



## **Answers to some questions about Channel 4 documentary 'A Killing in the Family'**

These responses to some frequently asked questions have been compiled to provide some background to the documentary 'A Killing in the Family' being broadcast on March 8<sup>th</sup> 2017 at 22.00 by Channel 4.

### **What is the programme about?**

The programme follows several children and young people who have had someone close to them die through violence as the charity Winston's Wish offers them support in their grief.

### **Who are Winston's Wish?**

Winston's Wish is a child bereavement charity that supports children, young people and their families when someone important to them dies.

We offer our highly skilled and experienced support through our Freephone national helpline to anyone supporting a bereaved child; and face to face and group support from highly experienced practitioners within our three geographic service areas (South West; South East; North West). When a death has been through murder or manslaughter, we offer our support across England and Wales.

Winston's Wish is part of the Childhood Bereavement Network, the hub for all services and individuals offering support to bereaved children and their families in the UK.

### **Why do we do what we do?**

The death of a parent or sibling will have a profound effect on a child or young person. We believe that, with the right support at the right time, children can live with their grief and go on to live changed yet still full and flourishing lives.

Over the years, we have developed creative ways of working with children and young people who have been bereaved to help them make sense of their loss and find a way through their grief.

Whenever we can, we try to share what we have learnt from these young people; this may be by training professionals or by engaging with the media.

### **What is in the programme?**

The documentary tells the stories of some of the children and young people who attended a residential weekend for those bereaved by murder or manslaughter in April 2016. It focuses on a few of these families and shows some of their pathway through support from early meetings with our Winston's Wish staff through the weekend's activities to the days and weeks afterwards.

It can be hard to watch in places, especially when the children concerned are talking about what happened in their family. However, the families want to assure you that it is much harder to live through what has happened than it is to watch this programme.

## How many children and young people have been bereaved through murder or manslaughter?

The Childhood Bereavement Network and Winston's Wish estimate that around **one child every day is bereaved of a parent or sibling through murder or manslaughter** in Great Britain.

## How many children are bereaved through any cause in the UK?

There are no official figures for how many children are bereaved each year; however, the Childhood Bereavement Network has worked out a very robust estimate:

- How many parents die each year, leaving dependent children?

We estimate that in 2014, 23,200 parents died in the UK, leaving dependent children (23,600 in 2013). That's one parent every 22 minutes.

- How many children are bereaved of a parent each year?

We estimate that in 2014, these parents left behind around 40,000 dependent children aged 0-17 (41,000 in 2013). That's **110** newly bereaved children every day.

- How many children in the current population have been bereaved of a parent?

By the age of 16, 4.7 per cent or around 1 in 20 young people will have experienced the death of one or both of their parents (Parsons, 2011).

- How many children in the current population have been bereaved of a parent or sibling?

In 2004, the last time a national survey was done, around 3.5% of 5-16 year olds had been bereaved of a parent or sibling (*Faith and others, 2012*). In today's terms, that equates to around 309,000 school age children across the UK.

- Are some groups more likely to be bereaved?

Yes. Mortality rates vary by social class and geography, so it follows that children living in disadvantaged areas are more likely to be bereaved. Also, some groups of children may be more likely to experience particular kinds of bereavement: for example mortality rates among disabled young people with complex health needs are higher than among the general population, so young people attending special school are probably more likely to be bereaved of a friend than their peers in mainstream schools.

## Why did Winston's Wish agree to take part in the documentary?

Our primary concern is always the wellbeing of the children and young people who trust us to help them through difficult times in their lives. Over the years, we have been involved in a few television documentaries (*for example: Surviving Suicide (Channel 4); The Mummy Diaries (Channel 4); Everyman (BBC)*) and we believe that, with sensitive programme-making, very helpful opportunities can be created to show the wider population the impact of being bereaved as a child and also the positive outcomes of our work.

We believe that the more that society as a whole is aware of the needs of bereaved children and the more willing people are to acknowledge a child's loss, the better these children will be supported. For too long, the needs and feelings of bereaved children have been overlooked.

There has also been even less attention played to bereavement through murder or manslaughter; much of the focus can go on the horror of the death or the search for the perpetrator while the experiences and feelings of those who have been bereaved are overlooked.

## **How may children react to being bereaved by murder or manslaughter?**

Any death of someone close will affect a child. They may experience a wide range of emotions from deep sadness to guilt and anger. When someone else has been responsible for someone's death, these emotions will be intensified. Children may experience profound and lasting shock, enormous anger at what has happened, rage at the person who caused their relative to die, deep fear at the perceived insecurity of the world around them.

