

Every life matters



Focus Group Volunteers

Who are we?

Every Life Matters is a Cumbrian suicide prevention and suicide bereavement support charity established in 2018. We aim to reduce suicides in Cumbria through training, campaigning and a network of Suicide Safer Community projects across the County, and to provide support to individuals and communities bereaved or affected by suicide.

In summer 2020 we launched our **Support After Suicide** service for people in Cumbria bereaved and affected by suicide. We work alongside Cumbria Police, and other local groups to support people in the early weeks and months after a suicide.

If you would like to find out more about this opportunity contact Paul on 07588 016 166 or email support@every-life-matters.org.uk

Our commitment to co-production

We are committed to ensuring that the support we offer is led and shaped by the views and experiences of people who have been bereaved by suicide.

As part of this commitment we want to bring together a small group of volunteers who are willing to share their ideas, feedback and experiences with us to help improve how we support people in Cumbria who have lost a loved one to suicide.

Your contributions will ultimately help towards improving the breadth and quality of suicide bereavement services for people in Cumbria.

What would being a Focus Group Volunteer involve?

You can help us by offering your ideas, thoughts and feedback in a variety of ways. You would only participate in a way which you felt comfortable with. This includes;

- **Group meetings** – coming together with 6-8 other people who have lost a loved one to suicide to share feedback and ideas about areas of our service, and bereavement support more generally. Meetings would last around 90 minutes and would be held online or face to face, depending on the latest Covid-19 guidelines, and would be supported by staff and Trustees from Every Life Matters.
- **Individuals conversations** – Sometimes conversations are easier one-to-one. At times we might ask for volunteers from the group to help guide us on development of particular areas of our service through a telephone or face to face conversation.
- **Surveys and questionnaires** – Sometimes we might need simple yes/no opinions, or preferences, and in this case we might send out simple online surveys for our volunteers.

Some of the areas we are seeking ideas, views and feedback around to begin with are;

- Contents and wording of a **Condolence Pack** given to families by Cumbria Police shortly after death of their loved one.
- Developing suicide bereavement information and advice on **our website**
- How we appropriately **stay in contact with people** in the longer term who we have supported
- Options for ways of providing **group support** for people bereaved by suicide in Cumbria
- Contents of a **Care Package** given to families on our first visit
- Developing and **Annual Remembrance Event** for people in Cumbria bereaved by suicide

What amount of time commitment is involved?

- We will seek to gather opinions from our Focus Group Volunteers around 6-9 times a year. We will reach out to volunteers at regular intervals as our service develops.
- Most focus groups and individual calls will happen on weekday evenings.
- You can dip in and out of volunteering depending on your other commitments, or your readiness to take part at that time. We fully appreciate that there will be times when it is simply too emotionally challenging to take part.
- You might also have a preferred way of engaging – groups, individual conversations or surveys. This is also your choice.

Who can become a volunteer?

- Anyone who has been bereaved by suicide, whether this was a family member, friend or work colleague or other.
- For your own wellbeing we ask that your loss was at least 6 months prior to becoming a volunteer. The role may trigger memories about your own personal loss and we need to make sure you are going to be OK.

Getting support

- We take your wellbeing very seriously and we fully appreciate that talking about your experiences of loss and the support you received afterwards may be very challenging.
- We will provide support and a listening ear to all participants before, during and after any volunteer activity.

Expenses

- Where volunteering activity takes place at a physical venue we will refund public transport costs or private car travel 40 pence per mile.
- Where meetings fall over lunchtime/dinner time, or are over 3 hours' duration, we will provide a meal for all participants.

About our Support After Suicide service

Losing a loved one to suicide is like no other death. The physical and emotional impacts can be devastating and can ripple out far and wide across families, friends, workmates and communities in a range of different ways. The grief you experience is unique. Each person will be affected in their own way, even in the same

family. Each had their own relationship with the person who has died, different ways of coping, and their own experience of other losses.

Every Life Matters aims to offer practical and emotional support at this critical and difficult time. Initially, we offer up to 4 meetings in the first few weeks and months after a bereavement, either in person, by telephone or online. Everyone has their own unique needs and the support we offer reflects this. We are here to:

- Offer emotional support and a listening ear, a space where you can talk openly and confidentially about how you are feeling.
- Help you to understand some of the responses you might be having to your loss
- Develop coping techniques to manage some of the impacts of grief
- Inform you about other organisations and groups that might offer support to you and your family - now and in the future.
- Advise you about talking to your children or telling others about the death.
- Provide information & support around the Coroner's Inquest and other Investigations.
- Help you manage any media interest and coverage about the death.
- Support you managing practical issues around money, housing and employment.
- Support you with arrangements around the funeral.
- Help you identify and access other support, including for your mental health.

Though our support is focused in the first months after the bereavement, we want to be there for people in the long term. We know that grief is a long and bumpy journey, particularly around anniversaries and other significant times, and people can contact us whenever they need to reach out for further support. And in turn we will reach out to check in with people as the months and years go by.

People can also explore with us meaningful ways to remember their loved ones, doing something to help others in your position, or undertaking fundraising or other events to raise awareness about suicide. Many people find this a very important part of their journey.

If you would like to find out more about this opportunity, or express interest in becoming a Focus Group volunteer;

- **Contact Paul on 07588 016 166**
 - **or email support@every-life-matters.org.uk**
 - **or visit <https://www.every-life-matters.org.uk/focus-group-volunteer/>**
-

