

Appendix 2

Focus Groups for Professionals, 20th and 27th April 2016

Introduction

During two focus group meetings, on 20th and 27th April 2016, we met with 12 professionals from a range of organisations offering services to bereaved people in the Banbury area. A list of attendees can be found at the end of this Appendix.

People were present in their professional capacity but also some of them had experienced bereavement and were able to comment on their experiences. *"There isn't a person who will escape bereavement."*

The purpose and guidelines for these meetings can be found in Appendix 5.

The discussions followed a framework with four main questions:

A. Services available in the Banbury Area

A list of services available to bereaved people was compiled from the two meetings and is to be found in Appendix 6. NB we have only reported on what was said during the meetings, and recognise that limited time did not allow people to give all the details of their services. For fuller details on some of these services, please refer to Appendix 1.

The comments on services refer to different levels or steps, and these refer to the NICE guidelines on bereavement services, detailed in Appendix 1.

"There is a black hole in the Banbury area"

B. Identification of gaps in service provision

"...clients do not know what they want"; "...the very first step is very hard"

The following gaps were identified:

- Self-referral options
- Not enough services at levels 1 and 2
- Befriending services
- A service in Banbury itself
- Complex needs services
- CBT and Step 4
- Not enough generic awareness training about bereavement
- Group support
- Lack of service for those who are suddenly bereaved and especially when it is in the younger age group (email contribution)

"at the point of looking for bereavement (help) it is a wilderness out there"

And the following aspects of current services were identified as not good:

- Long-waiting times - described as *"heart-sinking"*; *"...on telephoning Cruse, I was told however long you have to wait, so I*

didn't bother!"

- Lack of advertisement of services because of the fear of increasing the waiting time.
- Answering machine

The representative of the Funeral Directors said that *"it's knowing where to turn afterwards - need for friendship; loneliness is a problem"*.

From Banbury Restore, by email: *"at least half of our members (approximately 35 people) fully believe that bereavement services and support are desperately needed in Banbury...many people with mental illness have experienced bereavement or grief of some sort. We certainly, find many of our clients need a level of support that we unfortunately cannot provide. We have recently found that we are referring an increasing number of service users to the Therapy Centre or back to their GP with a view to perhaps accessing a service such as Talking Space."*

We also discussed the fact that many bereaved people are not religious and so *"miss out on pastoral care offered by ministers"; there is "a profound need to give expression to the spiritual side of person"*.

The difficulty of finding volunteers to train and retrain in the Banbury area, given very low unemployment rates, was discussed. Volunteers may give their time for 3 or 4 months before they find paid employment. Most organisations have good support systems in place for volunteers doing this work.

C. What are the elements of a good service:

- Accepting and diligent phone line
- Good manner on the phone: tone that is *"low, slow, warm and calm"*
- Good sign-posting
- No answer-phone - it's like a *"slap in the face"*

D. Banbury-specific issues

Banbury-shire exists and includes S Northants and S Warwickshire

Multicultural

Generally unskilled population: *"poorly educated and unskilled imposed on Banbury"*;

Lack of self-confidence to rival Oxford

E. Recommendations and ideas for the development of bereavement services

- **Hub service (Single Point of Access)** where professionals with appropriate expertise can assess and sign-post to appropriate services: one phone number; including for pre-bereavement services; well-resourced with care to avoid barriers, especially for ethnic minorities.
- Important to have good information for services to refer to each other *"perhaps we could create an active network for local agencies"*
- **Bereavement Champion**, working on behalf of the NHS

- **Befriending service**, after-care is needed
- **Regular meetings** of services in the North Oxfordshire area - move the venue for the meetings of the Oxfordshire Bereavement Alliance around the county
- Explore faith services and what they offering
- Samaritans and Edd Frost (Funeral Directors) are willing to offer a room for bereavement counselling
- Increase in level 2 provision in the area - this is a particular challenge to Cruse
- Involve students, especially post-graduates
- Make connections with businesses through Banbury Breakfast Group, Rotary Club, Inner Wheel, etc. who may be able to offer premises to bereavement services
- More publicity; a leaflet in every doctor's surgery; use of radios Oxford, Banbury radio, Radio Horton

F Conclusions

The most significant recommendation from the above consultation was for a **single point of access** for bereaved people, where all services share their information; this single point of access, properly staffed, would then be able to assess the need of the bereaved person and signpost them to the most appropriate service.

Attendance list

Organisation
Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group
Katherine House Hospice
Primary Bereavement Service
Primary Bereavement Service
Samaritans
Methodist Church
Age UK
Age UK
Cruse Northampton
Edd Frost & Daughters, Funeral Directors
Chair, North Oxfordshire Locality Forum

Non-attendees who contributed by email

Banbury Restore
Lawrence Home Nursing