



Losing a child

Smarties Nursery, Chester

Elsie, who was looked after in Smarties baby room, was diagnosed with a genetic disorder which meant her body couldn't process protein. She died a few days later at 19 months old.

Annie Silcock, nursery founder, received the awful news on a Friday evening five years ago. By Monday she had brought in a counsellor and enough supply staff to cover for her regular staff for two days.

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"We made a quiet place for staff members to see the counsellor, have some head time and explore how they were feeling. There was a trained expert there they could pour their heart out to and who could give them strategies to deal with their emotions.

"About six members of staff went to Elsie's funeral, including key workers and those closest to her. I spoke with her mum and explained that we would have our own celebration of Elsie's life separately. We kept our parents informed as we had brought in our bank staff for that day, but all those who went to Elsie's funeral returned to the nursery to share their experiences with the others.

"We decided to create a memorial garden to keep her memory alive and help her sister Flossie. Her family were involved in the design of the garden. They went on to create Elsie Ever After, a bereavement charity for those who have lost a child.

"We have a toolbox of resources for staff here about how to talk to parents and

children about bereavement. We're still very close to Elsie's family – they want to talk about her with us, that's very important - and they also have a new child Josh who is now with us. It took months of visits before they would leave him, but we were in no rush."

Annie's advice: "Really think about your bereavement policy and procedure now. Don't wait until something happens when

you are too shocked to do anything. Staff may need to take time off and keep details of a counsellor you can call in."

Smarties Nursery is the overall winner of NDNA's 2018 Nursery of the Year Award (see page ten).

Find bereavement support for parents at www.elsieverafter.org.uk/

Katie Koehler, CBUK: "Losing a child goes against expectations so can be extremely hard to deal with. It's crucial that when a child dies, staff are supported – give them space to talk about their feelings and the opportunity to support each other. Some may need counselling. Those with the closest connection with the child and family may want to go to the funeral and that wish needs to be acknowledged and discussed."

Resources

- The Child Bereavement UK website address is: www.childbereavementuk.org
- Their helpline number is **0800 02 888 40**. It is open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm, offering support, information and guidance for families, professionals, and anyone experiencing the death of a child, or who is supporting a grieving child or parent bereaved of a child
- Find out more about Elephant Tea Parties at www.elephantsteaparty.co.uk
- Cruse Bereavement Care offers free support for adults and children by email, telephone or face-to-face. The helpline **0808 808 1677** is open Monday to Friday from 9.30am to 5pm, extended on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday until 8pm. Find out more at www.cruse.org.uk/Children/children-understanding-death
- DfE has released an updated list of Child death overview panels contacts in each local authority areas: www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-death-overview-panels-contacts
- NDNA has useful resources for members including a bereavement policy and a trauma factsheet – search on our website www.ndna.org.uk



MEMBERS' STORIES

Take it away!

As part of our series of articles on expanding your nursery business, Nursery News interviews Lisa Cronk, Director of The Hollies Nursery in Cardiff. Hollies has recently set up a new venture offering a takeaway meal service, which has gone down a treat with busy parents...



Why did you start offering this service?

The idea came from a few of our parents whose children ate very little at home then came to nursery and ate everything! Parents were amazed at the wide variety of foods their children enjoyed, and a few parents jokingly asked if we could provide a takeaway service to make meal times at home much easier.

So, when we sat down as a management team to explore initiatives for the year, a children's takeaway service seemed the perfect choice. We started a takeaway breakfast option of toast and tea or coffee for parents within a month, but the children's takeaway initiative needed a great deal more thought. Ultimately it took us 12 months of planning and meeting with Environmental Health and Trading Standards before reaching production in April 2018.



How have parents at your setting responded?

Last year, when we first asked our parents if a takeaway service was something they would consider using, we had very encouraging responses. Positives from parents included knowing that if they purchased a meal, their children would definitely eat it, together with the fact that

all meals were freshly prepared and frozen on the same day.

It is still early, but we have had a great deal of interest from both parents and grandparents, many of whom are buying one portion of each dish available with the aim of establishing favourites for future orders. Parents are also purchasing duplicate meals for siblings who have left Hollies, which once again make family meal times easier!

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The convenience of re-heating a meal within minutes straight from the freezer combined with a simple ordering and payment structure has meant that there are many benefits for both our children and our parents.

How do you manage it?

We are fortunate to have two staff within our kitchen, which means that on specific days Stephen our Chef can prepare the takeaway meals alongside Louise who prepares and cooks the children's meals for the day.

The takeaway meals are prepared, cooled, decanted into pots, labelled and frozen within hours of being made. Parents

order on arrival and collect their meals as they are leaving at the end of the day. They are invoiced at the end of the month. Parents are also able to drop in and place an order on days their children do not attend.

What are your future plans for the meal service?

Ideally, we would like to expand the range of our children's favourite dishes on offer in Cardiff and also provide additional vegetarian options. In September 2018, we are opening a second site at Rougemont School Newport and our prospective parents are already excited about this service!

Do you have any tips for how other nurseries can grow their businesses?

I founded Hollies 16 years ago and I am still as passionate and dedicated about it today as I was then. In my experience, if a nursery is to remain sustainable, it needs to identify the ever changing needs of the children and parents, embrace change and adapt its services accordingly. I always find it exciting and motivational to work with my team on new initiatives and challenges - who knows what services we will be offering in 2019!!

