

Commissioning for Compassionate Community Bereavement Support

Getting bereavement on the agenda locally

This guide is for bereaved people and bereavement organisations, to help you raise the profile of bereavement locally and get it recognised in plans. Everyone has a role to play in supporting bereaved people: getting it on the agenda locally will help to underpin the support that families, friends, schools, employers and services are providing every day. This guide covers three routes to build the profile of bereavement in your local area

1. Getting bereavement included in local planning for health and wellbeing
2. Taking a motion to the local council
3. Attending or organising a hustings before an election.

The guide 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.

To see the full suite of resources, visit

<https://nationalbereavementalliance.org.uk/ourpublications/commissioning/>

Introduction

If you work for a bereavement service that is hosted by a wider organisation such as a hospice, you may not be in a position to lead on some of this work. In your organisation, who is it that has strategic conversations? Who represents the organisation externally? Are they doing all they could to champion bereavement? If not, you may have some internal work to do first. Use the other guides in this series (see above) to help persuade decision makers and influencers in your organisation of the relevance and importance of bereavement, so that they can advocate better for bereaved people locally.

The ideas in this guide are intended to be a starting point – as you explore these ideas and build contacts, you will come across other groups and opportunities. Use this guide as a starting point, not a blueprint.

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This document is about influencing local health and care systems and other public bodies to prioritise bereavement. It's not about the wealth of other ways that communities and organisations can make change to support bereaved people better many of which are covered in 'Ambition 6: Each Community is Prepared to Help' (NCPC 2016).

1. Getting bereavement included in local planning for health and wellbeing

Because bereavement touches so many aspects of people's lives, many organisations are involved in responding and meeting their needs, alongside friends, families and communities. Because no one organisation or body has overall responsibility, bereavement has struggled to be recognised for the major public health issue it is, and bereaved people have suffered from a lack of joined up thinking and working.

There is the potential for this to change, with the significant changes made to the health and care system in 2022. The Health and Care Act brought in reforms that are intended to make it easier for health, care and other organisations to work together.

This [short film](#) from the Kings Fund, explaining how health and other bodies are working together at the level of neighbourhoods, places (mostly local authority areas) and systems (the new Integrated Care Systems).

The new landscape for organising and funding health and care in England provides lots of opportunities to influence local plans and strategies in the interests of bereaved people. You can work to get bereavement included

- the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Plan produced in your local authority area
- the Integrated Care Strategy and Five-year Joint Forward Plan produced in your local Integrated Care System.

Why get involved?

Getting bereavement acknowledged and included in these documents will help to

- raise the profile of bereavement locally and increase awareness of the needs of bereaved people
- provide a focus for local people to come together and develop and realise a vision for improved bereavement support across the community
- make links between bereavement and other social issues such as loneliness and homelessness
- prioritise bereavement among the wider health and wellbeing challenges that people face
- identify and tackle inequities in the support that people get around bereavement
- increase the likelihood of funding being found for bereavement support

The next section explains more about these documents and strategies, and the organisations that produce them.

Understanding the local health and care system

Health and Wellbeing Boards

Health and wellbeing boards (HWBs) were introduced in 2013 in each local authority area. They are a formal committee of the local authority, with responsibility for promoting greater

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integration and partnership between bodies in the local area from the NHS, local government and public health. They are intended to provide a forum where political, clinical, professional and community leaders from across the health and care system come together to improve the health and wellbeing of their local population and reduce health inequalities.

In most cases, health and wellbeing boards are chaired by a senior local authority elected member. The board must include a representative of the Integrated Care Board and local Healthwatch, as well as local authority representatives. The local authority can choose who to appoint as additional board members, for example

- the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) and business sectors
- children's and adult social care
- healthcare providers

Health and Wellbeing Boards must produce a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and a Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

- Health and Wellbeing Boards must assess the health and wellbeing needs of their population and publish a JSNA. This provides the evidence base for the health and wellbeing needs of the local population and should be kept up to date regularly.
- In developing their JSNAs, HWBs are expected to involve the local community and representative organisations
- They are expected to look at wider issues that affect health and wellbeing such as housing or risk of homelessness, employment, education, crime, community safety, transport and planning
- They are also expected to consider specific groups that might be excluded from engagement, such as unpaid carers and those likely to have poor health outcomes
- JSNAs should also be informed by research, evidence, local insight and intelligence, as well as more detailed local needs assessments such as at a district or ward level.

Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy

- Health and Wellbeing Boards must also publish a joint local health and wellbeing strategy (JLHWS)
- This sets out the vision, priorities and action agreed by the Health and Wellbeing Board to meet the needs identified in the JSNA, to improve the health, care and wellbeing of local communities and to reduce health inequalities
- The JLHWS should reflect the evidence of the JSNA and set out how the needs it identified will be addressed, including addressing health inequalities

You can read more about the expectations of Health and Wellbeing Boards [here](#).

Integrated Care Systems

The Health and Care Act 2022 established integrated care boards (ICBs). These are statutory NHS organisations responsible for developing a plan for meeting the health needs of the population, managing the NHS budget and arranging for the provision of health services in the ICS area. The Act requires these ICBs to form a joint committee with their partner local authorities, called the integrated care partnership (ICP). Together, the ICB and ICP are known as the integrated care system (ICS).

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There are 42 ICS in England. Most ICSs involve several local authorities. You can read more about their geographical coverage and find your local ICS [here](#).

The changes brought in by the Health and Care Act 2022 are designed to enable a more joined up, collaborative system. NHS organisations are expected draw on the knowledge and experience of wider partners, including the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector, local authorities and Healthwatch, alongside their communities when considering how to meet their duties. There is guidance for ICBs on

- [working in partnership with people and communities](#) (July 2022)
- [partnerships with the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector](#) (Sept 2021).

These changes provide very significant opportunities to change the way in which bereaved people's needs are recognised and met.

One of these opportunities is getting bereavement included in the Integrated Care Strategy and the five year Joint Forward Plan.

The Integrated Care Strategy

- ICPs must produce an integrated care strategy to set out how the needs that have been assessed through the JSNA (see above) can be met by the ICB, partner local authorities or NHS England.
- The integrated care strategy should set the direction of the integrated system, setting out how commissioners in the NHS and local authorities, working with providers and other partners, can deliver more joined-up, preventative, and person-centred care for their whole population, across the course of their life.
- It should build on and complement JLHWSs, identifying where needs could be better addressed at the system level. It should also bring learning from across the system to drive improvement and innovation.
- You can read more about what the integrated care strategy should include, how it should be produced and how it sits alongside the work of Health and Wellbeing Boards [here](#)
- The guidance puts an emphasis on involving people and organisations in developing the integrated care strategy.
- Importantly, bereavement services are one of the organisations that they are specifically [recommended to involve](#), as well as many community groups that will also include bereaved people, such as unpaid carers, black and minority ethnic voices and older people.

The five year Joint Forward Plan (JFP)

- ICBs and their partner NHS trusts and foundation trusts must also produce a five year Joint Forward Plan (JFP). In 2023/4, the date for publishing and sharing the final plan is 30 June.
- NHS England has developed [guidance](#) to support ICBs develop their JFPs.
- ICBs have a general duty to involve the public, and specifically to consult with the public when developing their JFPs. This includes working with the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, and people and communities affected by or with an interest in the plan.
- ICBs also have a duty to reduce inequalities and should consider this in developing their JFP.

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When to get involved

The documents and strategies are produced on a cyclical basis.

- JSNAs and JLHWS are continuous processes and while they do not need to be undertaken from scratch every year, Health and Wellbeing Boards will need to ensure that their evidence-based priorities are up to date to inform relevant local commissioning plans.
- When an Integrated Care Partnership receives a new JSNA from one of the Health and Wellbeing Boards in its area, it must consider refreshing its Integrated Care Strategy
- The five year Joint Forward Plan must be reviewed and either updates or confirmed before the beginning of each financial year.

