

We are

# Voices

People with Living  
Experience of Suicide



## Contents

---

1. About us
  2. How we work
  3. Our stories
  4. Work with us
- 



# About us

We are a collective of People with Living Experience of Suicide. We believe our shared knowledge is fundamental in steering decision-making on suicide prevention and bereavement support.

We work collaboratively with you to offer strong guidance, advice and signposting on suicide related action.

“

Voices' perspective allows us to think differently and ensure the sensitivities around those who have lost someone to suicide are respected and built into aspects of our work.

”

**SANDRA O'HAGAN**  
**PUBLIC HEALTH CONSULTANT**

## Introduction

Voices came together as a collective in 2018, with the aim that fewer lives are lost to suicide, and anyone affected by suicide receives the best possible support. We are striving for quality initiatives in suicide prevention, postvention\* and bereavement by suicide across the Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton area.

## A unique perspective

Our valuable insights contribute to a tailored approach to suicide prevention and bereavement support work that better meets the needs of those who rely on it:

- Our stories break down the barriers of stigma, judgment and discrimination
- Our passion and drive create a positive impact on professionals
- We advocate for services designed with insight, compassion, and empathy at their heart
- We serve as models of hope and sources of comfort for others who are at risk of suicide or who have lost someone to suicide

\* Postvention is the term given to activities and programmes that are intended to assist those who have been bereaved or impacted by suicide to cope with what has happened. Suicide prevention and postvention are closely related in that postvention can also prevent further deaths.

## How we work

As a collective, our support for each other empowers us to support, inform, and influence the wider community. We keep up to date with the political and organisational processes which influence our agenda.

Our aim is to break down barriers and improve practices of organisations and professionals who provide support and services focused on suicide and suicide prevention.

### Our approach

To listen with empathy, to seek to understand, and to advocate with strength and conviction.

We collaborate with a wide range of partners such as the NHS, Local Authority, emergency services, first responders, and voluntary and community sector agencies.

“

Angela was integral to the process of selecting the most appropriate provider to deliver the best care and support to have a positive impact for children and young people.

”

**LUCY DENNIS**  
**SENIOR PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTITIONER**



### Our expertise

- **Guidance** on support strategies for suicide prevention and bereavement
- **Advice** on strategy planning and mentoring, and input on support groups, crisis centres and suicide prevention action groups
- **Advocacy** on behalf of those impacted by suicide to provide a voice and raise awareness
- **Signposting** for Children & Young People (CYP) bereaved by suicide and mental health support issues in primary and secondary care

# Our stories

Three representatives share their experience and dedication.



## Angela Forster

I lead a suicide prevention charity, Sasha's Project, which we established in memory of my daughter, who died by suicide when she was just 20. We run a drop-in centre for young people struggling with poor mental health. I'm active in suicide awareness and prevention activities, including the 4 Mental Health Expert Reference Group, doing all I can to prevent other families from experiencing the dreadful pain that my family now lives with.

I try to bring Sasha's approach to life, her values, and her ethics into my work with Voices.



## Ishtar Hopkin-Fisher

Growing up I had multiple traumatic experiences and, as a young teen, turned to self-harm while experiencing suicidal thoughts. I fought hard not to choose that path. The experience of losing my friend Oliver to suicide in 2018 affirmed that leaving is never the best choice. That remembering those who love and care for you and those whose lives you've touched are powerful and decisive reasons to stay.

Following this experience, I've undertaken Suicide First Aid Training, published poetry for charities, and filmed my story for prevention campaigns. I strongly relate to both prevention and bereavement interventions and aim to help create compassionate and caring support services.



## Ellen Hatto

My 82-year-old father, Alan, took his own life in 2013 following a period of physical and mental health decline. His body and mind had had enough.

This devastating life event set me on an unexpected journey, transforming my heartbreak and trauma into helping others whilst supporting my own experience of this complicated loss.

Providing a truthful and authentic voice for those impacted by suicide has become a real passion of mine.

As well as my work with Voices, I co-facilitate a suicide bereavement peer support group and am a suicide 'first aid' intervention trainer. I have also provided governance input as a trustee of two not-for-profit organisations specialising in suicide bereavement support for all ages and worked alongside local public health teams on projects relating to suicide prevention, postvention and bereavement support.

## Work with us

Voices can work with you, or your organisation, to sensitively and confidently ensure that suicide prevention and/or postvention are thoroughly considered.

### Here are some of the ways the collective has contributed:

- Design and procurement of support services
- Development of strategies, policies or action plans
- Evaluation of projects or interventions
- Representation at partnerships, panels or boards

Contact Voices

[public.health@hants.gov.uk](mailto:public.health@hants.gov.uk)

“

Beeb is a warm and giving person who engages well with any audience. We benefit personally and as an organisation from her knowledge, experience and compassion.

”

**HELEN DOVE**  
**CHILD AND ADOLESCENT**  
**MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

