

Commissioning for Compassionate Community Bereavement Support

The policy context for commissioning bereavement support

Responsibility for commissioning bereavement care sits across multiple responsibilities in ICBs, acute trusts and Local Authorities. This document is intended to help commissioners in one field (e.g. palliative and end of life care) identify commissioners in other fields (e.g. mental health, frailty) with whom they could collaborate to achieve a shared vision for bereaved people across a system or place, and to signpost commissioners and providers to the main policy documents where bereavement is mentioned directly or is relevant to a policy area.

After an initial section on the overarching strategies, this section sets out the key policy documents outlining this provision across end of life care, carers' support, maternity services, wellbeing, mental health and suicide prevention. The UK Commission on Bereavement has also set out 8 principles for change, each with concrete recommendations for changes at a national or local level. Read the summary report for England [here](#).

This document was last updated in April 2023.

The document forms part of a suite of resources for commissioners and providers of bereavement services. These resources are intended to build on the opportunities in the Health and Care Act 2022 and the UK Commission on Bereavement. These provide new structures and ways of working for local people, communities and services to collaborate to set out a vision for bereavement support in the local area, and to work together to make this vision a reality. Overall, these will help communities, providers and commissioners collaborate to ensure that the full range of bereavement support is in place and integrated, following expected and unexpected deaths across an Integrated Care System or place-based partnership.

The resources are available at <https://nationalbereavementalliance.org.uk/ourpublications/commissioning/>

General health policy		
NHS Long Term Plan (NHS England)	2019	Sets out the NHS' intention to make sure everyone gets the best start in life, deliver world-class care for major health problems, and support people to age well Specific mentions of bereavement: by 2023/23, all areas will be providing suicide bereavement support services, (commitment set out in the NHS Mental Health Implementation Plan 2019/20-2023//24
NHS priorities and operational planning guidance 2023/24	2023	Sets out the NHS' national objectives to recover core services and productivity, progress in delivering the key ambitions in the Long Term Plan, and continue transforming the NHS for the future. No specific mentions of bereavement but relevant areas summarised in Outcome Frameworks [link to doc]
Core20PLUS5 (NHS England)	2021	This approach to reducing health inequalities at national and systems level for adults and for children . Sets out a core target population (the most deprived 20%), plus locally defined groups that face particular health inequalities (eg those from ethnic minority communities, young carers), and five clinical areas of concern, including maternity, mental illness and hypertension case-finding. No specific mentions of bereavement but see Outcomes Frameworks [link to doc] for evidence on relevance of bereavement for the clinical areas.
Commissioning for Quality and Innovation (CQUINs) guidance for 2023-24	2023	Incentives for NHS trusts to deliver specific clinical quality improvements and drive transformational change. CQUIN 15 relates to measuring outcomes for people being served by specific mental health services (community, children and young people, perinatal). No specific mentions of bereavement but see Outcomes Frameworks for evidence on relevance of bereavement for the clinical areas.
Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) Guidance	2023	A voluntary programme which rewards GP practices, in England for the quality of care they provide to their patients and helps standardise improvements in the delivery of primary care. Relevant indicators for bereavement include PC001 The contractor establishes and maintains a register of all patients in need of palliative care/support irrespective of age. QI013 . The contractor can demonstrate continuous quality improvement activity focused upon workforce and wellbeing as specified in the QOF guidance and QI014 . The contractor has participated in network activity to regularly share and discuss learning from quality improvement activity focused on workforce and wellbeing
Palliative and End of Life Care Policy		
Health and Care Act	2022	Sets out a new duty on Integrated Care Boards to 'arrange for the provision of the following to such extent as it considers necessary to meet the reasonable requirements of the people for whom it has responsibility...[including] such other services or facilities for palliative care as the board considers are appropriate as part of the health service."