Ideally, you want to be involved as early on as possible in the cycle. But if you have just missed a key moment such as the publication of a new strategy, don't be disheartened, there are still plenty of ways you can get involved. Here are a few suggestions.

- If a strategy or other document is out for public consultation, you can respond, either as an individual or on behalf of a group
- If a strategy is published, and doesn't include mentions of bereavement directly, it probably does include mentions of circumstances or needs that are very relevant, such as end of life care, or loneliness, or social prescribing. Use our analysis of the outcomes frameworks [\[insert link\]](#) to make the links between bereavement and these wider issues.
- If a strategy is being reviewed, and new needs are being explored, you can send in evidence of how bereavement is affecting the local community, and your ideas for what could help.

How to get involved

Two key ways of getting involved in the health and care systems outlined above are through your local HealthWatch and via your local Council for Voluntary Service or other local infrastructure body.

They will be involved in the processes for influencing the documents and plans outlined above. For example, they may run a forum for voluntary sector organisations on behalf of the Integrated Care Partnership, or they may organise consultations with particular groups to inform the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

Healthwatch

Local Healthwatch are funded by and accountable to local authorities. They are represented on the local Health and Wellbeing Board. Among other responsibilities, they

- get the views of people about their needs and experience of local health and social care services
- make these views known to those involved in the commissioning and scrutiny of care services
- make reports and recommendations about how those services could or should be improved.
- promote and support the involvement of people in the monitoring, commissioning and provision of local health and social care services.

You can find your local Healthwatch [here](#).

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Local infrastructure organisations (LIOs)

Sometimes known as Councils for Voluntary Service, these organisations provide support to local voluntary and community sector organisations in their area. Among other activities, they

- provide leadership and advocacy in communities to strengthen the sector's voice and influence on key decision-makers and funders, particularly local health and care systems
- convene networks and partnerships between local organisations and strategic partners
- build capacity to facilitate community development.

Find your local infrastructure organisation [here](#).

2. Bringing a council motion

A motion is a request by an elected member for an issue to be discussed at a council meeting and for a decision to be made. Members of the public are not able to submit motions. However, you can contact your councillor to ask them to request a motion on a topic of concern or interest to you.

A motion needs to be about something for which the council is responsible, or which affects people living in its area. There are many aspects of bereavement for which local councils are responsible, including the registration process for deaths, support in local authority schools, bereavement support for council employees, the Medical Examiner scheme, cemeteries, public health funerals. There is more information [here](#) about the responsibilities of councils

Your local council will have published a guide to what types of motion are considered acceptable, and the procedure around them. Google your local council and 'motions on notice' or 'motion to Council' for more information.

Here are some examples of recent council motions on bereavement

- [Enhanced support for bereaved children in schools](#) in West Dumbarton
- [Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay](#) in Belfast City
- [Housing Policy for Bereaved Families](#) in South Tyneside

3. Attending or organising a hustings before an election

Hustings are meetings where election candidates or parties debate policies and answer questions from the audience. Hustings provide voters with an opportunity to hear the views of candidates or parties.

Attending a hustings and asking a question about bereavement support can help to raise the profile of bereavement and secure commitments from candidates about the actions they would take if they were elected.

Hustings can also be organised on specific issues. It is unlikely that a whole hustings would focus on bereavement, but you could team up with people interested in related issues such as the funding of voluntary sector organisations, or the tackling of health inequalities in the local bereavement.

If you work for a charity, you need to be careful to remain within charity law when getting involved in a hustings. Charities must not support or oppose any particular political party or candidate. One way of making sure that a charity does not do this is to hold non-selective hustings featuring candidates from as wide a political spectrum as possible. You can read more guidance from the Electoral Commission [here](#).

Next steps

The ideas in this guide have given some ideas for getting bereavement on the agenda locally. Use the other guides and resources in this series to help set out your vision for support, and to make the case for how this will meet the needs of bereaved people in your local area.

<https://nationalbereavementalliance.org.uk/ourpublications/commissioning/>

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