



Giving hope to grieving children

# Supporting Children and Young People Bereaved by Suicide

Giving hope to grieving children



# Child Bereavement Statistics for the UK

Every **22 minutes**, a child's parent dies.

This means that:

- **111** children a **day** are bereaved of a parent
- **41,000** children are newly bereaved each **year**

**480,000** children under the age of 18 have experienced the death of a parent or sibling.

That is:

- **4%** of children
- **1 in 29** – around 1 child per class



Giving hope to grieving children

# Child Bereavement Statistics for the UK

## Chronic illness

Over 52% of calls to our helpline are related to a bereavement through illness

## Sudden death

25% of deaths in the UK are unexpected deaths from sudden causes. 44% of the families we work with

(Bereavement in Childhood Report, CBN 2014)

## Suicide

In the UK, someone takes their life every 80 minutes (+6,000 suicides a year). Around 22% of calls to our helpline are related to a suicide bereavement

## Murder

A child is bereaved through murder or manslaughter every day – 570 such deaths in the UK each year

# Impact of Bereavement

Anxiety

Vivid memories

Sleep difficulties

Sadness and  
longing

Anger and acting  
out behaviour

Guilt, self-reproach  
and shame

School problems

Physical  
complaints

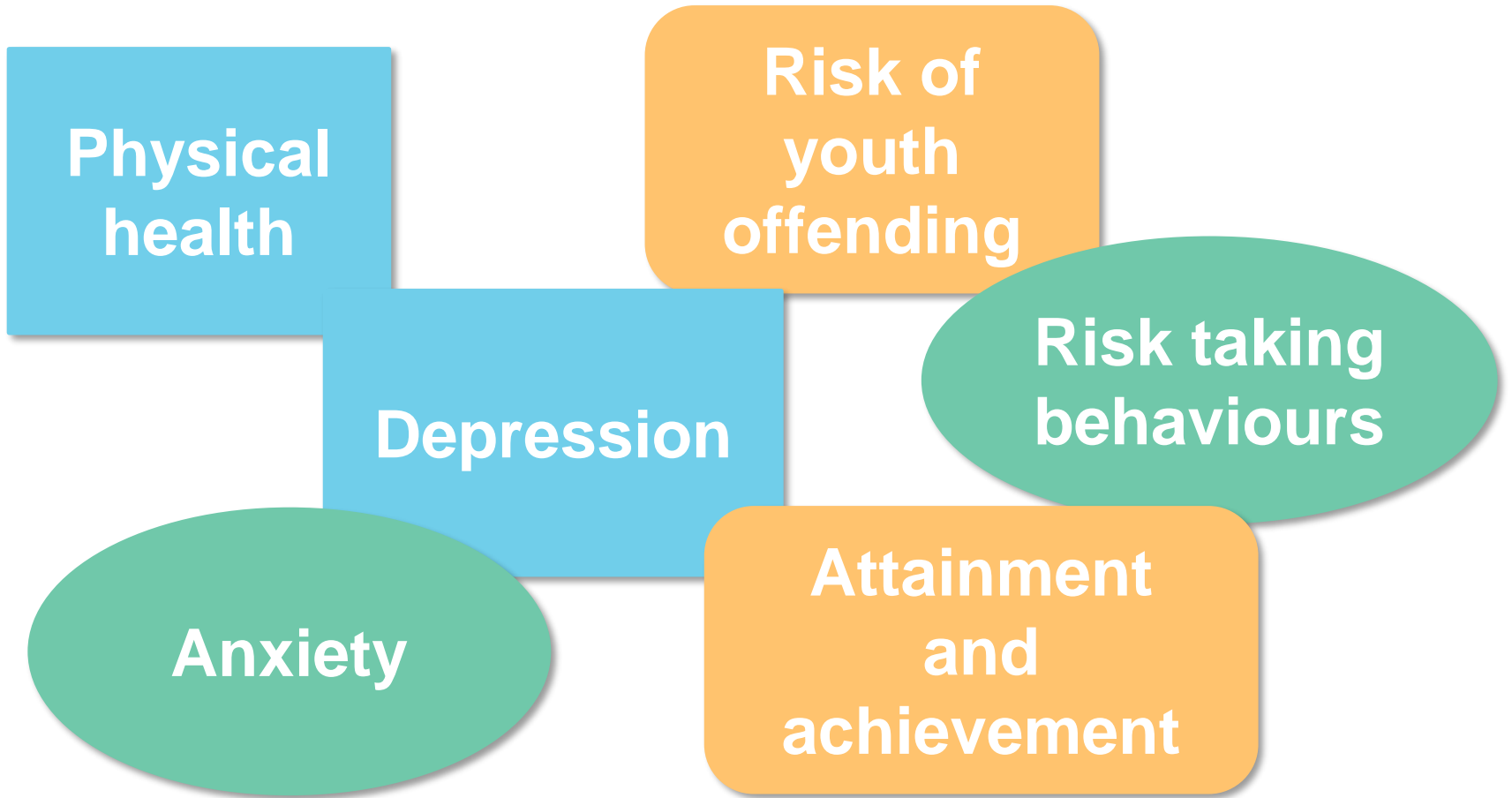
# THE DEATH OF A PARENT OR SIBLING IS ONE OF THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL LOSSES A CHILD WILL EVER FACE

