

## **The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on bereavement support services**

### **Topic Guide for interviews with bereavement service providers: Version 1 18/11/2020**

**NOTE:** This is an outline of topics explored – revised in line with emerging findings and examples of innovation from online survey. This topic guide was adapted for online bereavement support providers.

#### **1) INTRODUCTION**

Introduction, explanation of study aims and audio recording permission  
Audio consent taking

#### **2) PARTICIPANT BACKGROUND** (Brief discussion to contextualise responses)

Organisation/location/geographical coverage  
Type of support provided by organisation  
Role within organisation/length/depth of experience/previous role

#### **3) IMPACT OF COVID-19**

##### **Changing demand and level of support**

Changes to requests for support (probe: across different times/stages of pandemic)

- Whether or not demand has increased
- Any increased demand from BAME communities or from lower socio-economic groups/more marginalised communities
- Timing of support request (e.g. earlier, later)

Level of support needed:

- More complex grief experiences?
- Tier 1 support (probe: relative numbers, demand for information provision)
- Tier 2 support (probe: relative numbers, individual and group support)
- Tier 3 support (probe: relative numbers, specialist mental health and psychological support, waiting lists for referral)

##### **Changes to therapeutic encounter**

Impact of providing support remotely

- Loss of non-verbal communication (probe: bereaved person, provider)
- Changes in support relationship and impact
- Changes in interaction with those seeking support and impact (probe: characteristics of bereaved person – age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status etc)
- IT/practical issues
- How they have coped with these changes

### **Impact on staff providing support**

Coping with increased/changing demand

- Feeling unprepared
- Managing increased demand?
- Managing increased number of people with complex/complicated grief responses?
- Waiting lists
- Ability to do their job as they would like
- Staff illness/shielding
- Personal support/supervision for staff/volunteers
- How they have coped with these changes

## **4) INNOVATION/CHANGE**

**Innovations and/or changes in delivery** (NOTE: questions developed further using examples provided in survey)

Services withdrawn/on hold

New/extended/innovative services

- Adapting existing services
- New services provided
- Responding quickly to increased demand
- COVID-specific services
- Reaching different groups

How changes came about

- Why changes needed
- Who instigated changes
- Who was involved in designing/developing changes
- Who was involved in providing the services
- How the changes were implemented (probe: funding, technology, training, skills)
- COVID-specific challenges
- Ways of meeting the challenges faced

- What worked well/what didn't work – what were the keys to success? Or the reasons for difficulties?
- Any additional support that would have been helpful
- What would they do differently (probe: lessons for other providers)
- What were the positives (probe: reaching different groups, targeting services)

#### Evaluating services

- Have they carried out evaluation of new/changed services
- If yes - how did they evaluate, any results (probe; published, given feedback)
- If not - any difficulties (probe: time, support needed)
- Short or long-term changes anticipated (probe; changing Covid landscape)

### **5) RESOURCES/MANAGING CHANGE**

Impact of increased demand on staffing

Loss of volunteers (shielding etc)

Negative impact on funding streams (probe: fundraising, restrictions related to COVID-specific funding)

#### **Training/support needs of staff/volunteers**

Types of training

- Dealing with complex/complicated grief responses
- Delivering support remotely
- Individual/group delivery
- IT/practical support
- Personal support/supervision

#### **ANYTHING ELSE**

How do they view provision moving forward

Opportunity for participant to add anything else important to them not covered

Suggestions for additional key participants within their organisation for further interviews – i.e. to give a different perspective (e.g. staff vs volunteer, fundraising vs service delivery) or to help complete our understanding of the service and its response to the pandemic

**THANKS**