

Available Family Support Programmes:

Children's Group Work

A 6-week programme for children aged 5-12 who have a parent living with cancer. These groups run throughout the year according to need and are offered in the evenings to minimise disruption to school life. These are fun and educational sessions that support children to connect with their feelings, understand more about cancer and meet new people.

Teenage Support

Supporting 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 or significant adult has cancer. The service offers a safe place for teenagers to explore their feelings, build trust, promote autonomy and meet others in a similar situation.

Parent Sessions

Exploring the issues around talking to children about cancer and how it is to be a parent coping during a cancer journey. These can be standalone workshops tailored to the needs of the group and can be offered according to any developing needs.

Our groups run throughout the year according to need and frequency may vary.

It is because of generous donations that we can continue to deliver vital complimentary cancer support services to local people and families. To donate to or support our charity, please email fundraising@cancerfocusni.org

“My weekly Family Support session provided me with a safe and confidential place to talk – it was amazing for me and without it I may not have been able to support my boys through this time. The expertise and sharing of experiences between parents in the family support circle and from the counsellors was invaluable.”

Past Participant



If you have any concerns about cancer you can talk to one of our experienced nurses on the Cancer Focus NI FREE information and support Nurseline

0800 783 3339

Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9am - 1pm.
Calls are **free** and **confidential** from a landline.
nurseline@cancerfocusni.org



Family Support

If you would like to know more about this service, please contact:

T: 028 9066 3281

E: familysupport@cancerfocusni.org
www.cancerfocusni.org

Cancer Focus Northern Ireland
40-44 Eglantine Avenue
Belfast BT9 6DX



Charity No: NIC 101307



Family Support



When an adult in the family is diagnosed with cancer it affects the entire family. It can be a distressing, isolating and frightening time. Sometimes, it can be hard for a family to openly talk about exactly how it feels to go through a cancer journey.

For children and young people, it can bring unwanted and dramatic changes to their lives and can affect their experience of school, relationships, and ongoing development.

Family Support is one way for children, parents, and guardians to express their emotions. An opportunity to talk one-to-one or as a group in a safe, non-judgmental environment.

What to expect?

A designated Family Support Worker will discuss a family's individual needs and will arrange suitable support.

Support provided:

- Helps families, children and young people untangle complicated emotions and fears
- Provide a support service tailored to meet the needs of each family
- Offer constructive practical and emotional support when life feels difficult
- Help your family find the language to speak to each other about cancer
- 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.

About the service

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, grandparent, or carer. Sometimes an individual member of the family might benefit from one-to-one support or the entire family can have a space to be together and share their feelings.

This service is delivered across Northern Ireland and is run by experienced Family Support Workers. The service engages with Cancer Focus NI's wider therapeutic teams to respond to the individual needs of local families.

Common issues:

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.

“When I had to give my sons the news that their dad was terminal, they didn't know what that word meant so I had to explain it to them.

We went out afterwards to get ice cream and cried as we bought them. Thanks to these sessions, I have noticed a shift in how one of my sons is able to manage his emotions. He is only 10 years old and it's hard for him to have lost his father.”

Past Participant



Family Bereavement

Bereavement evenings are held once a month in venues around Northern Ireland. The aim is to enable grieving 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 it may be beneficial for a child or young person to meet with a Support Worker alone to talk about their thoughts and feelings. Meetings are arranged to suit the individual's preferences such as taking place at home or another setting. This service helps prepare children and young people for the loss of a loved one.

Individual Family Support

Providing time with a Support Worker can help families 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.

Dads Bereavement Socials

An opportunity for bereaved dads to meet once per month with family support workers in an informal setting. This can include walk and talk sessions, coffee mornings, or activity-based meet ups.