



Giving hope to grieving children



October 2024

## Winston's Wish and GCA Guidelines for designing cards suitable for bereaved children

These guidelines were the result of a workshop held in 2024 with a team from Winstons Wish and the Greeting Card Association, hosted by Moonpig.

[Winston's Wish](#) is the UK's first childhood bereavement charity. Established in 1992 Winston's Wish support 60,000 bereaved children and young people each year.

[Greeting Card Association](#) (GCA) is an independent not for profit trade organisation working for, and representing, the greeting card industry. GCA members consist of greeting card publishers, retailers, suppliers, individuals working in the card industry.

### Context:

A child is bereaved of a parent every 20 minutes in the UK; 127 children and young people lose a parent every day.

46,300 children lose a parent before the age of 18.

78% of 11-16 year olds have been bereaved of a close relative or friend.

Winston's Wish contacted the GCA explaining that their youth ambassadors felt that there was a gap in the market for cards suitable for bereaved children. Winston Wish director, Paul Moore said:

*"Time and time again we have heard the same story from children who recount the experience of sitting quietly surrounded by relatives and family friends who have brought cards of sympathy for the adult in the room but leave no words of comfort for the child who is grieving for their loved one"*

Winston's Wish wants to ensure that the support bereaved children receive is age-appropriate and filled with hope for a future.

In response to the need that was identified by Youth Ambassadors from the charity, the GCA reached out to members and several stepped forward to join a project team to address this gap. Moonpig kindly hosted a [workshop](#) and welcomed other GCA members and a team from Winston's Wish. The Winston's Wish team included several children and young people who had been bereaved as children who, by sharing their personal stories and reflecting on their experience of losing their loved one were able to guide the discussion around how imagery and wording could be used more effectively and bring hope to other young people who may find themselves in the same situation.

**Purpose of the Guidelines:**

To encourage and help greeting card publishers and designers develop more considerate & appropriate cards for children experiencing bereavement.

**Winston's Wish and GCA Guidelines:**

By following these guidelines, bereavement cards for children can provide comfort, foster connection, and gently guide them through their emotions in a thoughtful, supportive and age-appropriate manner.

**Tone and Sentiment:**

- **Clarity and Simplicity:** Use clear and straightforward language that is easy for children to understand. Avoid complex phrases like "with sympathy", "deepest sympathy" or "condolence" which may be confusing or meaningless to younger audiences.
- **Genuine Emotion:** Focus on authentic, heartfelt messages that acknowledge the child's feelings and the reality of the situation. Phrases like "I'm here, anytime" or "You're not alone" can be comforting.
- **Positive Messaging:** While acknowledging the loss, incorporate messages of hope and remembrance that gently encourage the child to think about positive memories with their loved one.
- **Avoid Overpromising:** Steer clear of statements like "Everything will be okay" or "It will get better," as these can feel insincere and may not align with the child's current emotions.
- **Keep child focused:** Avoid phrases like "I miss them too"; the child is feeling like they are the ones that miss them the most.

**Imagery:**

- **Relatable and Uplifting:** Choose imagery that is comforting and relatable to children, such as rainbows, or nature scenes like sunflowers or forget-me-nots. These can symbolize hope and the ongoing presence of the loved one in a gentle way.
- **Interactive Elements:** Incorporate tactile and interactive elements like pop-up features, die-cuts, or stickers. These can help engage the child and make the card feel more personal and special.
- **Avoid Loneliness or Sadness:** Stay away from bleak or sombre images like empty benches, broken hearts or dark colours. Bright, cheerful visuals are more appropriate for children, helping to lift their spirits.

**Content and Structure:**

- **Memory Sharing:** Encourage the child to remember and share their favourite memories with their loved one. Use prompts like "My favourite memory of your [Dad/Mum] is..." to inspire reflection.
- **Minimal Words, More Impact:** Use concise, meaningful statements. Avoid overly wordy cards; instead, focus on short poems or stories that convey comfort and support.
- **Keepsake Value:** Consider cards that can be kept as mementos. These could include elements that can be pinned up, stored in a keepsake box, or personalized with the child's own input.

### **Audience Consideration:**

- **Age-Appropriate Design:** Tailor cards to be suitable for different age groups, recognizing that younger children may respond better to images and interactive features, while older children might appreciate more thoughtful or reflective messages.
- **Peer-to-Peer Appeal:** Design cards that can be sent between young people, helping to break the stigma of discussing loss and providing mutual support among peers.

### **Cultural Sensitivity:**

- **Avoid Assumptions:** Be mindful of religious or cultural references, as these can be tricky for some children, especially after a loss. Opt for neutral, inclusive language that focuses on shared experiences rather than specific beliefs.
- **Inclusive Imagery:** Use imagery that resonates across different cultures and backgrounds, ensuring the cards are accessible and meaningful to a diverse audience.

### **Timing and Follow-Up:**

- **Beyond the Immediate Loss:** Consider cards for different stages of grief, such as on anniversaries or random occasions, to remind the child they are still being thought of and supported as time passes.

### **Greeting Card Ideas:**

1. **Memory Sharing Cards:**
  - Cards that prompt the child to share or reflect on their favourite memories with their lost loved one.
  - Example: "My favourite memory of your [Dad/Mum] is..."
2. **Interactive and Keepsake Cards:**
  - Cards with interactive elements such as pop-up features, die-cuts, or stickers that engage children and make the card feel special.
  - Example: A card that can be pinned up in a window or kept in a keepsake box.
3. **Tactile and Visual Elements:**
  - Cards that incorporate textures like stardust foil or tactile elements to make them more engaging for children.
  - Example: A "star" card that can be put together and placed on a window.
4. **Memory Box Sets:**
  - A set of smaller cards inside one envelope, with each card dedicated to a specific memory or message for the child.
  - Example: "For Sophia" – a card from a sibling or friend with a shared memory or message.
5. **Peer-to-Peer Cards:**
  - Cards designed to be sent between young people, helping them support each other and break the stigma around discussing loss.
6. **Anniversary and Follow-Up Cards:**
  - Cards specifically designed to be sent on the anniversary of the loved one's passing, or at random times to remind the child they are still being thought of.
  - Example: "Sending a hug a year on..." or "Just thinking of you today."

**7. Activity-Linked Cards:**

- Cards that include a QR code linking to activities or prompts for the child to engage with, helping them process their grief. With a link also signposting to support
- Example: A card that suggests a memory-based activity, like creating a memory collage.

**8. Culturally Sensitive and Inclusive Cards:**

- Cards that avoid religious or culturally specific messages, instead focusing on universal themes of remembrance and support.
- Example: Cards featuring rainbows, or nature imagery rather than overtly religious symbols.

**9. Customizable Cards:**

- Cards that allow the sender to build and personalize the card with specific memories or messages, making it more meaningful to the recipient.
- Example: A "build your card" concept where appropriate images or messages can be selected and added.