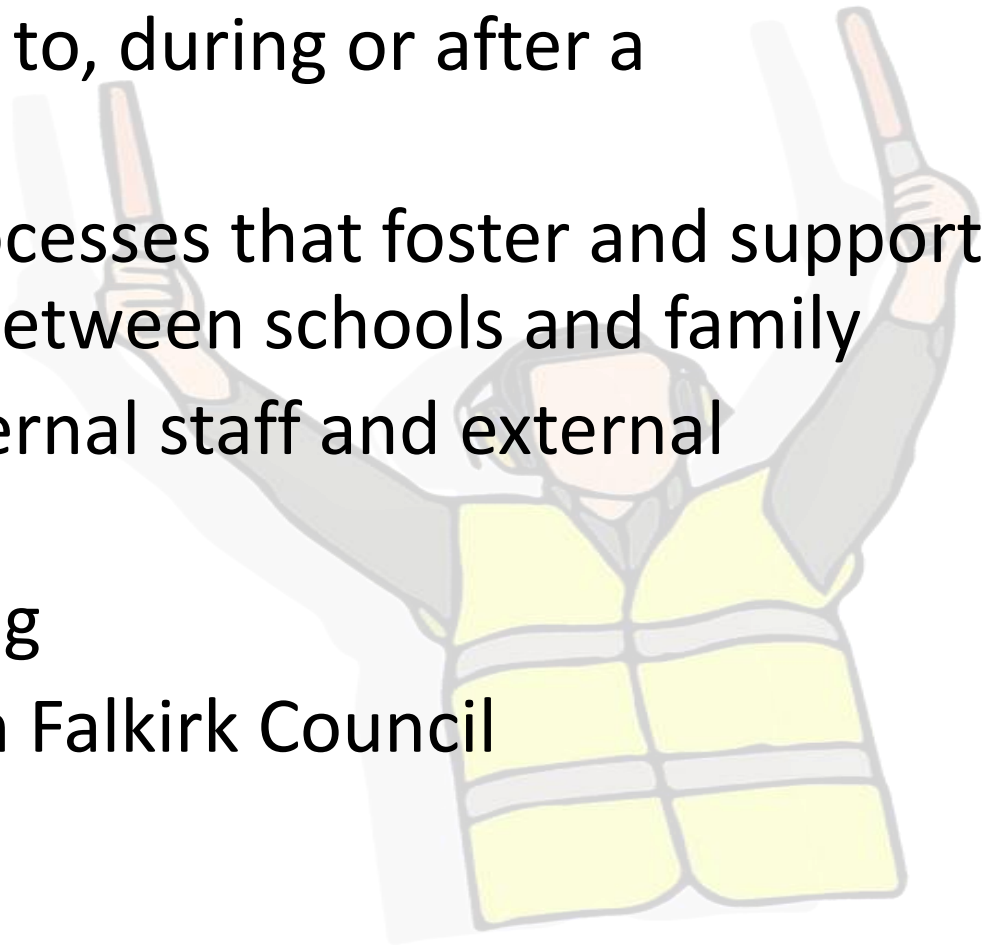
Bereavement training

- Run by local Hospice
- For ALL school staff
- Focuses on developing openness and confidence
- Suggests and supports the development of bereavement policy and procedures
- Evaluated



Bereavement policy

- Provides a framework for how to support pupils and/or staff prior to, during or after a bereavement
- Recommends processes that foster and support communication between schools and family
- Signposts key internal staff and external supports
- Reinforces training
- For ALL schools in Falkirk Council



A practical approach to death and bereavement education in schools

Curriculum Learning and Teaching:

Education on death and grief are included in curriculum to develop understanding of death as a part of the life cycle and the range of skills that can be employed to help self and others when someone dies.

Environment, Resources and Facilities:

Bereavement support is provided/accessed as necessary. School policy and strategy support appropriate responses to bereavement. Bereavement Training.

Partnership working:

Partners include staff, pupils, parents/carers, carer groups, end-of-life service providers (such as local hospices) and bereavement services.

Ethos and Climate:

Adopt an ethos which is open, encouraging and supportive towards children, families and staff discussing illness, death and bereavement.

Management and Leadership:

Strong support and Leadership from Management to adopt and rollout school agreed plan/policies, that includes promoting death education and bereavement support.

Staff Health and Wellbeing:

Bereavement support for staff is available and easily accessible. Staff are provided with training on how to engage with children about death dying and bereavement. Staff are offered and encouraged to seek support when engaging with bereaved children.

**A
Compassionate
School**

Challenges to this approach

- Teacher concerns
- Parent/carers concerns (?)
- No training in Initial teacher Education
- Continual need for training
- Death denying Curriculum for Excellence:
loss mentioned but death is not



Strengths of this approach

- Ensuring universal access to education AND support
- Three activities compliment each other and foster a change in culture
- Increased confidence in talking about and managing loss and bereavement
- Compliments existing bereavement and loss support programmes/services
- Transcends school building: affects wider community



Concluding thoughts

- All children will experience bereavement: preparation AND support are both important
- Upholding children's rights
- Communities caring for their own members
- Role of hospice in initiating work



“I think it should be encouraged
[...]because kids need to know about death
before somebody like they really love dies”
(boy, aged 10)

Resources available here:

