

**From:** Clair Bell, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health  
Andrew Scott-Clark, Director of Public Health

**To:** Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee

**Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021

**Subject:** Bereavement Support Services in Kent and Medway

**Key decision:** 20/00132

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of report:** None

**Future Pathway of report:** Health Reform and Public Health Committee 10<sup>th</sup> March  
2021

**Electoral Division:** All

**Summary:**

Kent County Council (KCC) have been awarded funds via Kent and Medway CCG and NHS England's National Suicide Prevention Programme to commission bereavement support services for under 25-year olds, and People Bereaved by Suicide.

The overarching aim of these new services is to support individuals in Kent and Medway who are experiencing high levels of distress and grief by supporting them to manage the impact of their bereavement and reduce the risk factors associated with this event.

Research of evidence-based approaches, engagement with service users, potential providers and other Local Authorities areas, have been used to develop a commissioning approach. This paper shares details of the planned services model with the committee so Members can help shape the future design and development.

KCC will lead on a competitive procurement process, working closely with the CCG, with the aim of having services in place for summer 2021. The maximum investment for these services will be £1,662,500 over the course of maximum initial term of three years with an optional two-year extension.

**Recommendation(s):**

Health Reform Public Health Committee is asked to:

1. **NOTE** the work to date to develop these services and in the intention to have them in place by Summer 2021 following compliant procurement process and key decision.
2. **CONSIDER** and **COMMENT** on the commissioning model.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to inform the committee of the procurement of two new bereavement support services for individuals across Kent and Medway.
- 1.2 The paper provides details of the engagement work to date, outlines the vision and service model and asks Members to assist in the development of the new service models.
- 1.3 KCC are leading this piece of work, with funding secured from the Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and NHS England's National Suicide Prevention Programme.
- 1.4 These services will help to fill a gap in current provision which is especially important as more people may experience bereavement linked to Coronavirus (COVID 19).
- 1.5 Bereavement services can play a key role in helping people manage their grief. From the provision of information, through to health promoting community-based resources, to more intensive, specialist help, for those whose reactions are complex or prolonged and affect their ability to manage everyday life.

## 2. Background

### 2.1 National context:

Bereavement is a natural part of human experience but can be intensely painful and negatively impact on physical and mental health (Selman et al 2020). Bereavement is associated with an increased risk of mortality, physical and mental health problems (such as anxiety and depression), relationship difficulties and difficulties coping with everyday life.

### 2.2 Kent and Medway Context:

Annex A outlines the estimated number of children and young people who may require specialist trained bereavement counselling or psychological support. The figures in the table do not take into consideration the excess deaths because of COVID-19 or make allowance for young adults up to the age of 25. Alongside this, there were also 176 coroner registered deaths by suicide in Kent and Medway in 2019, it is hard to estimate the number of people that are affected by these suicides and how many will need additional specialist support.

### 2.3 Key drivers for change:

- *Strategic:* National and local drivers for action include Public Health Outcomes Framework, KCC Strategic Outcomes, The NHS Long Term Plan, Local Transformation Plan for Kent and Medway, NHS Mental Health Implementation Plan, and Kent & Medway Suicide Prevention Strategy.
- *Statutory Responsibilities:* The Care Act 2014 makes it a requirement to ensure people who live in Kent and Medway receive services that prevent their care needs from becoming more serious or delay the impact of their needs. The Children Act 2004, places a duty to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in Kent and Medway.

- *Demand Management:* It is anticipated that providing timely support to those who need it, will reduce the likelihood of individuals needing more intensive mental health support from services in the future. It should also be noted that the commissioning of these service is being prepared during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the full impact of coronavirus and the associated economic and social distancing measures on the mental health of the population are as yet unknown.
- 2.4 The need to improve support and information to those bereaved by suicide is a priority within the Kent and Medway Suicide Prevention Strategy. In 2019 (and in anticipation of receiving this funding from NHS England) the Suicide Prevention Programme commissioned a local research company, Perpetuity Research, to explore the experiences of people in Kent who have been bereaved by suicide, with a view to informing the specification for this new service. This research has now been completed and the Executive Summary is embedded in Appendix A.

