

# WELSH GOVERNMENT INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

<b>Title of proposal:</b>	<b>Suicide Bereavement Liaison Service</b>
<b>Official(s) completing the Integrated Impact Assessment (name(s) and name of team):</b>	<b>Lisa Pollard, Adult Mental Health &amp; Vulnerable Groups</b>
<b>Department:</b>	<b>Health &amp; Social Services</b>
<b>Head of Division/SRO (name):</b>	<b>Tracey Breheny, Deputy Director, Mental Health &amp; Vulnerable Groups</b>
<b>Cabinet Secretary/Minister responsible:</b>	<b>Minister for Health and Social Services</b>
<b>Start Date:</b>	<b>September 2022</b>

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## SECTION 1. WHAT ACTION IS THE WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSIDERING AND WHY?

The Welsh Government is drafting a proposal to engage an agency that has demonstrable experience in bereavement by suicide that can ensure a consistent and timely community response to people affected by sudden deaths that are unexplained or a suspected suicide.

The aim is to ensure that all those affected by a potential suicide receive a proactive offer of support, within the first 48-72 hours of the death, and that the offer is compassionate, trauma-informed, and sentient to the particular needs of people living with bereavement by suicide (suspected or confirmed).

### Objectives

The objectives are to:

- Ensure a consistent response is available across Wales to everyone who might be affected.
- Raise awareness of the service across all agencies that could come into contact with people affected by a suspected suicide such as Primary Care Clusters and teams, banks and financial institutions, citizens advice bureau (CAB) and other advisory services, hospital end-of-life services and emergency departments.
- Ensure the needs of those affected are compassionately, and comprehensively assessed by an appropriately qualified and experienced (suicide) bereavement liaison officer, and plans agreed collaboratively with the persons affected, to meet those needs.
- Ensure that those affected are offered options, so that they can choose the support available that is best suited to them, their situation and their location.
- Ensure that those affected feel they have been acknowledged, that their specific situation is understood, and that they have someone to 'come alongside' them on their bereavement journey for however long they need that support.
- Identify those areas of Wales where there is poor or sub-optimal provision to support bereavement by suicide, to inform further investment and service planning
- Identify areas of good practice, learning from localised quality provision that is particularly reliable and responsive to people's needs, with a view to extending this to areas of poorer provision.

### Background

Early in 2021, a listening exercise was commissioned from Opinion Research Services, Swansea, eliciting insights from people living with bereavement by suicide in Wales. This piece of work was designed to complement and build on the report 'From Grief to Hope'

published by Manchester University<sup>1</sup>. We asked the bereaved to explain their bereavement journeys, following a sudden or unexplained death that could be a suicide, through to the inquest, and subsequently. This provided a platform to bring together those key agencies that people come into contact with (touch-point agencies), to develop national guidance around how we respond to people exposed, affected or bereaved by suicide. The process of guidance development highlighted the need for an agency that could receive referrals from the police, or other early contacts, and then proactively offer access to suitable support within the first 48-72 hours following the death.

Previous small-grants funding from the Welsh Government has supported the development of bereavement responses in a number of agencies in Wales ('2 Wish' in Gwent, MIND in Aberystwyth/Pembrokeshire/Llanelli, and SOBS in North Wales). These projects have been localised and pilot groups were at points disrupted by the COVID pandemic. Other support has emerged from communities responding to a local suicide, and through other funding streams, such as local fund-raising, The National Lottery, or the national Bereavement Support Grant, including the Jacob Abraham Foundation<sup>2</sup>, Jac Lewis Foundation<sup>3</sup>, LISS West Wales (Living in Suicide's Shadow)<sup>4</sup>, Sandy Bear<sup>5</sup>, and the continued work of '2 Wish'<sup>6</sup>. The support offer from these agencies is valuable, but variable, and so we are looking for a consistent, reliable and equitable immediate response that can be offered to people affected by a suicide, particularly in those areas where we know there is little to no provision.

A real-time surveillance system to track suspected suicides, as they happen, has recently been launched in Wales, through partnership between the four police forces, Public Health Wales and the NHS Wales Health Collaborative. The data available will enable rapid referral to support services, and will inform the developing immediate or rapid response groups (eg: IRGs) emerging across Wales. These IRGs will coordinate the community response to deaths by suspected suicide.

