

Widening Access to Services for Children of Palliative Patients

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Making today matter

Background

30% of hospice patients are now under 60

This means more patients now have child caring responsibilities and more children than ever before are affected by life limiting illness and bereavement¹.

Research suggests that children of palliative patients are at risk of poor outcomes such as low self esteem and low educational attainment unless they gain access to information and services^{2,3}.

Many teachers feel that it is beyond their skills to deal with death, dying and bereavement (one teachers feelings)

Success to date

- So far we have provided 324 hours of support to 53 children
- We have raised approx £15,000 with schools to support the development of this work in the future.
- We are in the process of evaluating how our service makes sure children are safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible and included.

Methodology

1. The numbers of children bereaved in Ayrshire and Arran was calculated and compared against services to support them before or after a death.
2. Teaching staff from 12 primary schools were consulted on how they support children with death, dying and bereavement
3. Consultations with bereaved parents and children
4. Education day for 50 Professional staff exploring the needs of bereaved children

Results

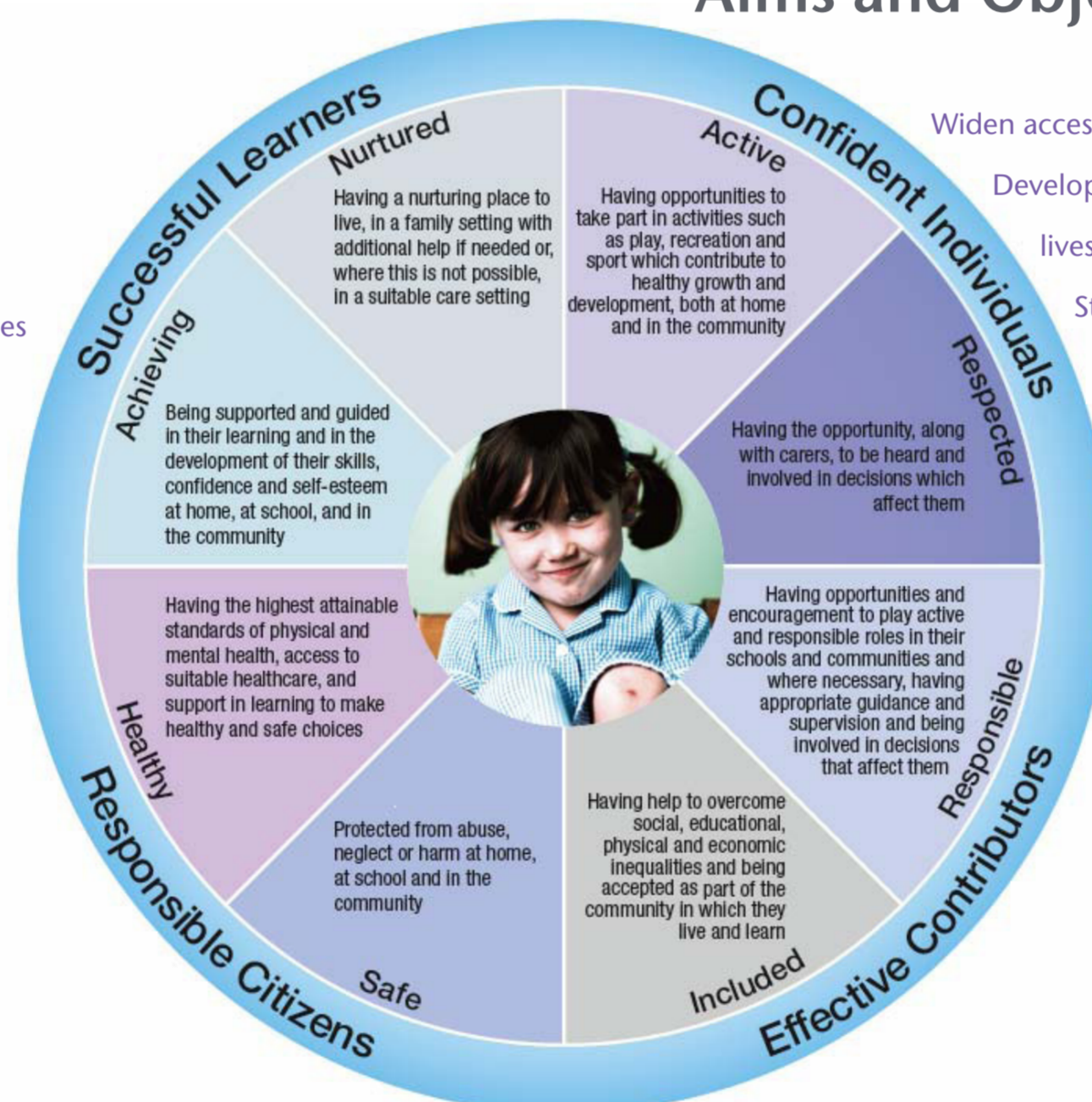
- Large gaps in service provision in Ayrshire - no service specifically supported children of palliative patients
- 1700 children and young people will be bereaved each year of someone significant in Ayrshire and Arran⁴
- Adults in the lives of children do not know how to support them when someone is dying or had died



Conclusion

The needs of children of palliative patients in Ayrshire are not being met due to inadequate service provision and lack of education for adults caring for them, which means that the children of palliative patients risk not achieving positive outcomes.

Aims and Objectives



I just expected the school to have... counselling or support or resources, but they didn't (parent)

What we did

- We set up a service which provides 1:1 support for children affected by life-limiting illness
- We offer advise, guidance and support to families, agencies and professionals of how to support children and young people
- We engaged with schools to educate school communities on the importance of talking about death and dying with children and how to support them
- We designed a joint education and fundraising packs with school to educate them on childhood bereavement and raise money for the service too.

References

1. Valuing the work of the hospice, *Annual overview* Ayrshire Hospice 2012/13
2. Christ GH. *Healing Children's Grief: Surviving a Parent's Death from Cancer*. Oxford University Press: New York 2000
3. Worden JW. *Children and Grief: When a Parent Dies*. Guilford Press: New York 1996
4. Child Bereavement Network (CBN). Calculated incidence of prevalence of bereaved children in Ayrshire and Arran 2012

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