The policy context for commissioning bereavement support

Statutory Guidance for Integrated Care Boards (NHS England)	2022	<p>Statutory guidance (to which ICBs must have regard) to support them with the new Health and Care Act duty to to commission palliative care services within integrated care systems (ICSs).</p> <p>P5 sets out that commissioners must 'work to ensure that there is sufficient provision of care service providers available to deliver this, paying particular attention to access to....bereavement services...'. Explains that Every ICB should commission PEOLC services that meet people's needs, aligning to the commitments in the Ambitions framework (see below).</p> <p>P8 specifies involving, supporting and caring for those important to the dying person, as well as principles of co-design (involving people with lived experience), leadership in creating the conditions necessary for the commissioning of integrated and high quality personalised palliative care, and integration in working collectively with colleagues across health, the voluntary and community sector and others, and identifying funding across budgets to support joint commissioning.</p>
Palliative and End of Life Care Handbook for Integrated Care Boards (ICBs)	2022	<p>(Email england.palliativeandendoflife@nhs.net for access). Accompanies the Statutory Guidance and provides practical advice on implementation. Chapter 4 sets out how to involve, support and care for those important to the dying person, including carers and into bereavement, including assessing the current quality of identification and support; developing and implementing consistent processes and protocols for identifying, assessing, and supporting those important to the person dying; and implementing the processes in all relevant contracts. Chapters 7, 8 and 9 also relevant.</p>
Ambitions for Palliative and End of Life Care	2021	<p>A national framework for local action, developed by a broad partnership of health, social care and VCS organisations. While focused on the experience of the dying person, the concern is broader and 'each statement should also be read as our ambition for carers, families, those important to the dying person, and where appropriate for people who have been bereaved. Foundations include the importance of involving, supporting and caring for those important to the dying person, including good bereavement and pre-bereavement care, including for those bereaved suddenly and traumatically (p15). Ambition 1 gives further detail on p20 (good end of life care includes bereavement) and Ambition 6 sets out a vision for compassionate communities. Also has important sections on co-design, leadership and integration</p>
Ambitions Self-Assessment tool		<p>Helps local areas assess the provision and quality of their palliative and end of life care provision against the Ambitions, including 1.7: 'Bereaved people within the locality all have equitable access to bereavement and pre-bereavement care, including children and young people and those affected by sudden or traumatic death' and 6.1 'The locality has a dedicated work programme aimed at building community capacity'</p>
Commissioning and Investment Framework		<p>Sets out the key sources of funding for aspects of PEOLC, and prompts commissioners to consider the wider system of relevant funding arrangements for elements of care. Divides PEOLC into core, specialist and enhanced services and sets out the expected funding sources for each.</p> <p>Section 8 Non-routinely funded services identifies that some elements are beneficial for palliative care but may not fall into these categories, such as 'services for complex grief where needs can't be met by standard mental health services' These are non-routinely funded services and as such, need a process for decision making locally which could</p>

