



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

---

## **WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT**

---

**TITLE**            **Scoping Study of Bereavement Services – Welsh Government Response**

**DATE**            **13 February 2020**

**BY**                **Vaughan Gething AM, Minister for Health and Social Services**

This written statement follows the statement issued on 22 July 2019 on NHS bereavement support. It provides an update on the work undertaken since that statement was issued and sets out the actions the Welsh Government will take in response to the scoping study of bereavement services undertaken recently by Cardiff University and its partners.

Bereavement can be defined as the sorrow you feel or the state you are in when a relative or close friend dies. Bereavement is associated with elevated risks to mental health, morbidity and mortality and services that provide bereavement support can be vital in managing these risks. Bereavement support can also reduce the emotional, physical and mental impact of grief.

The bereavement services scoping study was undertaken by Cardiff University in conjunction with Marie Curie and the Wales Cancer Research centre on behalf of the End of Life Care Board. The study mapped existing support, ranging from signposting through to specialist counselling, and identified areas where further resourcing is needed. The study was published in December and can be accessed at:

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-12/scoping-survey-of-bereavement-services-in-wales-report.pdf>

The scope of the study covered the broad range of bereavement support, including that for children and young people. It highlighted the gaps and challenges in bereavement support, and raises a number of considerations for service development. These are centred on the need to develop a national framework for bereavement care in Wales. This would then facilitate investment in bereavement support at organisational and regional levels and provide equity and access to appropriate levels of support responsive to local need.

A national framework would support the establishment of clear referral pathways, risk and needs assessments, training for staff and volunteers and a directory of available bereavement provision. It would also support improvements in how services are evaluated and assessed and enable standards for use as audit and quality improvement tools.

To develop the framework, a dedicated project manager has been recruited and will start work later this month. The national clinical lead for end of life care (Dr Idris Baker) has also been asked to establish a National Bereavement Steering Group to support the project manager with this work. Dr Baker has considerable knowledge and experience in bereavement care.

The existing Bereavement Support Working Group will be merged into the National Bereavement Steering Group, thereby ensuring that organisations supporting children, young people and those affected by baby loss and sudden death are all represented. The group will also include organisations supporting those bereaved by suicide and agricultural bereavement charities.

To address the gaps in bereavement service provision, the Welsh Government will be making an additional £1m available for bereavement support from 2021-22. This will provide time to enable the national bereavement framework and the pathways, training and standards that will follow to be developed. It will also allow time to agree how to allocate the funding so that health boards and existing local and national bereavement charities have the opportunity to access and make best use of this funding.

In the interim, funding has been provided in 2019-20 to four bereavement organisations (2 Wish Upon a Star, Papyrus, Cruse and the Jacob Abraham Foundation) to support the work that they undertake with those bereaved by suicide.

These measures will ensure that the Welsh Government is able to respond to the bereavement study in a timely manner and enable a national framework for the delivery of bereavement care to be in place before the end of 2020-21.