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<sup>1</sup> [From-Grief-to-Hope-Report.pdf \(suicidebereavementuk.com\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Mental Health Help Cardiff | Wales | Jacob Abraham Foundation \(jacobsfoundation.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Jac Lewis Foundation](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Peer to peer support group | LiSS Living in Suicide's Shadow | Wales \(lisslistens.org\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Sandy Bear Childrens Bereavement Charity](#)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.2wish.org.uk/>

## **Links to the National Framework for the delivery of bereavement care in Wales**

A national framework for the delivery of bereavement care in Wales was published in October 2021. The guiding vision is for a compassionate Wales where everyone has equitable access to high quality bereavement care and support to meet their needs effectively when they need it. The framework sets the standard, and acts as a catalyst to drive improvements in quality, provision and availability of bereavement support across Wales. The new liaison service which will respond to people who have been bereaved, exposed, or affected by suicide in Wales will support delivery of the 2021 national framework for the delivery of bereavement care.

## **COVID-19**

Whilst latest published data show that deaths by suicide have decreased during the pandemic, risk factors for suicide may be exacerbated by the wider impacts. This includes uncertainty, financial impacts and unemployment. Whilst we are taking a preventive approach to suicide, the importance for all services to better understand how they can improve their response to bereavement by suicide is even more important in the context of the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic.

## **WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT**

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act requires the Welsh Government and other public bodies to think about the impacts of the decisions we make today for a better tomorrow. The sustainable development principles (and their focus on prevention, integration, collaboration, involvement and the long term) underpin the objectives of the new liaison service and are fundamental to developing a coherent, holistic and long-term response to bereavement by suicide care in Wales.

## **PREVENTION**

The liaison service links directly to the Welsh Government's Talk to Me 2 Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Strategy which has a specific focus on preventing suicide and self-harm. In addition, the Welsh Government's Together For Mental Health Delivery Strategy has a focus on early intervention so that longer-term harms are prevented before they occur. The aim of the liaison service is to focus on ensuring that people bereaved by suicide have prompt and equitable access to the services they need when they need it most. The liaison service recognises the importance of formal and informal support networks and the factors that keep people well. The liaison service is one element of a much wider approach to prevent suicide and self-harm which includes work in schools, expansion of tier 0

support (for example – [Silvercloud](#) / [CALL Mental Health Helpline](#)) to prevent escalation and investment in specialist services.

The NHS Planning Framework sets an expectation of a broad approach to prevention to be applied in all aspects of planning. This is supported by Welsh Government policy that is set out from a perspective of prevention, whether that is a more traditional public health perspective or in unscheduled care or planned care.

Preventative approaches to all physical and mental health challenges and support for well-being will ultimately avoid escalation of conditions and illness. Opportunities for investment must be considered that will support future generations and inform future service provision.

Our aim is to take significant steps to shift our approach from treatment to prevention. The vision we have established in A Healthier Wales is to place a greater focus on prevention and early intervention.

## **INTEGRATION**

The NHS Planning Framework, which is also the Minister's Direction to the NHS, always seeks to align with the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act and to continue to strengthen how organisations work to deliver their plans using the five ways of working.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has also been a strong focus on avoiding the harms that have been the key quality context within which services and care must be provided.

Welsh Government has published [Looking Forward](#)<sup>7</sup> to help health and social care emerge from the pandemic, describing the challenge as building the integrated health and social care service that we want going forward and to deal with the long-term impacts of COVID-19. The opportunity is to change for the better, recognising that COVID-19 is still with us.

A key aspect to this recovery is ensuring that care is as safe as possible, and that harm is minimised. The five harms we describe in health and care in Wales are:

1. Direct harm from COVID-19 itself;
2. Indirect harm from COVID-19 due an overwhelmed health and social care system and reduction in healthcare activity as a result;
3. Harm from population based health protection measures i.e. educational harm;
4. Economic harm both directly and indirectly as a result of COVID-19 i.e. unemployment as a result of lockdown;
5. Harm as a result of exacerbation or introduction of new inequalities in society.

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<sup>7</sup> [Looking forward](#)

The guidance is integrated into wider policy developments, with its aims being integral to delivering Prosperity for All and A Healthier Wales. The guidance is multi-agency and aims to improve access to support where we know there are current gaps in provision. At its most strategic level, the aim of A Healthier Wales is to ensure the sustainability of health and social care services in Wales into the future. It sets out the actions that will be taken by the Welsh Government to support the Welsh NHS, local authorities, the voluntary and independent care sectors and wider public services make the transformation required across Wales to ensure we have sustainable, value-based, high quality health and care services that meet the needs of our citizens now and in the future. One of the four key themes in 'Prosperity for All' is 'Healthy and Active', with Welsh Government's stated aim being to improve 4 health and well-being for the citizens of Wales. Our health and social care services are critical to delivering this overarching objective, and A Healthier Wales sets out the ways in which we expect them to support it, both through the provision of effective and sustainable health and care services, and by requiring them to place greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention with the aim of promoting healthy lifestyles and reducing health inequalities.

