

## Introduction

Reducing the rate of suicide must be a priority for the UK. There were 5,821 suicides in the UK in 2017. It is the biggest cause of death in men under the age of 50 (REF). Half of transgender people under the age of 25 attempt suicide(REF). It is the biggest cause of death in new mothers (REF).

## The Emotional Impact

Bereavement by suicide can be devastating. Research suggests up to 135 people are impacted by each suicide (Cerel et al., 2018), impacting nearly 800,000 people a year in the UK.

People impacted by suicide are 65% more likely to attempt suicide themselves, with at least 9% going on to make a suicide attempt themselves (REF). This number may be much higher. Some people may drop out of work or education (around 8%), and people are likely to feel intense grief, guilt and shame...and may feel a sense of hopelessness, being stigmatised, and isolated.

## The Economic Impact

Each suicide is estimated to cost £1.7m (Department of Health and Social Care, 2017). Most of this cost - around 70% - is the emotional impact on families and on society. The national cost of suicide is almost £10 billion a year.

Suicide is not an individual problem. It affects every part of our society and is everyone's problem and responsibility. There is an urgent need to support people impacted by suicide.

## An Effective Service

There are some areas of the UK who already offer suicide bereavement support services. There is also a wealth of best practice from Australia, New Zealand, Norway, USA, Japan, and others. Therefore, we know an effective service should have the following:

- A single point of contact
- Contact with the bereaved family, within 72 hours of the death
- An offer of emotional and practical support
- Support with the Inquest and legal process
- Referral to specialist support services
- Contact and support for the long term
- Pathways to the future
- Support from a multi-agency group including frontline services, local services and councils, hospitals, GPs, schools, the Police, Coroners, and other organisations along the bereavement pathway.

# The compelling need for suicide bereavement support



## The Cost Effectiveness

A local STP-wide service might cost c.£200,000 a year. This would be about £10 million a year nationally. Therefore, a national service would only have to save 6 lives a year...

...to pay for itself in less than a day.

## What You Can Do - the Action Required

In January 2019, NHS England published their Long Term Plan, and pledged;

- post-crisis support for families, and staff who are bereaved by suicide, through the NHS 111 helpline system (page 70, paragraph 3.97)
- Suicide bereavement support for [bereaved] families, and staff working in mental health crisis services in every area of the country (page 72, paragraph 3.106)

This second point means that there is a real chance people will be offered the timely and appropriate support wherever they are in the country. You can help to make this happen by:

- Visiting the Central Hub website to learn how to develop an effective service, set up and run a multi-agency suicide prevention group, develop proposals for funding, and connect with organisations delivering services in the UK ([centralhub.supportaftersuicide.org.uk](http://centralhub.supportaftersuicide.org.uk))
- Speak to your NHS STP Lead, to have a discussion about bereavement support in your area
- Speak to local bereavement support groups to learn what you can do to support their organisations
- Talk to the Support after Suicide Partnership to learn more about supporting people bereaved by suicide
- Become a champion for making this happen in your STP. The best services are rooted in the local area, and come from a background of understanding of the needs of local people.