The policy context for commissioning bereavement support

		<p>be through an Individual Funding Request or an area may agree pooled funding for a larger footprint to benefit from the approaches, usually following a business case proposal.</p> <p>Core activities (funded by ICBs and Local Authorities) includes elements of 9.9 bereavement support and 9.12 family assessment; Specialist activities (funded by ICBs) includes 10.6 a multi-disciplinary team including specialists in social, emotional and psychological support; Enhanced activities (predominantly funded by charities and other non-NHS funding streams) includes detail on 11.2 support groups, 11.3 practical support in accessing housing or the benefits system and 11.4 emotional and psychological support including bereavement support.</p>
National PEOLC service specification for adults		Template for commissioners to procure PEOLC services for adults. Includes references to bereavement under 1.1 national context, 3.1 aims and objectives of service, 3.3 key components, 3.4.3 key service characteristics – family and carer needs
National PEOCL service specification for children		Template for commissioners to procure PEOLC services for children and young people. References to bereavement throughout including 3.3.4 specialist services 3.4 key service characteristics 3.4.1 family and carer needs as well as the importance of interdependence with other providers, and of system-wide working
Each Community is Prepared to Help (National Council for Palliative Care)	2016	Expands the public health approach outlined in ambition 6 of the Ambitions for Palliative and End of Life Care, setting out ways in which organisations can actively participate in helping to build supportive communities. Multiple references to bereavement.
End of Life Care Quality Standard 13 (NICE)	2021	Covers all settings and services in which care is provided by health and social care staff to all adults approaching the end of life. This includes adults who die suddenly or after a very brief illness. Quality Standard 7 covers holistic support for families and carers, and Quality Standard 14 covers bereavement support.
End of life care for adults: service delivery (NG142) (NICE)	2019	Covers organising and delivering end of life care services, and the planning and preparation for this, in all care settings. It also includes advice on services for carers. Section 1.3 on supporting carers
End of life care for infants, children and young people with life-limiting conditions: planning and management (NG61) (NICE)	2019	Section 1.4 covers care and support for parents, carers and healthcare professionals in relation to the death of a child or young person. Includes discussion and written information with parents about the practical arrangements that will be needed after their child's death; information about available bereavement support; planning and provision of bereavement support; staff support; updating information and systems.

Improving Supportive and Palliative Care for Adults with Cancer (CSQ4) (NICE)	2004	Covers best practice in developing and delivering cancer services for adults. Chapter 12 provides a model for local bereavement support including the three-component model. The End of Life Care Strategy (Department of Health, 2008) subsequently applied this model to bereavement following all expected deaths.
Support for carers		
Some people have extensive experience of caring before they are bereaved, and so support for carers is a necessary – though not sufficient ¹ – aspect of bereavement care. Pre-bereavement levels of mental distress influence how well a carer will manage after the death. Feeling exhausted and overloaded, lacking support, and having competing responsibilities such as work or caring for younger children are all associated with poor bereavement outcomes (Schulz et al, 2008a).		
Care Act and Children and Families Act	2014	The two Acts should work together to make sure that the needs of the whole family are met when someone in the family has care needs: Care Act 2014 sets out support for adults caring for an adult or (section 60) for a parent caring for a disabled child preparing for adulthood. Children and Families Act sets out support for a parent caring for a disabled child (section 97), for a young carer (section 96) and for a young carer preparing for adulthood (section 63). Together these set out key rights for carers, including the duty on local authorities to promote carers' wellbeing
Care Act Statutory Guidance	2023	Sets out the detail on local authorities' responsibilities. These include the duty to prevent, reduce and delay the need for support for carers , with pre-bereavement given as an example of a point in a person's life when these approaches might be particularly appropriate (para 2.11) the requirement to provide information and advice to carers in relation to their caring role and their own needs , (3.17), acknowledging that these needs might be triggered by bereavement (3.26) and that those who are socially isolated need particular attention (3.30). carers' right to a carer's assessment based on the appearance of need, and for their eligible needs to be met. Importantly, the carer's assessment must also consider the carer's future needs for support (6.18). The primary reason for this is to consider whether the caring role and relationship is sustainable, but this could also be an opportunity to consider the likely future support needs of the carer if the person they are caring for dies.
Supporting carers in general practice: a framework of quality markers (NHS England)	2019	This voluntary scheme asks six questions that can be used by general practice to improve its effectiveness in recognising and supporting carers. The scheme has been recognised as good practice by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). No specific mentions of bereavement.

¹ Carers and bereaved people are distinct groups. Most carers will feel themselves to be bereaved when the person dies, but the pool of bereaved people is wider than this. Many bereaved people would not have identified themselves as carers before the death, and nor would they have qualified for a carers' assessment.

