

# Guidance and Tips for Schools and Education Providers



Thank you for your interest in supporting a bereaved military child or young person. Your support and understanding could make such a difference to their education journey.

*Nikki Scott*

**Nikki Scott, BEM**  
Founder, Scotty's Little Soldiers

46

%

of our members who completed our survey said they do not feel sensitively supported by their education provider.\*

\*STATISTIC AS OF JUNE 2023

## Childhood Bereavement

Every child processes grief differently, and their bereavement story will be unique and individual. A child will experience a wide range of emotions and feelings at different ages and stages of their life. Research tells us that bereaved children and young people experience factors that could affect their educational attainment – here are a few examples:

- They may not talk to anyone about their bereavement, making them feel isolated and alone in their grief.
- They may have difficulty in maintaining their concentration levels.
- They may be exposed to curriculum topics (e.g. PSHE, English literature) that could impact on their grief and loss experience and their emotional wellbeing.
- Education staff may not know how to support a bereaved child or feel comfortable talking about death and dying.
- Staff may forget about the student's bereavement over time, even though a significant death means that child's life will have changed forever. There is no 'getting over it' with time.

## Significant Dates

There are many significant dates during the year that can impact on a child or young person's emotional wellbeing as a result of a bereavement including a deceased parent's birthday or the anniversary of their death. For children and young people who have experienced the death of a parent who served in the British Armed Forces, the lead up to and Remembrance Day itself can be a challenging and emotional time for them and their families.

We encourage all educational establishments to sit with the student, discuss their story and find out about those key dates and their potential impact. This will help you to create a plan of how to support that student in their education journey.

# Our Top 10 Tips for Education Staff

1

Discuss with the student what support they feel they need and involve them in any plans or strategies being implemented to help them. Identify trusted adults who are best placed to provide the student with support when life feels overwhelming and challenging.

2

Issue the student with a 'Time Out' card so they don't have to repeatedly explain their story and the reasons why they might need some space to compose themselves before continuing with their studies.

3

A bereaved child's concentration level and their motivation can reduce significantly due to their bereavement. This may mean they need a little extra help keeping up with their studies.

4

Please be mindful of any lessons or assemblies that could impact on a bereaved military child's wellbeing. Discussions about death and dying, war, conflicts and Remembrance may affect them. Please discuss any curriculum subjects in advance with the student so they know what to expect. They may wish to be excused from that lesson and so together you can agree where they should work instead.

5

If any student has a Supply Teacher, please ensure they are made aware of the child's bereavement and the sensitivities associated with it.

6

If a bereaved child has taken time off school or college, they can often get asked questions on their return. Their peers may not always understand why they didn't attend on significant dates. Please help the student to explain this and educate their peers.

7

Encourage the student to tell you about their deceased parent and the work they did in the military. Listen to them. They are proud of their parent's military service and may want to share this information with you.

8

Many grieving children and young people have experienced bullying and offensive remarks being made against them because of their bereavement. It can be incredibly demoralising and debilitating at a time where the student is feeling intense emotional pain. Please help your students deal with such challenges by offering them regular 1:1 wellbeing support.

9

Recognise that some bereaved children and young people may feel the pain of grief and loss but become stronger for it. They may strive to achieve a high standard of attainment due to their parent's death. Encourage and support them to make realistic targets for themselves, so that they can thrive in a healthy and appropriate way.

10

And finally, recognise that grief is a natural and healthy reaction to loss. However, remember that a parent's death is likely to impact on the student for many years to come. Discussions must continue and plans may have to be adjusted over time, to ensure the student feels sensitively supported and heard.

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*My child had been at high school for 3 years and not one of their teachers knew they were a bereaved military child, despite it being on their notes from primary school.*

- Parent

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*My child's teacher is amazing in trying to help, but the wider school (SENCO, Headteacher etc) have no understanding in anything to do with bereavement.*

- Parent

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## About Scotty's Little Soldiers

Scotty's Little Soldiers is a charity dedicated to supporting children and young people (0 to 25 years) who have experienced the death of a parent who served in the British Armed Forces. Scotty's provides its members with access to bereavement support, outstanding development opportunities and the chance to smile again.

Inspired by the experience of Army widow Nikki Scott, following the death of her husband Corporal Lee Scott in Afghanistan in 2009, the charity, which was set up in 2010, provides support and guidance to hundreds of bereaved military children and young people throughout their childhood.

## Work with Scotty's and support bereaved military children

Standby is an education project by Scotty's Little Soldiers, the charity for bereaved military children and young people.

The aim of the Standby project is to help Scotty's members and any child who has experienced the death of a parent who served in the British Armed Forces to feel sensitively supported in their education setting. No young person should be disadvantaged as a result of their bereavement.

Scotty's is able to supply resources offering tips and guidance for education providers to help them to support young people bereaved of a military parent. To subscribe and be notified of these resources, please scan the QR code.



*Subscribe here for more resources*



*It is a constant battle and I am always having to relive the trauma of explaining to school.*

*- Parent*



**Thank you for your time and support of bereaved British Forces children & young people.**