### **3. Current service provision and market**

- 3.1 KCC and Kent and Medway CCG currently commission a range of emotional wellbeing and mental health services across both children and young people's and adult services. However, none of these services deliver specialist bereavement support and are not equipped to deal with complex grief which may need to be delivered by trained Counsellors, tailored to individual needs.
- 3.2 As well as the commissioned Mental Health and Wellbeing Service, there are several national and local bereavement support services that can be accessed (Appendix B). These are delivered by the Voluntary and Community Sector and have not been funded by Kent County Council, Kent and Medway CCG or Medway Unitary Authority. We have assessed that these services do not offer the type or level of specialist support we are looking to commission, although can complement the proposed new services.

### **4. Service outcomes**

- 4.1 Through the Kent and Medway CCG and NHS England's National Suicide Prevention Programme, it has been identified that there are two particular groups in which bereavement can have an increased risk of depression, self-harm and other mental illness. These include children, young people and young adults and people bereaved by suicide.
- 4.2 Due to the complexity and variety of individual circumstances which influence the level and type of support needed, an outcomes approach will be taken. The service will aim to improve outcomes for both identified groups, by providing person centred support, delivered in a timely period by a specialist worker with relevant skills and expertise.
- 4.3 The key outcomes for these services will be:
- Improve service user's resilience and their capacity to cope in their surroundings
  - Improve service users physical and mental health (measured by evidence-based tools)

- Personal goals and outcomes achieved, maintained or progress towards
- Reduction in stigma and discrimination

## 5. Commissioning model

- 5.1 Surveys, one to one interviews and focus groups have been completed with key stakeholders, people with lived experiences and with other local authorities, which has assisted the development of the service model.
- 5.2 Despite some similarities and shared outcomes between the needs of these groups, two separate services will be commissioned. This is due to the differences in workforce skills and the type of support required. A high-level summary of each service is provided below.

### Specialist Bereavement Service for under 25-year-olds

The service will deliver evidence-based specialist counselling to those from pre-school age (3 1/2) to 25 years old who are experiencing complex grief. The interventions will be age appropriate. Delivery of these sessions will be via trained Counsellors with experience in bereavement, delivered in venues suitable for the service user, such as school and youth clubs. Referrals into the service will be open access.

### A Support Service for People Bereaved by Suicide (all ages)

The service will help family and friends for people who have been bereaved by suicide. There will be three main cohorts of people that the service needs to support:

1. Close family members of the individual who died
2. Friends, colleagues, witnesses, and other people affected by a suicide
3. People who are working to support, or who are spending time with, people bereaved by suicide

Each cohort will require a different response and it is anticipated that most resource will be allocated to cohort 1.

The service will provide a person/family centred approach and deliver evidence based interventions. Referrals into the service will be open access but the main referral route will be via a formal pathway between Kent Police, the Kent Coroner Service, Kent and Medway Public Health Teams and the new service provider. KCC Public Health will lead, co-ordinate and approve the development of this formal pathway.

- 5.3 It is envisaged that services will use a blended approach to delivery including face to face, virtual support and group-based intervention.
- 5.4 Where available, validated scales or evidence-based tools will be used to measure the impact of these services and delivery of outcomes. The Provider(s) will be required to work innovatively and collaboratively to expand opportunities for people successfully meeting their personal goals. This will include a maximising opportunity for digital innovation and developing close links with wider support agencies within local communities.
- 5.5 Ongoing service user engagement will be essential to measure the effectiveness of the service and ensuring it meets client needs. We will work with the service provider(s) to ensure the model is flexible to adapt to feedback.

5.6 KCC will work with the provider(s) to develop a sustainable support offer that can be utilised by other organisations once the contract has ended. This will include upskilling other agencies that are in contact with bereaved individuals and the development of useful resources (toolkit, e-learning) that can be used to support people that are bereaved.

