

SUPPORT AFTER SUICIDE PARTNERSHIP (SASP) CORE STANDARDS

FOR SUICIDE BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT SERVICES



Support
After
Suicide
Partnership

Central Hub

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INTRODUCTION

As more new suicide bereavement support services are commissioned, adopting shared standards will offer assurance that all are delivering support which is high quality, consistent and evidence-based.

The Support After Suicide Partnership (SASP) has developed this set of Core Standards as part of our Central Hub support commitment; to provide a range of information and resources to develop and run proactive suicide bereavement support services. They are intended to support continuous measurement and inform service improvement, as part of an overall measurement and evaluation framework.

The NHS Long- Term Plan (LTP), page 72, outlines a commitment to put in place suicide bereavement support in every area of England by 2023/24. This work is already well underway, with new and expanded services being delivered in more areas each year. In many areas, these services form part of a wider network of support to people bereaved or affected by suicide.

The research report [*From Grief to Hope: The Collective Voice of those Bereaved or Affected by Suicide in the UK*](#) was published on 18th November 2020. This research report has been led by University of Manchester in collaboration with the SASP. It shows a poignant, personal and full picture of the impact of suicide on the lives of

individuals, families, colleagues and professionals. It recognises progress made in the past years, and sets out recommendations for how policy and change makers can do more to save lives.

Amongst the recommendations contained in the report is the implementation of national minimum standards in postvention services. Appendix A of the report summarises the contributions made by participants in the research, which has led to the identification of areas of good practice and minimum standards required for suicide bereavement support services.¹

It is hoped that these Core Standards go some way to address some of the important areas raised in the report.

The Core Standards are intended to sit alongside locally agreed performance indicators. We hope that they will help to strengthen the evidence base around suicide bereavement support, which is currently largely qualitative.

While this document is primarily for suicide bereavement services delivering services commissioned as part of the delivery of the NHS Long- Term Plan, we would hope that the guidance it offers may also provide a useful resource for anyone working to deliver suicide bereavement support in any capacity.

¹ McDonnell S, Hunt IM, Flynn S, Smith S, McGale B, Shaw J. *From Grief to Hope: The Collective Voice of those Bereaved or Affected by Suicide in the UK*. Manchester: University of Manchester. November 2020.

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ADOPTING THE STANDARDS

The Core Standards are informed by the shared experiences of existing commissioned services and stakeholders, published guidance, research in postvention and the NICE guidelines (2019) on Suicide Prevention (Quality statement 5: Supporting People Bereaved or Affected by a Suspected Suicide).

Service delivery in different localities is likely to be influenced by factors such as sociodemographic factors and geography, as well as the communities

they serve. However, some fundamental principles are shared.

A nation-wide community of service providers who share the Core Standards can not only provide a network of mutual support and collaborative learning, but also ensure that there is a consistent approach to providing services to those who are bereaved and affected by suicide, wherever they are in the country.

USING THE CORE STANDARDS

The Core Standards can be used:

- By local suicide prevention and suicide bereavement support systems to inform the development of services; contracts and service specifications.
- To support organisations setting up suicide bereavement support services.
- To provide standards against which services can measure their delivery.
- As an audit tool to allow services to benchmark themselves and highlight areas of good practice and areas for development.
- To inform the focus of service evaluation.

The core standards are divided into seven themes, each of which contains a number of specific standards. All standards are of equal importance and where possible reflect a pathway.

It is expected that many of the standards will already be in place for services delivering suicide bereavement support, or for there to be robust plans in place to meet the standards. The core standards recognise that services may be of different sizes and stages of maturity and that for some there may be areas of the service that need to be further developed.

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SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

The Core standards are designed to be used interactively. Under each standard we have included some further information/ areas for consideration when reviewing the standard (this is not intended to be exhaustive). We have also highlighted useful resources, including; templates, guidance and case studies, which can offer support for services in applying the standards. These are available on the SASP Central Hub website.

Two key publications underpin the development and delivery of suicide bereavement support services. These should be considered by all areas and services:

1. "[Support after a suicide: A guide to providing local services: A practice resource](#)" Public

Health England, supported by National Suicide Prevention Alliance. Published 2016.

2. "[Support after a suicide: Developing and delivering local bereavement support services](#)." National Suicide Prevention Alliance, Support After Suicide Partnership, supported by Public Health England. Published 2016.

A self-assessment and local action plan template is available to support services to use the core standards for ongoing evaluation, identify priority areas, and develop individual, local action plans.



1. Governance

The service has strong internal structures to support the delivery of a high-quality service and is engaged in wider local accountability and delivery structures.

1.1 Internal management structure:

The organisation has an internal management structure, with clear lines of responsibility and accountability.

1.2 Lines of accountability: *The service has clear lines of accountability within local suicide prevention structures and is integrated/reflected with the wider suicide prevention strategy for that local authority area.*

1.3 Reporting and monitoring:

The service engages in local accountability/ service monitoring meetings.

2. Policies

The service has policies and procedures to support staff to deliver a high-quality service.

2.1 Guiding policies: *The service has guiding policies and procedures in place to support service delivery, with a mechanism for regular policy review and update to reflect best practice.*

3. Staffing

Staff are suitably skilled and experienced and are provided with resources and support to deliver the service.

3.1 Staff: *The service has suitably experienced and qualified staff.*

3.2 Resources: *Appropriate arrangements are in place to support staff.*

3.3 Staff training: *All those involved in delivering the service have received specific training in supporting people bereaved by suicide, including age-appropriate training, training for supporting different groups of bereaved people and safeguarding.*

3.4 Education and development: *All staff have access to education/ training and continuing development, relevant to their role.*

3.5 Staff welfare: *The service has a plan for maintaining the welfare of the suicide bereavement team.*



4. Collaborative/ partnership working

The service works in partnership to deliver a high-quality service.

