

Navigating systems of support



Gaddum is a charity leader in providing health and wellbeing services in Greater Manchester, working across Manchester, Salford, Stockport and Rochdale. At Gaddum, everyone is treated as an individual and works with people to offer a range of support that's right for them.

One of Gaddum's offers of support is bereavement support for children and young people within Greater Manchester. They were keen to get involved with the Bereavement Care Service Standards, as they know that children and young people are not separate from the families around them.

Natalia Ozioro, Gaddum's Children and Young People's Bereavement and Complex Care Therapy Service Manager, explains: "In the Manchester and Salford area, we're experiencing a significant backlog for bereavement counselling services. While our focus is on providing counselling sessions for children and young people (CYP), we frequently find that parents and carers are also struggling with their own grief. Recognizing that supporting CYP often entails supporting the entire family unit, it became clear that developing deeper understanding of the Bereavement Standards is essential, as it directly influences our approach and effectiveness in this crucial work".

Gaddum arranged a focus group of adults from Salford to discuss matters of quality and experiences of bereavement. Participants were almost exclusively migrants to the UK, and brought to the table a variety of experiences and cultures from around the world: Jamaica, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Nigeria and Armenia.

The focus group provided rich insights for Gaddum to consider. Participants spoke about the need to make quick and sometimes painful decisions about funeral arrangements, as well as managing the expectations of family members in their home country.

'We have so many assumptions within the funeral industry', Natalia notes, 'like the assumption that the person will be buried in England, the funeral being in English, and the tension between the English systems in place and the family's preferences for their own customs and rites. This doesn't help those who are new to England.'

Natalia reflected on the need for communities to have a positive sponsor 'someone they can trust', often within their faith or religious communities, to signpost to external bereavement support.

‘The importance of religion or faith to migrants to the UK cannot be underestimated: ‘Systems and resources can be hard to understand for those not born in the UK,’ Natalia notes, highlighting some of the key themes that arose from the focus group.

A trusted community leader can help navigate these systems and signpost to relevant resources. This rings true for the families that Gaddum supports. Natalia explains: ‘Some families are very grateful that their child is receiving some support. Other families are distant, or have very different expectations about what support means.’

Gaddum has previously spent time linking into communities in the Manchester and Salford areas. The organisation found this can take a long time, building trust and understanding slowly. They are keen to learn from the focus group, by concentrating on the trusted sponsor within communities and engaging with them through workshops and dialogue: ‘We are hoping to be able to extend our offer to BAME community (especially in Salford area) by establishing connections with BAME organisations. Our approach involves conducting presentations to introduce our services and raise awareness about the support we offer.’

‘We are hoping that the awareness of our service would increase the service accessibility for BAME community. We have already started to target a few primary schools in Salford from which we did not receive any referrals. We are in the process of reaching out to those schools to deliver informative presentation’. The organisation is also keen to find out more about the refreshed Standards and how these can be applied to their current and future practice.

Natalia also highlighted the impact of supporting children and young people: ‘Sometimes this means supporting the family too.’ Supporting families by educating them on grief literacy is an obvious way of ensuring that children and young people are supported well by their family. However, family support is not often considered within funding packages, meaning this extra work is often carried by the organisation and removes capacity away from reaching more children and young people. This is a key learning point for commissioners and other funders: that when funding a child or young person, allow for further funded capacity to support the important people in that child or young person’s life.



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