## 6. Procurement approach

6.1 A comprehensive procurement plan has been developed and been endorsed by senior leads at KCC and the CCG. This includes sign off by the Strategic Commissioner to ensure the approach will comply with the public contract regulations and public procurement policy notice which came into force following the UK exit of the European Union on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.

6.2 The procurement approach has been designed to enable fair opportunity for smaller/ voluntary sector organisations with a certain specialism to bid for the service. To ensure best value to the council and CCG and ensure social value is maximised.

6.3 KCC will issue this opportunity via Find a Tender on the Kent business portal in January 2021. A high-level timetable for procurement can be found in Appendix C.

6.4 Once the contract has been awarded, we have allowed a maximum of a three-month mobilisation period to develop the infrastructure of the new services, with the aim for the services to go live in the summer or autumn of 2021.

## 7. Financial Implications

7.1 The total amount for both services, for the maximum of 5 years (including possible two-year extensions) is £1,662,500.

7.2 Funding is made up of £125,00 of CCG funds a year for the Specialist Bereavement service for under-25-year-olds, with an additional £50,000 available for any innovation or demand management for this cohort. In addition, the Kent and Medway Suicide Prevention Programme has been awarded £125,000 a year to invest in the Support Service for People Bereaved by Suicide. This funding is from NHS England's Suicide Prevention Programme.

## 8. Corporate implications

8.1 The following implications are relevant to this project:

- **Legal** - The Public Contracts Regulations 2018 will set out the legal basis for Local Authority procuring services which will be followed as outlined in section 6.
- **Equalities:** Equality Impact Assessments have been undertaken for both services and are appended to this report (Appendix D and E) and any recommendations for improvements in service delivery have been incorporated in the service specification. It will be a requirement for the

awarded provider to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment on their delivery model.

- **Data:** Recommendations from the Data Privacy Screening will be actioned and it will be a requirement within the service specifications for the awarded provider to complete a DPIA for the data in which they are the controller for.
- **Other corporate implications:** The services will interact with a number of other functions within the Council and the wider system of support services, including; Adult Social Care, Integrated Children's Services, Education, Kent Police, Mental Health Providers, Coroner's Office and local charities.

## 9. Governance

- 9.1 Performance, including outcomes and activity levels, will be monitored by KCC and the CCG through the submission of quarterly performance monitoring reports.
- 9.2 Any issues or concerns in relation to service delivery or performance will be escalated to CCG Commissioners and through the appropriate KCC governance routes via the Public Health Lead Commissioner.
- 9.3 A further paper will be presented to the Health Reform and Public Health Committee following the competitive procurement process described above. This will support the key decision process required in awarding a contract to the successful bidder.

## 10. Conclusions

- 10.1 KCC is working with Kent and Medway CCG to commission bereavement support service for under 25-year olds and people bereaved by suicide. There is currently a gap in service provision and with the current climate around Covid-19 the need for this service has never been so great.
- 10.2 The services offer an opportunity to deliver interventions to individuals who are struggling to manage the complexities of their grief and link them in with ongoing support. It is anticipated that by providing timely support to those who need it, both services will reduce the likelihood of individuals needing more intensive mental health support from services in the future.
- 10.3 Outcomes and quality will underpin the services and we will work with the service provider(s) to ensure the model is adaptable and undertakes continuous improvement based on the feedback from service users, their carer's, and stakeholders. A flexibility will also be needed to ensure services can meet demand of this new service.

### **Recommendation(s):**

Health Reform Public Health Committee is asked to:

1. **NOTE** the work to date to develop these services and in the intention to have them in place by Summer 2021 following compliant procurement process and key decision.

2. **CONSIDER** and **COMMENT** on the commissioning model.

### 13. Background Documents

- 13.1 National Bereavement Alliance (2017) *A guide to commissioning bereavement services in England*. Accessed via web:  
<https://nationalbereavementalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/A-Guide-to-Commissioning-Bereavement-Services-in-England-WEB.pdf>

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