

SAMARITANS AND CRUSE - FACING THE FUTURE

Bereavement is one of the most distressing experiences a person will face. Bereavement by suicide is not necessarily more severe than other types of bereavement, but those bereaved are more likely to experience stigmatisation, blame, emptiness, shame, guilt, and a sense of rejection.

In addition, there is evidence to suggest those bereaved by suicide are at increased risk of taking their own life by suicide¹. In England, over 4000 people take their own lives every year, so when considering their families and friends, the number of people affected by suicide is of significant number.

Facing the Future is a service provided through a partnership between Samaritans and Cruse Bereavement Care (Cruse), designed to support this vulnerable group of people. Having been successfully delivered in London since 2011, the partnership undertook to extend the service outside London to reach more people who have been bereaved by suicide.

Since October 2015 8 local partnerships have delivered Facing the Future, providing groups in all regions of England except the North West. Delivering 6 weekly sessions to 20 groups during this period they have reached 107 people.

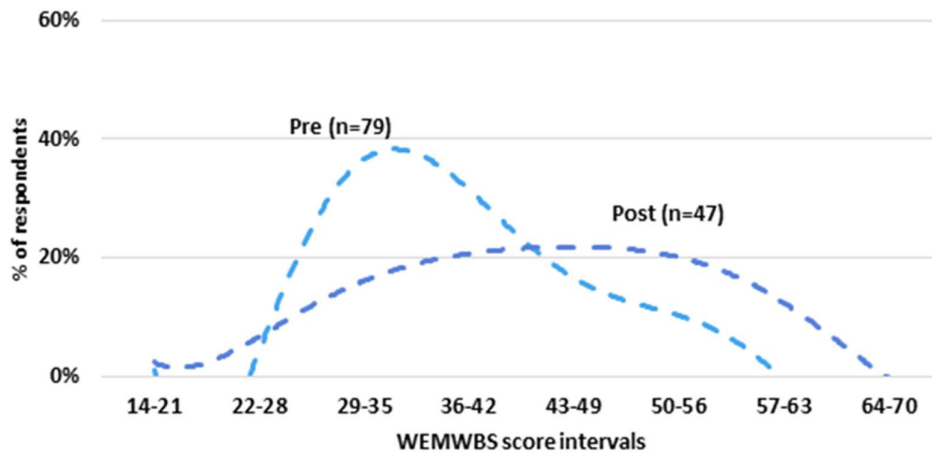
The pilot has been evaluated using a blend of quantitative and qualitative methods involving both participants and those delivering the service.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

Mental and emotional wellbeing

Mental and emotional wellbeing was measured before and after participation using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)².

Figure 1 - The programme saw a positive shift in the wellbeing of participants
The proportion of participants with lower scores has decreased, whilst those scoring higher has increased



¹ Pitman, A., Osborn, D., King, M., & Erlangsen, A. (2014). Effects of suicide bereavement on mental health and suicide risk. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 1(1), 86-94.

²WEMWBS is a 14-item scale of mental well-being covering subjective well-being and psychological functioning that enables the monitoring of mental wellbeing in the general population and the evaluation of projects, programmes

Qualitative data gathered through surveys and interviews, strongly indicates participating in the sessions has made a significant contribution to improved wellbeing:

- ★ 89% of survey respondents reported feeling emotionally better since attending the sessions, 40% felt very much or much better
- ★ all but one of those respondents attributed that change, to varying degrees, to the group sessions, with 70% saying it had contributed to their change quite a bit or a lot
- ★ most interviewees reported that their positive shift in wellbeing was due to the sessions helping them move forward in their recovery and enabling them to process their thoughts and feelings

Being able to talk

- ★ 96% of respondents found the group helpful with over two thirds finding the sessions very or extremely helpful because it enabled them to:
 - meet people who understood how they felt
 - talk in a safe environment
 - listen to others
 - be part of a group discussion
 - feel less isolated
- ★ 49/50 said they would recommend the service to someone else in their situation

Improving relationships

- ★ participants said the group enabled them to speak about their bereavement in a safe, non-judgemental environment and had helped them to then share feelings and thoughts with family and friends outside of the group
- ★ after attending the group respondents felt they were more understood and felt more listened to by others

Moving on

- ★ 77% of survey respondents reported that they felt differently about their bereavement at the end of the six weeks
- ★ participants said they felt less guilty and more accepting of what had happened
- ★ some felt more positive about moving their own lives forward
- ★ most respondents felt they were more aware of other services, and felt more confident about contacting them

“I definitely feel better about things, I’ve got a more positive outlook now, I feel more confident that I can get through this”

A Facing the Future participant

KEY TO SUCCESS

The success of this service is in no small part due to the dedication and commitment of volunteers in both organisations. The partnership brings together complementary knowledge, skills and experience at both individual and organisational level. The support provided centrally for training, supervision, administration and promotion ensures a locally delivered service is consistent across the country, but each local partnership is empowered to take ownership of the service.

The Department of Health’s Suicide Prevention Strategy states that ‘effective and timely emotional and practical support for families bereaved or affected by suicide is essential to help the grieving process, prevent further long-term emotional distress and support recovery’. Facing the Future has the potential to play an important role in helping achieve this objective.