Sadly, in many cases, the person who caused the death is also known to the child, resulting in great confusion and a double loss, for example, if one parent kills the other and is then imprisoned. The world becomes even less safe when a stranger is responsible for the death or when the perpetrator has not been found.

In some families, the child may have to move house, school, area – away from familiar and comforting places and routines. It can be difficult to live, for example, with grandparents who are mourning the loss of their own child (who was your parent) and unable to forgive the person who killed them (who may be your other parent).

## **What is happening to the children in the film now?**

All of the children, young people and family members seen in the documentary were fully informed about the nature and content of the documentary and were freely able to choose whether or not to take part at any stage. They have all seen the film before transmission and fully support the broadcast. Our staff continue to support them and we are also working with their schools to ensure that any impact of the broadcast is minimised.

## **What did we think of film makers?**

Dragonfly TV has been truly exemplary and responsible programme-makers. Their intuitive understanding of and respect for the families involved and our work with them have reassured us throughout the process. They have respected confidentiality and boundaries and have sacrificed 'good television' ideas when this might have interfered with necessary therapeutic processes. Their commitment to the families' wellbeing never wavered.

It is never completely comfortable to be filmed but they did everything in their power to make the actual filming have minimal intrusive impact on the processes and content of the therapeutic work.

## **What about these families' confidentiality?**

We offer all our families confidential support within a framework that puts children's wellbeing first. Families were fully informed of any potential consequences if they chose to take part in the filming. However, it should be noted that a death through violence inevitably attracts media coverage and these families had already experienced the media spotlight. All were happy to be involved.

## **How often are these weekends held?**

At present, Winston's Wish holds one residential group a year for those bereaved through murder or manslaughter. More people are supported one-to-one who choose not to attend a group. We recognise that there is an unmet need and would like to hold additional weekends if funding was available.

## **How could I get involved with this work?**

At present, Winston's Wish use a mixture of staff and highly trained volunteers to deliver our work – and we currently have enough clinical volunteers. But if you would like to be considered in the future, please email [info@winstonswish.org.uk](mailto:info@winstonswish.org.uk). We are always grateful to hear from individuals or companies that would like to help us by raising some of the funds we need to provide our support to bereaved children.

## Where can I find organisations that can help bereaved children and young people?

The **Childhood Bereavement Network** website has a directory of local open access services which support children and young people who have been bereaved. [www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/directory](http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/directory)

In addition, the following organisations have a national remit to support children and young people affected by death and bereavement and/or adults who have been bereaved.

### **Winston's Wish**

Guidance, support and information for anyone caring for a bereaved child. Winston's Wish also offers particular support to those bereaved through murder or manslaughter.

Helpline: 080 88 020 021 – open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

E-mail: [askmailbox@winstonswish.org.uk](mailto:askmailbox@winstonswish.org.uk)

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

### **Child Bereavement UK**

Guidance, support and information for anyone caring for a bereaved child.

Phone: 0800 02 888 40 – open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

Email: [info@childbereavementuk.org](mailto:info@childbereavementuk.org)

[www.childbereavementuk.org](http://www.childbereavementuk.org)

### **Cruse**

Support for the bereaved of any age, including a network of local groups, some of whom work with children.

Phone: 0808 808 1677 – open Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 5pm: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday until 8pm.

Email: [helpline@cruse.org.uk](mailto:helpline@cruse.org.uk)

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

### **Child Death Helpline**

Helpline for anyone affected by the death of a child of any age

Phone: 0800 282 986

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

### **The Compassionate Friends**

Support for bereaved parents who have experienced the death of a child of any age and from any cause.

Phone: 0845 123 2304

E-mail: [info@tcf.org.uk](mailto:info@tcf.org.uk)

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

### **ChildLine**

Helpline for children to talk about anything that worries them, 24 hours a day, every day

Phone: 0800 1111

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

### **SAMM – Support After Murder or Manslaughter**

Offers emotional support to those bereaved through murder or manslaughter, in this country or abroad.

Phone: 08458 723440

[www.samm.org](http://www.samm.org) / [www.sammabroad.org](http://www.sammabroad.org)

### **Samaritans**

Confidential emotional support, 24 hours a day, every day of the year

Phone: 116 123

[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

### **Support After Suicide**

Website containing supportive information and links to organisations supporting those bereaved by suicide.

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

### **Victim Support**

Support for anyone who has been the victim of a crime

Phone: 0808 168 9111

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