

Impact Evaluation: PABBS (Postvention Assisting those Bereaved By Suicide) Training

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1. Executive summary

The number of people that die by suicide each year is growing. Although there are several charities and organisations that provide support for mental health, many of the volunteers are not given sufficient training or supervision. By offering PABBS training, it will allow for an improved safety for those individuals providing and receiving the support. This is especially relevant as the facilitators, who lead the groups and offer the support, have lived experience of mental health difficulties and could be at risk of mental health crisis, and suicide themselves.

- This report focuses on an evidence-based suicide bereavement training called PABBS (Postvention Assisting those Bereaved By Suicide).
- It was offered to a male-only mental health group.
- 20 individuals were commissioned the training, 16 attended, and 14 individuals provided feedback.
- The feedback showed the success and effectiveness of the one-day PABBS training course.

It is important to understand the impact of this training because it will inform and guide future development and spread of the training to other mental health crisis teams focusing on crisis alternative services/settings.

Crisis alternatives: Alternatives to attending the Emergency Department, health-based place of safety or inpatient admission, usually defined as a safe space, sanctuaries, crisis house or crisis café however an initial scoping exercise has also found talking groups and therapy for those in crisis. These are commonly referred to as VCSE services as they are predominantly provided by Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises.

Voluntary sector organisations have a distinctive and important role to play. The breadth of this contribution needs to be acknowledged and its role as an accessible alternative to

inpatient provision prioritised. A whole-system approach to mental health crisis provision is needed (Newbigging et al 2020).

These services, such as crisis houses, safe spaces, and crisis cafes, have highest level of service user satisfaction and will be expected to employ peer support workers and those with lived experience ((Newbigging et al 2020). Therefore, the community mental health group that were provided with the PABBS training is one of many that uses facilitators with experience of suicide bereavement as leaders, meaning the results will likely be generalisable to many other voluntary sector organisations.

2. Summary of PABBS

Postvention Assisting those Bereaved By Suicide (PABBS) is designed to improve the knowledge and confidence of individuals who come into contact with people who are affected by suicide.

The training is delivered through taught sessions, films, group discussion and interactive exercises.

The research team members who have developed PABBS training all have experience in suicide bereavement research, suicide prevention, and mental health nursing. Several of them have personally been bereaved by suicide.

PABBS training is the only **evidence-based** suicide bereavement training, which means it was developed from a three-year research study (Suicide Bereavement UK, 2020).

PABBS is also the only **theory-based** suicide bereavement training. This means that the delivery of the training is based on existing training framework that supports learning (Suicide Bereavement UK, 2020).

3. Context: Who was the training provided to?

The PABBS training was offered to a non-profit, male-only, community mental health group which provides informal peer-support talking groups. The idea is that it offers men, who may be experiencing a mental health crisis, a safe space to seek-support.

The groups are run by volunteers, who have no formal training, only lived experience. This was flagged up as a concern considering further suicide risk. Also, their psychological safety as they may experience vicarious trauma from facilitating these group sessions (Kim et al, 2021).

Therefore, the training was offered to this Community Interest Company to help voluntary staff improve their knowledge of suicide prevention and bereavement. The aim was to help volunteers learn new techniques in dealing with someone who has recently been bereaved by suicide as well as gaining skills in how to manage their own mental health and wellbeing.

4. The training delivery/package

PABBS is a one-day training course, which is CPD accredited.

It is delivered by two facilitators who have broad knowledge of suicide prevention and postvention through training and personal experience.

The training costs £299 + VAT per person.

HEE funded the training when it was offered to the male-only community mental health group.

5. Prior to PABBS Training

Prior to the PABBS training day, attendees were asked multiple questions about their past experience of suicide bereavement and how skilled and knowledgeable they thought they were on the topic.

To help understand the level of exposure the trainees had on suicide bereavement, they were asked whether they had been personally bereaved by suicide and whether they had been affected by suicide in a professional capacity. The responses revealed that 29% (4 people) had been personally affected by suicide and 86% (12 people) had been impacted by suicide at work. This shows the need for the training as most individuals had come into contact with someone who had been bereaved, without having had any formal training on how to effectively help.

