

## CLOSER

**Children of Jannah, based in Wythenshawe was originally set up as a Facebook page by Hafizah Ismail following the sudden and tragic death of her 2-year-old nephew.**

Aimed at bereaved families from the Muslim community, the group provides counselling and support for families suffering with the bereavement of young children.



The name of the group comes from the Islamic belief that children who die before puberty enter paradise, or "Jannah" as it is known in Arabic. This belief is a key message used in helping bereaved parents and families heal from their grief.

The Facebook group was set up in 2011 and grew greatly, making the transition from a virtual group to a physical one and becoming a not-for-profit organisation in February 2015.

The group's mission is to meet the needs of grieving Muslim parents, providing practical, emotional and spiritual support, while educating friends, families, professionals and others to be able to support grieving individuals in a much better manner.

They have created a safe environment where bereaved parents can share their stories and experiences in whichever way they feel most comfortable.

Separate Facebook groups exist for bereaved mothers and bereaved fathers, acknowledging cultural sensitivities that may be associated with a mixed group. They also have an email service available for those who find it easier to put their thoughts and feelings down in writing; and a telephone service available to those who prefer to speak over the phone.

The group is facilitated by specially trained Bereavement Support Group facilitators. Facilitators work through five areas of bereavement; denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance, healing over the course of five two-hour sessions. A confidential, non-judgemental ethos is agreed upon by the group facilitator and attendees at the start of each session.

The Facebook group is still used alongside the counselling sessions. Of the page, one user said: *"I lost my 8-year-old daughter three months ago. Whenever I feel it's too much I come to your page and read through. It eases the pain and dries the tears and helps me make it through another day."*

By recruiting volunteers from the community the organisation enables greater understanding and compassion and forms networks of support, which continue after parents leave Children of Jannah's services. Part of this process is to provide Heal Training, which teaches people key skills and knowledge in order to offer the highest level of support possible.