4.1 Partnership/collaborative

working: *The service is aligned to local priorities and actively engages with people with lived experience and partner organisations (e.g., local statutory, voluntary and community organisations) and attends multi-agency forums.*

4.2 Suicide bereavement awareness:

The service is engaged in promoting awareness of suicide bereavement and the importance of timely support for those impacted or affected by suicide.

5. Awareness and access

Services are accessible and delivered proactively in a timely way.

5.1 Service information: *Clear information on the service is available, including a description of the service, what it offers, contact details and how to make a referral.*

5.2 Addressing equality and diversity:

The service has a policy in place to promote equality and diversity and to address any barriers to access, including for specific groups who may experience barriers to services.

5.3 Using data to understand local

needs: *The service uses data and intelligence to understand and respond to the particular needs of its local population e.g. isolation in rural areas, people who do not have English as a first language, people with limited access to the internet.*

5.4 Understanding the impact of

local and national events: *As part of a multi-agency response, the service considers and plans for local and national events that may impact on the service.*



6. Delivering a responsive and high-quality service.

6.1 Real time referral: *The service is part of/engaged in a real time referral (RTR) system, to effect a timely referral to suicide bereavement support.*

6.2 Single point of access: *The service offers a single point of contact to people bereaved by suspected suicide.*

6.3 Availability of resources: *Procedures are in place with the local police, local Coroner's officers to ensure that all those bereaved or affected by suicide receive appropriate resources, such as "Help is at Hand" or "Finding the Words".*

6.4 Proactive response: *The service delivers a proactive response and makes contact, by telephone, online, or face to face within 72 hours of receiving a referral.*

6.5 First contact information: *On first contact the service provides clear information to people using the service about what they can expect, the support available from the service and, where appropriate, signposting what other support might be available.*

6.6 Practical and emotional support: *The service offers **both** practical and emotional support that responds to individual circumstances.*

6.7 Assessment and support planning: *The service offers a flexible and adaptable approach to meet individual circumstances, recognising that needs may change with time.*

6.8 Continuity of support: *As far as is feasible, services should identify a consistent staff member to support individuals throughout their journey with the service.*

6.9 Follow up support: *The service is available to people who may need it at different times throughout their journey.*

6.10 Follow up and sign-posting: *At the end of support provision /post inquest, the service identifies follow up support and refers on or signposts as appropriate.*

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7. Monitoring, measurement and evaluation.

Monitor and review service delivery to ensure it continues to meet the needs of those using the service and to inform future developments.

7.1 Data collection: *The service routinely collects activity / outcome data to reflect the impact and uptake of the service.*

7.2 Feedback from service users: *The service has in place a co-produced and systematic approach to collecting and responding to the experiences of the full range of clients using the service and feedback is used to inform continuous service improvement.*

7.3 Engagement in development activities: *The service is aware of and engages in relevant development activities, including research, national policy, developing best practice/ initiatives.*

7.4 Annual evaluation: *The service undertakes an annual service evaluation, which is developed in partnership with people who have lived experience of suicide loss, local stakeholders and commissioners.*

7.5 Sustainability planning: *The service has a sustainability plan in place which may include: relationship management, funding and service strategy for 3-5 years.*

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FURTHER READING

[*"BCSS Bereavement Care Service Standards"*](#) (2014)

https://www.cruse.org.uk/sites/default/files/default_images/pdf/Documents-and-fact-sheets/Bereavement_Care_Service_Standards.pdf

[*"From Grief to Hope: The Collective Voices of People Bereaved or Affected by Suicide in the UK"*](#) (Published 18th October 2020)

<https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=51927>

ABOUT THE SUPPORT AFTER SUICIDE PARTNERSHIP

Support After Suicide Partnership is a collaborative network of organisations across the UK who strive to provide timely and appropriate support to those bereaved or affected by suicide.

<https://supportaftersuicide.org.uk/>

<https://twitter.com/aftersuicideuk>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to all those who contributed their experience and expertise in developing these Core Standards, including:

Sumita Bhola – Lifecraft

Jane Brett-Jones – Public Health, London Boroughs of Camden and Islington

Sarah Boul – South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw

Richard Brown – Listening Ear/AMPARO

Tammy Coles/Kate O’Hagan – Public Health England

Anne Embury – Suicide Liaison Service Lead, Outlook South West - Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

Penny Fosten – National Suicide Prevention Alliance

Raili Frost – NHSE/I

Nicola Glassbrook – Devon Public Health

Ruth Hall – NHSE/I

Caroline Harroe – Harmless/The Tomorrow Project

Jonathan Hartley – Independent practitioner, De Facto Chair Bereavement Evaluation Forum

Jonjo Hurley/Gabriella Baker – Thrive LDN

Andy Langford – Cruse Bereavement Care

Steve Mallen – Zero Suicide Alliance

Alison Penny – Child Bereavement Network/National Bereavement Alliance

Alexandra Pitman – University College London

Barney Thorne – Suicide Prevention Lead, Leicestershire Police

Thank you to colleagues who provided their knowledge and time to develop resources to support the core standards:

Hannah Neil and David Brown – If U Care Share

Sammy Ashley – Listening Ear/AMPARO

With particular thanks to Anne Embury, Suicide Liaison Lead, Outlook Southwest for her very many contributions and generous help and support throughout.

Project Lead:

Sue Christie – Support after Suicide Partnership

Advisors:

Hamish Elvidge – Support after Suicide Partnership

With special thanks to:

Jacqui Morrissey – Samaritans

Amanda Duffy – Author

Jasia Warren – Designer

Elvina Flower – Website development

Support after Suicide Partnership Leadership Team



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