



# **Support After Sudden Bereavement During the Covid-19 Pandemic**

A Thrive LDN  
Toolkit Briefing Note  
November 2020

## About this toolkit

Thrive LDN has developed this toolkit to help provide bereaved people with reassurance that help is available if they need it. It provides important information about how existing services have changed how they are supporting people. We have included dedicated support options for groups of people who may be particularly vulnerable, to help ensure they are aware of who can best understand their circumstances.

## Considerations for professional partners

Bereavement is one of the most challenging things that we can experience, affecting every one of us. In some traumatic and sudden circumstances, we might need additional and more specialised support to help to cope with a bereavement.

During the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, bereavement has been impacted by people being unable to say goodbye to their loved ones in the usual way, as well as being isolated from their usual support networks due to restrictions on social distancing. If the death was sudden, they might experience greater shock and find it more difficult to accept their passing, due to limited time to prepare for life without the person who has died.

### Support structures and experiences of complicated grief

The lack of usual support structures and the changes implemented to services, including end of life and palliative care, has influenced experiences of grief and mourning for death of all causes during this period. The observance of many cultural or religious mourning practices has also been disrupted. This can affect the ability to connect with the deceased before and after their death, potentially increasing the risk of complicated grief<sup>1</sup>.

Other vulnerabilities also make it more likely that a bereaved person will experience complicated grief; these can be pre-existing or arise as a consequence of bereavement. For instance,

LGBTQI+ people may face additional stressors in bereavement such as a failure to acknowledge their relationships and consequent exclusion from discussions and decisions being made by family members or health care professionals in relation to their loved ones. Additionally, older individuals may experience social isolation following the death of a partner, given current advice for people in later life to limit social contact with other households.

### Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities

COVID-19 has exposed structural inequalities which have led to an unfair and inequitable impact of COVID-19 on Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities across London. We can anticipate that this will only increase the grief, stress and loss felt by communities.

Despite the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on BAME communities and accompanying increase in demand for BAME-led bereavement services, there is a lack of dedicated services and culturally specific provision at a national level. A recent report by BAMEsteam highlighted the need for service providers to have quality-assured, cultural competency training and for identification of existing good practice, to help address the disparity of bereavement support for BAME communities. There should be a greater commitment from London partners to implement culturally specific provision.

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1. Mayland CR, Harding AJE, Preston N, Payne S. **Supporting Adults Bereaved Through COVID-19: A Rapid Review of the Impact of Previous Pandemics on Grief and Bereavement.** *J Pain Symptom Manage.* 2020;60(2):e33-e39. doi:10.1016/j.jpainsymman.2020.05.012