

## **Jane and Rosie's story**

Following the death of her husband and her mother, (both within a few months of each other) Jane contacted Children and Families in Grief for help. She had heard about our service through her daughter's (Rosie, age 8) primary school and her local hospice.

Jane was struggling with her own grief following the death of her husband when her mum died quite suddenly. This left her feeling unable to cope with her grief whilst trying desperately to support her 8 year old daughter.

Following an initial telephone assessment, two therapists were assigned to work with the family and enroll them on one of our therapeutic weekends, which was scheduled for 2 months time.

On the first visit to the family home Rosie didn't want to speak to us as she felt so upset and didn't want to discuss the death of her dad and granny. We talked to Jane and heard about their experience, sharing of her own grief and that of her daughters. We introduced ourselves to Rosie and said that we would come back and see her in a few weeks time and bring a game with us.

On our return a few weeks later Rosie was keen to see us and engaged immediately in playing "all about me" which is a therapeutic game aimed at encouraging conversation around the lives of those who play it. It gently asks questions about the lives of the players that helps them to talk about the things that are good and difficult in their lives. It asks questions like "What do you do if you feel sad?", "What is the worst thing that has happened to you this year?" and "If you could meet anyone, who would it be?"

This second visit felt very positive and Rosie was now opening up and even brought out her dad's ashes, which were in a beautiful wooden casket with photos of the family on it. She asked us both if we would like to hold 'daddy' and talked about the pictures on the casket and why they had chosen them. We were already noticing a huge shift in feelings and openness from Jane and Rosie.

This family attended our therapeutic weekend in October 2011 along with other families.

During the weekend Jane and Rosie had opportunities to talk about the death of their family members. We used creative story telling, drama and artwork to help Rosie express her feelings. Jane benefitted from talking to the other adults at the weekend when the adults and children were separated for some sessions. They both particularly enjoyed the memory jar activity where coloured chalks and salt are mixed together with different colours poured into jars and layered to represent different memories, helping families share their memories with each other. Jane and Rosie found this exercise very special and clearly engaged in the sharing of their memories with each other.

After the weekend we arranged a follow up visit at which we could visibly see the difference that the weekend had made to this family. Both were talking more freely and spoke of feeling 'lighter' since the weekend.

The family continue to stay in touch and attend our social events and are keen to help Children and Families in Grief help more families like them in the future.