The policy context for commissioning bereavement support

Commissioning for carers (NHS England)	2014	Principles and resources to support effective commissioning for adult and young carers. No specific mentions of bereavement but all principles are relevant to bereavement support for former carers.
Support for mental health		
NHS Mental Health Implementation Plan 2019-20/2023-24	2019	Sets out how the NHS will deliver the mental health commitments made in the Long Term Plan. Relevant mentions of bereavement include that all systems will provide suicide bereavement services for families and staff by 2023/24, with financial envelopes provided per STP/ICS in a targeted and phased manner based on proportions of suicides
Support following a death		
When a person dies	2011	identifies good practice in bereavement care around the time of death and shortly afterwards, setting out provision in detail, with a particular focus on acute settings
National Guidance on Learning from Deaths (NHS England)	2017	Sets out a framework for NHS Trusts and NHS Foundation Trusts on identifying, reporting, investigating and learning from deaths in care. Chapter two focuses on bereaved families. Providers should have a clear policy for engagement with bereaved families and carers, and should offer a bereavement service for families and carers of people who die under their management and care.
Working together to safeguard children (Department for Education)	2018	Chapter 5 sets out the statutory responsibilities for investigating sudden or unexpected child deaths, including providing support to the bereaved family, involving them in meetings as appropriate, referring to specialist bereavement services where necessary and keeping them up to date with information about the child's death.
Child death review: statutory and operational guidance (HM Government)	2018	Statutory and operational guidance for ICBs and local authorities as child death review partners. Chapter 6 sets out the support that should be provided to all bereaved families and carers after the death of a child, including the key worker role, the medical lead, and what parents and carers can expect.
Sudden unexpected death in infancy and childhood (Royal Colls. Pathologists & Child Health)	2016	Multi-agency guidelines for care and investigation following the sudden and unexpected death of a child. Chapter 3 sets out the information and support that should be provided to bereaved families.
National Bereavement Care Pathway (SANDS)	2022	Tools to improve the quality and consistency of bereavement care received by parents in NHS trusts after pregnancy loss or the death of a baby. Based around nine core standards, there are five pathways for different experiences of loss.

The policy context for commissioning bereavement support

Guide to Coroners Service (Ministry of Justice)	2020	Gives statutory guidance that the coroner's office will provide information on the main local and national voluntary bodies, support groups and faith groups which help bereaved people, including as a result of particular types of incidents or circumstances, or specific medical conditions.
Bereavement support standards for children's hospitals (National Children's Hospitals Bereavement Network)	2020	Sets out standards for the delivery of bereavement support in UK children's hospitals or district general hospitals that offer services for children and families.
Support for people bereaved by suicide		
Preventing suicide in England (HM Government)	2012	A cross-government outcome strategy including the provision of better information and support to those bereaved or affected by suicide. Specific actions for postvention include providing support that is effective and timely and having in place effective local responses to the aftermath of a suicide.
Support after a suicide: a guide to providing local services (Public Health England)	2017	Sets out in detail the commissioning and delivery of suicide postvention support, which is further elaborated in National Suicide Prevention Alliance guidance on Developing and delivering local bereavement support services and Evaluating local suicide bereavement support services .
Core Standards for Suicide Bereavement Support Services (Support After Suicide Partnership)	2021	An evidence-based framework for service delivery which will enable providers to deliver a sustainable service and provide evidence to meet criteria required by commissioners to secure future funding.
Suicide prevention quality standard (QS189) (NICE)	2019	Chapter 5 describes high quality care to ensure that people bereaved or affected by a suspected suicide are given information and offered tailored support.
Support for people bereaved by homicide		
Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (Ministry of Justice)	2015	Sets out the support that bereaved families are entitled to receive as victims of the most serious crimes, including the assignation of a Family Liaison Officer, accessible information on bereavement and information on available victim support services (section 4.7) and contact with the Crown Prosecution Service (section 6.14).