If childhood grief is not dealt with appropriately it can lead to a variety of short and long-term problems

**Giving hope to grieving children**



# Unresolved Grief



# Confidence to say something

*'It is very doubtful that we will look back and say it was wrong to talk directly and openly to children about difficult things'*

Dyregrov, A. (2008)  
Grief in Children: A Handbook for Adults, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.



# GRIEF WITH THE VOLUME TURNED UP

**Giving hope to grieving children**





# Issues Related to Suicide

Rejection

Shame

Blame

Hereditary?

Media  
Intrusion

Why?

Manipulation

Judgement by  
Others

Suicide  
Notes

Giving hope to grieving children



# Why?

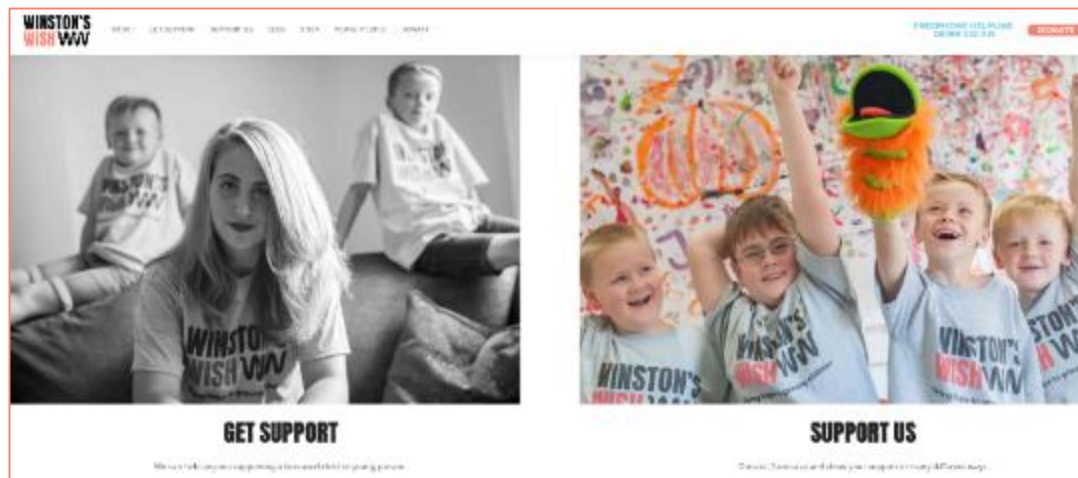


Giving hope to grieving children



# How can we support you?

- National Freephone Helpline (**08088 020 021**)
- Website
- Publications and resources
- Training and Consultancy
- England & Wales murder-manslaughter
- National military families programmes



Giving hope to grieving children



# WINSTON'S WISH **ww**

**Giving hope to grieving children**

[winstonswish.org](http://winstonswish.org)  
[info@winstonswish.org](mailto:info@winstonswish.org)  
Freephone Helpline: 08088 020

# Supporting children and young people bereaved by suicide

**Karen Harvey**

Service Development Manager



# Suicide is the leading cause of death in young people

In 2017, in the UK

- 574 young people (15-24 years) took their own lives.
  - 207 aged 15-19 and 367 aged 20-24.
- Young males are almost three times more likely to die by suicide than young females.
  - 423 Males
  - 151 Females

**SAMARITANS**

# Suicide bereavement is a risk factor for suicide attempt

People bereaved by suicide are less likely to receive informal support than people bereaved by other causes of sudden death

Young adults bereaved by suicide had a higher probability of attempting suicide than those bereaved by sudden natural causes.

