# INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

**Medway Educational, Child and Community Psychology Service**

**It is normal for children to deal with bad news in different ways.**
**It is very difficult to predict how each child will respond to bad news.**

**When children are stressed or worried they may .....**

- Be more clingy, anxious or emotional
- Have difficulty with sleeping or have nightmares
- Need to go to the toilet more often
- Lose recently acquired / previously learned skills e.g. wet the bed at night / be more accident prone / clumsy
- Find ordinary skills more difficult
- Not want to talk, or talk more than usual for them
- Re-enact a feature of the event through repetitive play, or go over and over aspects of the event
- Make silly mistakes, become forgetful or have difficulty concentrating
- Become irritable or short tempered
- Experience physical symptoms e.g. feeling sick or headaches
- Have a reduced sense of humour
- Try to make sense of the event by linking it to previous personal experiences or by filling in gaps in the information available abut the event
- *These are entirely normal responses of children to bad news*

**These are some ways in which you may help your child.....**

- Make allowances for the child (and yourself!)
- Be understanding and accept your child's reactions – people respond differently to the same event
- Be available by providing more time and support for the child to acknowledge his/her feelings and provide a sense of security
- Listen to what the child is saying, rather than what you think they might be saying. Don't deny or contradict the child's perceptions but appropriately challenge rumours or speculation – stay with *not* knowing all the answers
- Acknowledge that the event was distressing but balance with reassurance that the world is usually reliable, predictable and dependable
- Provide more physical contact than usual
- Sensitively maintain the usual boundaries and routines around, for example being allowed out and bedtime

**Most children cope well with bad news when they are given the kind of support suggested here. However, if you are concerned about your child after 2-3 weeks, seek further advice from the school or GP.**