Preparing children for a funeral

- Find out what the child knows about a funeral and if they have ever attended one before

- It can really help a child to visit the church or crematorium before so they are not going to an unknown place. Funeral directors and ministers are usually very happy for this to happen

- Talk to the family before and get as much information as you can about the day and how they are planning for it to run

- Can the child play a part? Choose the flowers, write a poem for the order of service, choose a photograph etc. It is important that they feel part of it

- There are books you can use to help with the imagery of a funeral and prompt this conversation

- Go through the running order; what will happen that day using details for example letting them know that the coffin will be carried in and will be placed at the front of the church whilst the service happens

- See what their understanding is of key aspects: the coffin, cremation, burial, ashes etc. Workout beforehand how you are going to explain these things using language that is age appropriate and you and the family are comfortable with

- Suggest that there is a close friend of the family that can be seated by the door and if the child feels they need to leave they can take them, this way the family does not need to leave the funeral but the child knows there is a plan in case they need to. Talk this through with them

- They may want to put something in the coffin with the person such as a drawing, letter, photo etc but it is important that they know they will not get this back and it will be put in before the funeral happens

- Talk about emotions they may witness on the day and how they may feel about this

- Play them the music that will hear in the service (or suggest this to the family)

- We don't want the child to be shocked on the day as their emotions will be heightened

- Let them have some time to think these things through and come back with questions if they have any. Give them time to think about what they might like to do