**SAMARITANS**

# What is postvention?

“ The term given to activities and programmes that are intended to assist those who have been bereaved by suicide to cope with what has happened. Suicide prevention and postvention are closely related in that postvention can also prevent further deaths. ”

**SAMARITANS**



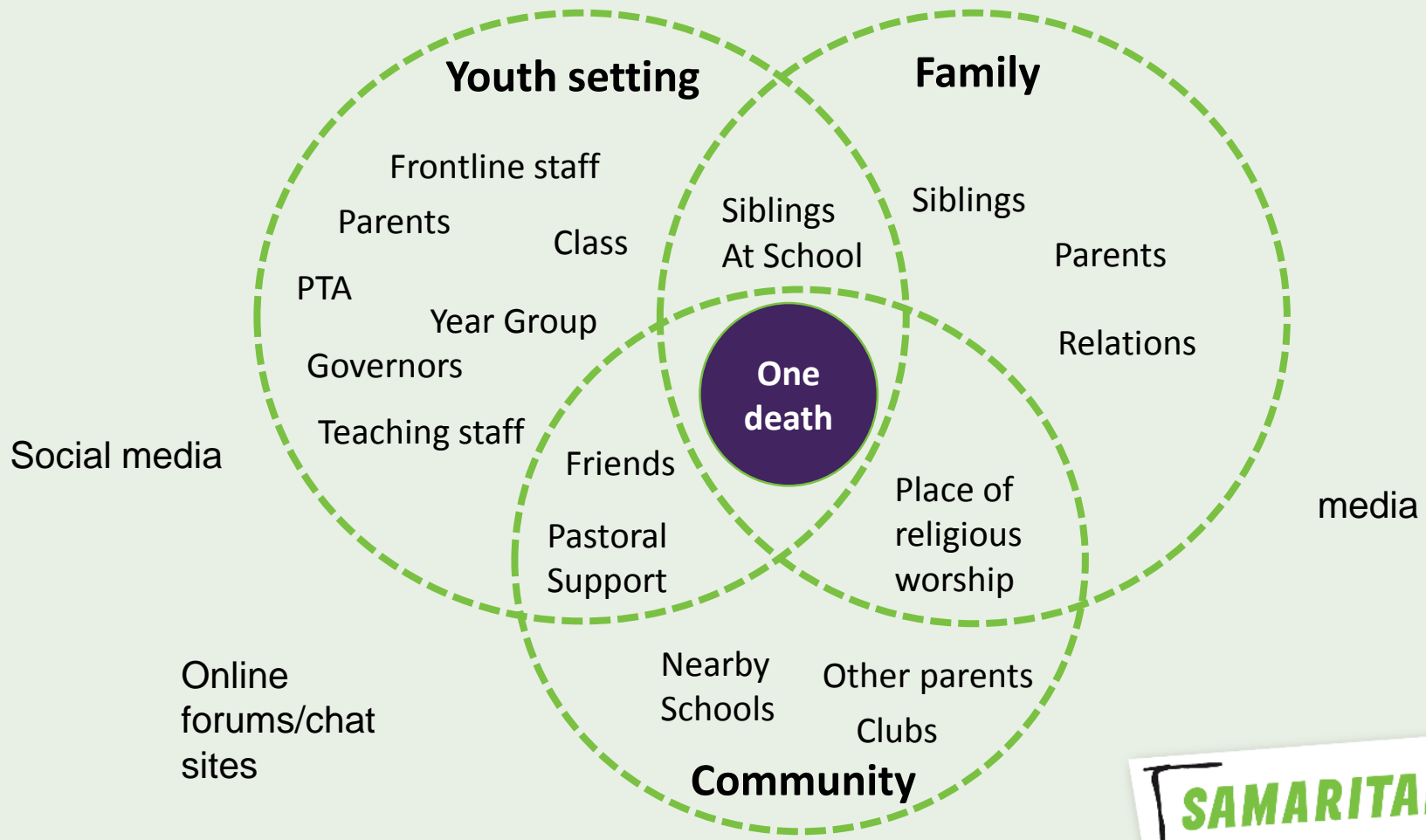
**The impact..**



**SAMARITANS**

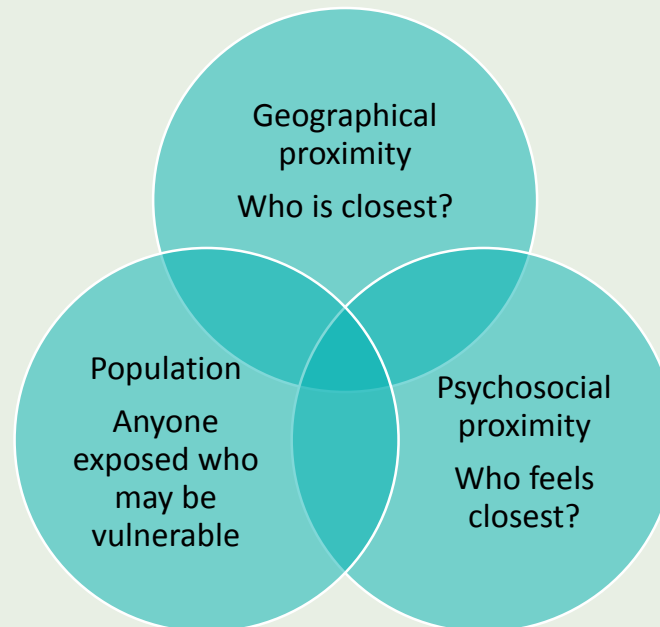
Over 130 people exposed to a death by suicide

## How many are affected?



**SAMARITANS**

# Identifying who is most vulnerable



**SAMARITANS**

# Creating an environment where everyone can say if they need help

## Knowledge:

Safe way to talk about suicide  
Prepared to protect  
Identifying risk/ warning signs

## Skills:

Knowing students  
Talking  
Everyone belongs



Isolation, shame and stigma play an important role in reducing help seeking behaviour and making it less likely that the staff can identify those at risk.

**SAMARITANS**

# Our services

## Prevention

Raising awareness of emotional health, coping strategies, developing listening skills and help seeking behaviour:

- Workshops and talks
- DEAL – Developing Emotional Awareness and Listening.

In 2018 our volunteers made over 2000 visits to youth settings and spoke to over 100,000 young people

## Postvention

Supporting a school to recover after a suspected suicide :

- Step by Step

In 2018 we made Step by Step responses to 130 youth settings

**SAMARITANS**

# Step by Step

- A free Samaritans service that provides practical support and guidance to help school and college communities recover from a suspected or attempted suicide.
- 100% of schools surveyed who have used the Step by Step service said they would recommend it to other secondary schools.



*“I cannot thank Samaritans enough and the Step by Step team, the service is utterly brilliant and they deal with one of the most devastating things that can happen to a school.”*

*(Head teacher)*

**SAMARITANS**

**SAMARITANS**

# Postvention Advisors

- Are active Samaritans listening volunteers
