



## **Forces Support Scoping Study - Executive Summary**

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### **The evidence base supporting the current work of Forces Support**

An extensive literature review has been performed to establish the recommendations for best practice for supporting traumatically bereaved families and in turn these have been reviewed in the context of Forces Support's current practices to determine how these recommendations are currently being met by the organisation. This review of literature successfully demonstrated that the current practices of Forces Support are well supported by the theoretical evidence.

The recommendations for best practice revealed by the literature review encompassed aspects such as the mobilisation of social support networks; delivery of practical support and initiation of meaning making activities; a family centred and all encompassing approach; early identification of mental health needs; competent, knowledgeable staff and an understanding that there is a need for ongoing research to contribute to the field. These are all well incorporated in to Forces Support's current practices through the support, training and deployment of a Family Liaison Officer, the all encompassing eligibility criteria, development of care plans, the undertaking of practical and memorial tasks and the commissioning of research studies.



## **Review of current support provision in the UK and internationally for families affected by traumatic bereavement and loss**

This review encompassed both statutory and non-statutory health and social care services and made reference to local and national services and examples of best practice.

A number of organisations were reviewed and while many offered a level of support which would be useful for Forces Support to draw upon in order to develop training, refer families to or accept referrals from, none offer the same or even similar support to that offered by Forces Support making Forces Support unique in their field.

Organisations offering a more substantial level of support to bereaved families allocate case/support workers to them. The review of such organisations does seem to indicate that a support worker working with a family or individual will inevitably lead to the development of a comprehensive tailored care plan which draws on their own organisation's resources as well as those elsewhere. This is reflected in Forces Support's strategy.

## **Gaps in current provision for families affected by traumatic bereavement and loss**

Many organisations acknowledge the therapeutic value of the establishment of a memorial space/item when families have been bereaved for a few months but none of these organisations provide this as part of their services.

At the current time there is no other organisation in the UK works with families following a traumatic bereavement regardless of the cause of death



In many cases the undertaking of practical tasks is alluded to, especially for those organisations who work with bereaved families immediately e.g. the National Homicide Service, Rainbow Trust etc however the details of these tasks are difficult to ascertain and are entirely dependent on the individual families needs - childcare, shopping, housework etc.

## **Areas for development and recommendations for the future based on the literature review**

Following a review of the literature a number of recommendations were established based on current evidence and best practice. These for the most part can easily be incorporated into the current operating procedures of Forces Support in order to enhance the compliance with best practice and deliver a well evidence based service. Such recommendations include skills training in a number of different areas for the FLO, redevelopment of the Facebook site to include additional sources of assistance and education, early intervention practical support, facilitation of meaning making activities beyond the home and garden, identification of mental health needs and for Forces Support to develop a research strategy and agenda and to encompass audit and evaluation as an integral part of its current work.

## **Proposed model of practice following a traumatic bereavement**

In addition to providing the evidence base for the unique service already offered by Forces Support and ways in which this could be enhanced, the scoping study also proposed a model of practice for Forces Support to provide support to all traumatically bereaved families.



This model builds upon Forces Support's current approach to military bereaved families encompassing the recommendations revealed by the literature review and acknowledging the gaps in provision revealed by the review of current provisions. As such the proposed model is highly innovative in proposing that Forces Support become the only UK organisation to work with families following a traumatic bereavement regardless of the cause of death, combining the delivery of both practical and emotional support and providing families with the opportunity to embark upon a meaning making/remembrance project not currently offered by any other organisation.