Support for wellbeing (children and young people)		
Mental health and behaviour in schools (Department for Education)	2018	Departmental advice, setting out how schools can support pupils whose mental health problems manifest themselves in behaviour, through prevention, identification, early support and access to specialist support. Table 1 (p14) identifies death and loss as a risk factor associated with mental health.
Social, emotional and mental wellbeing in primary and secondary education (NICE)	2022	Covers ways to support social, emotional and mental wellbeing in children and young people in primary and secondary education. Section 1.3 covers identifying children and young people at risk of poor wellbeing (referring to Table 1 in the above <i>Mental health and behaviour in schools</i> guidance which includes bereavement as a risk factor) and section 1.4 covers targeted support for those that need it. Section 1.5 specifically addresses support for children and young people going through significant life changes, which would include bereavement.
Early years: promoting health and wellbeing in under 5s QS128 (NICE)	2016	Quality standard covering covers services to support the health, and social and emotional wellbeing of children under 5, including vulnerable children who may need extra support. It includes health visitor services, childcare and early years education, and early intervention services in children's social care. Statement 1 sets out that Parents and carers of children under 5 have a discussion during each of the 5 key contacts about factors that may pose a risk to their child's social and emotional wellbeing
Social and emotional wellbeing: early years PH40 (NICE)	2012	Guideline covers supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of vulnerable children under 5 through home visiting, childcare and early education. It aims to optimise care for young children who need extra support because they have or are at risk of social or emotional problems, with parental mental health problems and living with a single parent identified as potential relevant risk factors.
Support for wellbeing (adults)		
Older people: independence and mental well-being NG32 (NICE)	2015	This guideline covers interventions for people aged 65 or older, and how to identify those most at risk of a decline, specifying that this includes those bereaved of their partner.
Mental wellbeing at work NG212 (NICE)	2022	This guideline covers how to create the right conditions for mental wellbeing at work. It aims to promote a supportive and inclusive work environment, including training and support for managers and helping people who have or are at risk of poor mental health. Section 1.4.7 covers having a plan in place for responding to unexpected traumatic events such as the death of a colleague. 1.7 covers approaches for employees who have or are at risk of poor mental health and section 1.8 covers organisation level approaches where employees are likely to experience traumatic events in the normal course of their work
Workplace health: management	2015	This guideline covers how to improve the health and wellbeing of employees, with a focus on organisational culture and the role of line managers. Includes an acknowledgement of the stresses of home life, and the impact of life events including for older employees, which could include bereavement. Section 3 covers mental wellbeing at work.

The policy context for commissioning bereavement support

practices NG13 (NICE)		
Healthy workplaces: improving employee mental and physical health and wellbeing QS147 (NICE)	2017	This quality standard covers the health and wellbeing of all employees, including their mental health. It describes high-quality care in priority areas for improvement, including organisational priorities, role of line managers, identifying and managing stress. No specific mentions of bereavement but statements 1, 2 and 3 are relevant.
Support for loneliness		
A connected society: A strategy for tackling loneliness (HM Government)	2018	Sets out the role that government can play and how it can set the framework to enable local authorities, businesses, health and the voluntary sector, as well as communities and individuals, to support people's social connections. Identifies bereavement as a life event that can trigger loneliness (P20) and includes examples of actions from DWP (p28), employers (p48), funeral directors (p52) to tackle loneliness following bereavement
Emergency preparedness and response		
Emergency Response and Recovery (Cabinet Office)	2013	Describes the multi-agency framework for responding to, and recovering from, civil emergencies in the UK. Chapter 7 includes aspects of support for families bereaved in emergencies.
Community resilience development framework (Cabinet Office)	2019	Aims to help emergency planners in Local Resilience Fora ensure communities are central to emergency planning, response and recovery.

The National Bereavement Alliance is hosted by the National Children's Bureau, registered charity no 258825.

www.nationalbereavementalliance.org.uk

@BereavementNBA

© National Children's Bureau, 2023

This work has been funded through the VCSE Health and Wellbeing Alliance, jointly managed and funded by Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England and UK Health Security Agency. For more information, please visit: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/hwalliance/>