- Are trained in postvention
- Can provide support materials
- Work with local branches
- Support to staff, not direct support to young people
- Are part of an Organisation-wide team



*We currently have 48  
trained volunteers*

**SAMARITANS**

# WE ARE THERE FOR THE COMMUNITY

Giving people time, undivided attention  
and empathy meets a  
fundamental emotional need  
and reduces distress and despair



**SAMARITANS**



Her death was such a shock. I'd never experienced loss in the way we were experiencing at that time. So having someone come in and talk so matter of factly about what our young people might experience over the coming days, weeks and months was so, so helpful. As guidance for us, it was really helpful. (Teacher)

I was really very confused and upset, to this day feel quite devastated about it all. Samaritans were brilliant, they allowed me to talk about my emotions, which meant that I was in a much better place to resume my teacher role and support the kids. I wasn't sure whether what I was saying to the students was the right thing and they were able to offer me guidance, which meant I felt so much more confident in what I was saying. These kids are in such a vulnerable place and you don't want to say the wrong thing, because you are desperate for it not to happen again. (Teacher)

**SAMARITANS**

# Feedback

“ They didn’t wait to see how we coped, they were here straight away and in hindsight this was really important. ”

“ They helped to point out pathways, when you couldn’t see the wood for the trees. ”

“ They are experts and pointed out things we would never have thought about, they are what we needed and we have had the need to use them more than once in the past few years. We are grateful they are part of our extended team. ”



**SAMARITANS**

# CONTACTS

## Samaritans Step by Step Service



**08081682528**



**stepbystep@samaritans.org**



## Samaritans Press Office



**020 8394 8300**

**07943 809162 (Out of hours)**

**SAMARITANS**