

When an adult in the family has cancer, the question of how and what to tell children - of whatever age - can be daunting. The Family Support Service is here to help deal with this difficult dilemma and some of the issues that people consider in these circumstances include:

- Is it possible to have a family life when a member of the family is so unwell?
- Is it better to tell the truth?
- What if my child asks difficult questions?
- How do I calm my child's fears?
- Are there any books that would help my child/teenager?
- Would it help my child to meet other children in the same situation?
- It worries me that my child's routine will be disrupted if I'm not there.



We offer specialist support to help families cope with disruption to ordinary family life and minimise the long term impact on a child's emotional well-being



If you are worried about any aspect of Cancer please call our Information & Support Helpline

**0800 783 3339**

Monday to Friday 9am - 1pm  
Calls are free from a landline  
[helpline@cancerfocusni.org](mailto:helpline@cancerfocusni.org)

**Cancer Focus Northern Ireland**  
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Focus on  
**Family Support  
Service**

## Family Support Service

Our Family Support Service offers a number of different programmes that will help tackle both emotional and practical needs. It will:

- Help families, children and young people untangle complicated feelings and dispel fears
- Provide a support service tailor made to meet the needs of your family
- Offer constructive practical and emotional support when life feels very difficult



- Help your family find the language to speak to each other about the cancer journey
- Provide opportunities for children/young people to meet others in a similar situation
- Provide opportunities for parents to share experiences and feelings
- Support the family to have some fun together and enable them to continue family life

## What is the Family Support Service?

When an adult in the family is diagnosed with cancer it affects the entire family unit. For children and young people this can be distressing, isolating and frightening. It can bring unwanted and dramatic changes to their lives and can affect their experience of school, relationships and ongoing development.

This Service offers specialist support to help families cope with disruption to ordinary family life and minimise the long term impact on a child's emotional well-being.

### Who is it for?

The service is for children/young people and their families when a significant adult has been diagnosed with cancer. The adult might be a parent, aunt, uncle, grandparent or anyone who has a central role in the child's day to day life.

You might decide that individual members of the family would benefit from the service, a parent or a child for example, or perhaps the whole family would benefit from using the service together.

Our Family Support Worker will discuss your individual needs with you and will arrange whatever support is best for your family.



## These programmes include:

### C.L.I.M.B.

C.L.I.M.B. (Children's Lives Include Moments of Bravery) is a programme for children aged 5 -12 who are experiencing the impact of a cancer diagnosis in either a parent or a significant adult. C.L.I.M.B. is run over six weeks and the groups meet in the evenings so as not to disrupt school attendance. It's an enjoyable, sharing, interactive experience and a time for the children to come together to deal with their feelings. They will develop an understanding of cancer and the myths and fear that children hold will be dispelled. The groups are creative, using drama and arts. They are also based around having some fun together and meeting new people.



### Teenage Support

We support teenagers and young adults on either a one to one basis or in a group session. The focus is on how it is to be a teenager when a parent/significant adult has cancer. We look at the effects of independence, dependence and fear and provide a place for teenagers to explore their feelings and meet others in a similar situation.

## Parents Programme

This programme looks at the issues around talking to children about cancer and how it is to be a parent coping at this time.

### Family Bereavement Evenings

Family bereavement evenings are held once a month in venues around Northern Ireland. Our aim is to enable bereaved families to come together and for children and carers to meet with others to gain support and friendship. The meetings are informal with games and activities for the children and a time for parents to speak and be heard.

### One to One Support for a Child / Young Person

Sometimes a child or young person may benefit from one to one sessions with the Support Worker. Meetings are arranged wherever the child/young person wishes, including their own home. We also help prepare children for the loss of a loved one.

### Individual Family Support

Sometimes families need time together with the Support Worker to help them find the right words to talk to each other and work through concerns and worries. Meetings can be arranged at whatever location is most convenient for the family, including their own home.

### Writing for the Future and Memory Work

We enable people living with cancer to collect written ideas and items to keep in books or in memory boxes. We also support families as they collect memories after a loved one has died. Each piece of work can be adapted to best suit the needs of the children whatever their age.