## **COLLABORATION/INVOLVEMENT**

The need for a suicide bereavement liaison service was identified through work undertaken on developing the draft guidance 'Responding to people bereaved, exposed or affected by suicide'. This included the listening exercise referenced in the introduction to this Impact Assessment which involved insights from people living with bereavement by suicide in Wales.

The guidance was developed by a National Multi-agency Task and Finish Group and has been informed by the invaluable insights provided by people living with bereavement by suicide in Wales and the agencies that have supported them. The agencies involved in the development of the guidance includes:

Police Liaison Unit, Welsh Government

South Wales Fire and Rescue Services

Wales Ambulance Service

Consultant Child Psychiatrist Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, and Advisor to Welsh Government on Child Mental Health

Public Health Wales

Compassionate Cymru

CRUSE Bereavement Support, Cymru

PAPYRUS, Prevention of Young Suicide

Samaritans Cymru

Jacob Abraham Foundation

Cwm Taf Morgannwg MIND

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

South Wales Central Coroner's Office

Swansea Bay Health Board

The National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors

Powys Teaching Health Board

Traumatic Stress Wales

Swansea University

Support After Suicide Partnership

To Wish, Gwent

Enfys Alice, North Wales

LISS (Living in Suicides Shadow), West Wales

SOBS (Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide)

#LetsTalkMensMentalHealth, Welsh Valleys

MIND (Aberystwyth, Pembrokeshire, Llanelli)

The DPJ Foundation

## **IMPACT – LONG TERM**

The Welsh Government's Together for Mental Health Strategy sets out a number of high level outcomes aimed at achieving a significant improvement to both the quality and accessibility of mental health services for all ages. In so doing, it is anticipated that the liaison service will make an important contribution to ensuring there is parity (in terms of mental health and access to care) – and will make an important contribution to delivering the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and their focus on building a healthier, more equal and more resilient Wales.

Bereavement by suicide can be a risk factor for suicide and mental health issues. The aim of the liaison service is to improve the response and support following a suicide as a key component of suicide prevention.



## **COSTS AND SAVINGS**

The Welsh Government is providing £330k to provide additional support in the form of the suicide bereavement liaison service.

There are no other direct costs associated with the liaison service which provides recommendations to a range of agencies to help them identify areas where they can change policy/process to improve the suicide bereavement journey.

The earlier appropriate support could potentially provide savings in the longer term as the numbers of those with more complex bereavement issues requiring services reduce, however the number of people bereaved by suicide is relatively low so any cost savings are likely to be relatively small.

## **MECHANISM**

Legislation is not proposed and therefore a Regulatory Impact Assessment is not necessary.

## **KEY POLICY DOCUMENTS**

[Talk to me 2 – suicide and self-harm prevention strategy 2015-2022](#)

[Everybody's Business: a report on suicide prevention in Wales, National Assembly for Wales, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee, December 2018](#)

[Welsh Government Mental Health Delivery Plan 2019-2022](#)

## SECTION 7. CONCLUSION

(Please note that this section will be published)

### **7.1 How have people most likely to be affected by the proposal been involved in developing it?**

The Suicide Bereavement Liaison Service has been developed by the National Task and Finish Group and has been informed by the invaluable insights provided by people living with bereavement by suicide in Wales and the agencies that have supported them.

### **7.2 What are the most significant impacts, positive and negative?**

The positive impacts of the liaison service will be that people will have equitable access to bereavement by suicide services and touch point agencies will improve their response to suicide bereavement. An additional £300k has been made available to commission the Suicide Bereavement Liaison Services covered in the 'Responding to people bereaved, exposed or affected by suicide' draft guidance to ensure people are offered support and connected with appropriate support in response to their needs in a timely manner.

### **7.3 In light of the impacts identified, how will the proposal:**

- **maximise contribution to our well-being objectives and the seven well-being goals; and/or,**
- **avoid, reduce or mitigate any negative impacts?**

The liaison service will help will maximise the contribution to the well-being goal for a healthier Wales through the mitigation of levels of harm from bereavement by suicide for the people of Wales. It will also help to promote a society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.

### **7.4 How will the impact of the proposal be monitored and evaluated as it progresses and when it concludes?**

Once the Suicide Bereavement Liaison Service has been commissioned, the take up of this service will be monitored routinely. In addition, the multi-agency task and finish group convened to develop the guidance will support implementation and will provide regular reports on progress across organisations. Progress on the implementation of the guidance will also be monitored through the work of the Mental Health Delivery and

Oversight Board chaired by the Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Vulnerable Groups, which includes a specific workstream on Suicide and Self Harm.

## SECTION 8. DECLARATION

### Declaration

I am satisfied that the impact of the proposed action has been adequately assessed and recorded.

Name of Senior Responsible Officer / Deputy Director: Tracey Breheny, Deputy Director

Department: Mental Health & Vulnerable Groups

Date: September 2022