

#HOPEAFTERSUICIDE

The short film raising awareness for the children left behind

Childhood bereavement charity, Winston's Wish, has pledged to raise awareness of the thousands of children who are bereaved by suicide each year through the release of a short film entitled #HopeAfterSuicide.

The film has been directed and produced by filmmaker Phil Beastall, the man behind the *£50 Love is a Gift* short that went viral last Christmas.

"In the UK, on average, someone takes their own life every 90 minutes," says Fergus Crow, CEO of Winston's Wish. "Many of these may be the parents and siblings of children who are left overwhelmed and bewildered by what has happened.

"Public awareness of suicide is increasingly higher, but awareness of the consequences for the children bereaved by suicide is not. Many of these children will have returned to school this month, with the reality of their summer holiday 'stories' in stark contrast to those of their friends and class mates. Our aim is to shine a light on the reality of this issue because, if we don't address it, then we are leaving thousands of children to suffer.

"Suicide is a sudden, and often unexpected death, which can have a particularly devastating effect on young people - an experience which, left unsupported, can lead to very negative life outcomes, including developmental issues and mental health disorders, bullying or being bullied, lower educational attainment, high risk behaviour, unemployment, crime and social exclusion."

These risks, according to recent academic studies, are increased further when the bereavement is by suicide, with research showing that "people who are bereaved as a result of suicide are themselves at increased risk of taking their own life".

Evidence shows, however, that for many young people these risks can be mitigated against with well managed support.

Director of Family Services at Winston's Wish, Sacha Richardson, explains: "The support a child receives after the death of close loved one can help to define the rest of their lives. With the right support, a bereaved child can go on to live a full, flourishing and healthy life - and so our message to all those affected is that there absolutely is hope after suicide."

Filmmaker Phil Beastall became impassioned with the work of Winston's Wish after visiting one of its family centres. He said: "What the charity does for children's futures is

immeasurable - many of the children they work with have been bereaved in deeply traumatic circumstances. I make my living out of telling emotional stories which, hopefully, make a difference to all who watch them and, when I learned how Winston's Wish therapeutically supports children in finding the words to be able to tell their own stories - no matter how difficult those stories are - I just had to give my support. These children's stories need to be heard, and I sincerely hope that this film will make a difference, not only for the charity but also for the children who need support.

"My hope is that this film will not only raise awareness of the devastating effect suicide can have on children but, most importantly, signpost adults who may be supporting a bereaved child to the support and advice available through Winston's Wish, as well as raise vital funds for us to be able to do the work we do."

To watch the film and find out more about the #HopeAfterSuicide campaign, visit www.winstonswish.org/hope-after-suicide.

For anyone supporting a child who has been bereaved by suicide, Winston's Wish provides individual guidance and information on how to talk to children about this type of death, as well as offering on-going support for grieving families and professionals supporting a grieving child.

Freephone National Helpline: 08088 020 021, 9am - 5pm Monday - Friday

Join in the conversation
#HopeAfterSuicide

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Giving hope to grieving children