

Cruse Bereavement Care celebrates success of youth support programme



A leading Northern Ireland charity celebrated its 50th anniversary by revealing that they have more than doubled their support to bereaved children and young people within the past year.

A major evaluation report on Cruse Bereavement Care's Children and Young People's (CYP) programme, shows that in the last year (2007/8) Cruse was able to provide 1-1 support to 126% more children and young people than in 2006/07.

The programme provides vital training for volunteers so they can offer face-to-face bereavement support to children and young people throughout Northern Ireland who have lost a loved one.

Funded with a grant of £134,000 from the Big Lottery Fund's Voluntary and Community Sector programme from 2005 - 2008, the success of the CYP programme was showcased at a high profile celebration event chaired by BBC presenter Joe Lindsay in Belfast's Stranmillis University College on Thursday 5 March 2009.

Organised as part of Grief Relief Week, a series of events and workshops from 28 February to 6 March, Cruse also used the event to announce that the vital CYP service will continue, thanks to a recent grant of £384,000 from the Big Lottery Fund's Reaching Communities programme.

James, 22, attended bereavement support sessions with Cruse when he was 17 to help him cope with the loss of his father who died of cancer in his 40s. The support he received from Cruse helped James deal with his grief during a very difficult time.

"I first came along to counselling sessions at Cruse in 2004 after the death of my dad. He died of cancer so it was something I was prepared for, but I just felt I needed a bit of extra support from someone who had a neutral perspective on things," said James.

He continued: “The feelings you experience when you lose someone close to you are a very personal thing. I felt very confused and alone and the volunteer from Cruse helped me to begin the healing process and deal with my grief in the best way for me.

“It was a great support to be able to open up completely to someone without feeling I was being judged and I realised that what I was feeling was normal. I learnt that there are no right answers when it comes to dealing with grief, you deal with it in your own way.”

Elaine Roub, Cruse Regional CYP Coordinator said: “This evaluation, conducted by Karen McMinn through Community Evaluation Northern Ireland (CENI), shows that we have been able to use the funding from the Big Lottery Fund to make a real difference to children and young people in Northern Ireland who have been bereaved.

“The continued support of the Big Lottery Fund will allow us to build on the success of the programme and reach those young people who need our support.”

Commenting on the success of the Programme, Karen McMinn, who conducted the independent evaluation, said: ‘This evaluation has found that the Children and Young Person’s Services Programme has been very effective in delivering its stated aims and objectives.

“Key stakeholder groups – bereaved young people, parents and carers, as well as social care and education professionals using the services have expressed a very high level of satisfaction with the quality and nature of support delivered by the Programme.”

During the event Cruse also re-launched “Ask the Experts”, a DVD created by 18 bereaved young people in a unique partnership project that involved, Cruse, Northern Ireland Hospice, Marie Curie and Barnardos. A panel of young people presented the DVD at the event, which offers advice for parents, carers and professionals on supporting bereaved children and young people.

James, who was also involved in the Youth Advisory Group that helped to create the DVD, said: “We all felt it was important to provide information for anyone who has contact with young people who experience a bereavement--people like teachers, youth workers, social workers and even sports coaches.

He continued: “We found that people often had difficulty knowing how to react in this harrowing situation so we wanted to give people some pointers about how they can help, what might work, what to avoid doing and what they can do to make a difference.”

Breidge Gadd, Big Lottery Fund NI Chair, said: “The Reaching Communities programme is a very important part of our work in NI, ensuring that lottery cash reaches strong projects led by the voluntary and community sector that have a real and lasting impact on people lives.”

She continued: “Cruse Bereavement Care’s Youth Services will be supporting marginalised people within our society.”

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