When asked about how well equipped they felt they were to help men in crisis, the majority of individuals revealed that they did not think their knowledge of suicide bereavement was sufficient enough for their current role (43% disagreed they had appropriate knowledge and 7% strongly disagreed). It was worrying to find that only just over a quarter of people (29%) thought they had a suitable level of knowledge around the subject. In addition, it was revealed that although 29% of trainees felt that they did have the knowledge, only 22% felt that they actually had the skills to put their knowledge into practice and 57% of people felt they did not have skills to support people who have been bereaved by suicide.

After finding these figures, it is not surprising to reveal that the majority (57%) did not feel confident to effectively respond to people who have been bereaved by suicide.

These figures show how relevant and important it was to share this training with voluntary groups.

6. Following the PABBS training event

The results that were gained following the PABBS training was overwhelming positive and highlighted the immense benefits the training offered.

Every individual who responded to the feedback form that was provided after the training session (14 out of the 16 that took part) said that their knowledge of suicide bereavement and their skills regarding how they support them improved as a result of the training (improved knowledge= 50% agreed, 50% strongly agreed, improved skills= 86% agreed, 14% strongly agreed). The confidence of each individual increased, providing support that the training improves the skills and knowledge of helping those going through suicide bereavement.

7. Comparison

	Prior to PABBS training	After PABBS training	Increase?
My knowledge of suicide bereavement is sufficient for my role/has improved	29%	100%	71%
My Skills to support people bereaved by suicide is sufficient for my role/has improved	22%	100%	78%
I feel confident responding to those bereaved by suicide	14%	100%	86%

8. The Delivery of the Training

Throughout the feedback survey, the trainees were asked about the way the training was delivered and overall, the responses were hugely positive.

When questioned about the materials that were offered throughout the training, the responses showed that they were informative (93% agree or strongly agreed), high quality (100% agreed or strongly agreed) and applicable and easy to use outside the training session (93% agreed or strongly agreed). The training offers a separate manual and workbook, and 93% of people found this helpful. Finally, throughout the course of the training session, video clips were shown, and the feedback highlighted 100% of participants found the clips helpful.

Regarding the way the day was run, 93% of respondents agreed the training had met their expectations. The feedback found that individuals felt the day was designed effectively (93%), contained the right amount of material (79%), was well facilitated (100%), and met the stated objectives (100%).

Respondents were then asked to expand on their feedback regarding the facilitation. Overwhelmingly, there was 100% agreement rate on the facilitators being well prepared, receptive to questions, effective with their use of audio/visual aids, active in simulating interest in the subject, sharing the attention to all delegates, supportive and encouraging.

9. Additional comments and feedback

100% would recommend this course.

86% would value an online version of the training to consolidate their learning.

Only 15% would prefer online only rather than attending in-person.

100% of respondents are going to make changes to their practice as a result of the training, with comments such as the consistency of their language will be improved, they will not try to 'fix' but try to support, they will be making several adaptations to their charity.

The only constructive comments that were given about how the course could be improved were that the training would benefit from not being as repetitive with the statistics and figures and it would be valuable to introduce more practical 'role play' scenarios. There has been support regarding the benefits of simulation training in mental health crisis care, including the improvement of personal and clinical skills (Vega et al, 2020). Future improvements could be made to PABBS training by adding more simulation training.

10. Conclusion

What the respondents have taken away from the training:

- The importance of self-care
- Listening skills
- Make sure time is made to decompress after working with the bereaved
- Not being a 'fixer' or 'pleaser'
- Not showing judgement

The effectiveness of this training is consistent across the feedback. This could demonstrate a further need for this training in similar workforce groups and settings. Therefore, this type of training could be recommended to and adopted by other crisis alternative organisations around the region. Furthermore, it could also demonstrate the need for any training and a space to reflect for facilitators who have lived experience and are working in these roles.