

# Cruse Bereavement Care

*Somewhere to turn when someone dies*



by **Debbie Kerslake**, Chief Executive

Cruse's vision is that 'all bereaved people have somewhere to turn when someone dies'. We do this through enhancing society's awareness of bereavement, and delivering a comprehensive range of services. Our 6,000 volunteers across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, together with a sister organisation in Scotland, deliver high quality support to anyone who has been bereaved. Our impact is far-reaching, whether directly providing services, influencing government policy or developing the skills of those who come into contact with bereaved people. For a bereaved person it can be life-saving.

## Cruse services for bereaved people

Cruse recognises that the death of someone close is likely to be the most distressing experience we will ever face. Grieving is not an illness, but it may bring risks to physical and mental health.

No two bereavements are the same and everyone's experience is unique. Grieving is a natural process, usually painful and of uncertain duration; it depends, for example, on the nature of the death, the circumstances of the bereaved person and his or her relationship with the person who died. Most people come through the process safely with support from family or friends. Some people experience difficulties and may need particular help and support.

Cruse has developed a broad menu of services to respond to these different needs. Services are provided free of charge by volunteers who have completed comprehensive training, undergo ongoing development and receive support and supervision.

The range of support on offer recognises that different types of help are needed at different times. This may range from reassurance (e.g. in the immediate aftermath of a death when people will call our national helpline with the question 'Am I going mad?') to the need to share experiences and coping strategies with others who

have experienced a death through suicide in a facilitated peer support group. Others facing isolation and loneliness meet for social support in friendship groups. The majority of services provided are either bereavement support or bereavement counselling delivered on a face to face, one to one basis. Many hear about Cruse first from their GP, but many clients also self-refer.

After referral, assessment identifies:

- those who need help or reassurance to negotiate the grieving process
- those whose grieving may be stuck, delayed, protracted or intense
- those who may be at serious risk of complicated grief reactions

We can then agree what support is needed and whether Cruse can provide it. Or we can explore what other services are available and appropriate. Assessment is not a one-off event, but continues throughout the working relationship.

## Cruse Services

- One to one, face to face bereavement support
- One to one, face to face bereavement counselling
- A national helpline - 0844 477 9400
- Website - [www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)
- E-mail support - [Helpmail@cruse.org.uk](mailto:Helpmail@cruse.org.uk)
- Facilitated bereavement support groups
- Social support groups
- Publications and leaflets
- Bespoke training and consultancy for organisations across all sectors

- Support after a major incident
- The international journal Bereavement Care published by Routledge
- Liaison with Government and others concerned with the welfare of bereaved people
- provides volunteers with the opportunity to reflect on their practice
- gives opportunities for support, personal growth and development

## Other Cruse work

Cruse is the largest provider of bereavement care for children and young people in the UK. Our services include:

- A freephone helpline - 0808 808 1677
- Specialist website, e-mail support and message board service at [www.rd4u.org.uk](http://www.rd4u.org.uk)
- Helpful leaflets, specially written for children and young people
- Face to face, one to one bereavement support and counselling

## Volunteering for Cruse

Our volunteers come from all avenues of life and each brings different experiences and expertise to their roles. A significant number of our bereavement volunteers have received support from Cruse themselves.

As well as those who work directly with bereaved people, volunteers can take on roles such as management, administration and fundraising. Cruse is committed to the continuing professional development of all our volunteers, and many go on to specifically support children and young people or the military family.

Last year our volunteers helped us...

- Provide one to one support to almost 40,000 people
- Support over 5,000 children and young people face to face

All volunteers working with clients must first complete the Awareness in Bereavement Care course - this involves a total of 60 hours of study. All volunteers who go on to work directly with clients are supervised every four to six weeks, either one to one or in a group. Supervision:

- safeguards the wellbeing of the client
- ensures the quality of the work

As well as providing services directly to bereaved people, we continually monitor the effectiveness of our work. This is vital to maintain the high quality of our services, and to ensure that resources are used effectively. Cruse has been working on an evaluation toolkit that draws together a range of different methods to carry this out most effectively.

Cruse also contributes to research that extends society's and our own knowledge of the impact of bereavement, or which considers the ways in which bereaved people are, or could be, supported.

Cruse has a history of responding after major incidents. The organisation was mobilised by the Foreign Office after 9/11, sending volunteers to New York to support British families, and by the Metropolitan Police after the London bombings. Recent training has focussed on developing our preparedness for a major incident.

Cruse also recognises that as an organisation we can impact on the experience of bereaved people through campaigning and by influencing government policy. For example, the first chief coroner for England and Wales was appointed in September, and Cruse played a key part in the campaign to create this important role.

Over the years, Cruse Bereavement Care has developed from a small local service supporting widows and their children to become the UK's leading bereavement care charity, providing a range of national and local services across a branch network. The numbers approaching Cruse for support continue to grow: each year over 100,000 people contact Cruse. Cruse continues to provide somewhere to turn when someone dies through a structure that delivers national and local services firmly rooted in local communities, based on an ethos of volunteering which draws on the contribution of thousands who give their time, skills and passion.

For more information on how to become a Cruse volunteer, or otherwise support our work, please visit [www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)