

TRANSCRIPT: Sibling support

Caroline Dew

The hospice is really good for sibling support as well. My eldest daughter, Zoe, attends a sibling support group and they also have family support workers who will talk to your child whilst they're in the hospice.

Zoe will attend sibling support days probably four or five times a year. Some of its all fun activities and team building and it's with siblings that have had a bereavement of their brother or sister and siblings who still have their brother and sister alive, and the other section of it is they really explore feelings and how to express those feelings and that it's OK to feel worried, anxious and upset about what happens at home.

Zoe's an eight year old child but she comes across as much more emotionally mature. She has conversations with us about Matthew's life expectancy. We have to give her scores out of ten at how well he is if he's in hospital. She wants to be there when he dies. All those conversations you wouldn't expect to have with an eight year old, she's very comfortable discussing it and you have to be as open and honest as you can be because otherwise that just brings more anxiety and fears about the unknown with her. Our comfortableness talking to Zoe about that has increased over time. It helps with the family support at the hospice because I can liaise with the support workers and say, 'How's the best way to talk about these things with Zoe? What level of understanding will she have at that age?' and I'm more than happy to discuss it with her because that's what I would want as a child as well, I think, that openness.

The sibling workers come to Zoe's school and explained to her peers and to her teachers, about what it's like living with a child with life limited expectancy and it's all part of that whole care of the family.