Article for Kent Law Society mailshot July2017.

**Could your firm help Cruse to provide bereavement support?**

You will have heard of Cruse, the national bereavement care charity. Cruse operates across Kent through four local areas. Each has a team of volunteer counsellors who offer support for people having difficulty coming to terms with bereavement. This is mainly delivered through telephone and face to face support, and Cruse gives additional training to volunteers to deal with particular client groups, such as children and young people, and military families.

I am writing to you as the Fundraising Coordinator for Maidstone & Medway Cruse Bereavement Care. Despite being a voluntary organisation we do need to raise around £35,000 per annum to run our service. We, along with our colleagues across Kent, need to diversify our funding sources so that we can continue to offer our highly valued service to people in need. We have seen partnership agreements in other parts of the country with firms of solicitors where, when a will is being made, either the testator or the solicitor or both make a donation to Cruse.

We would be very keen to explore the possibility of introducing similar arrangements with any law firms in Kent who would be interested in supporting Cruse. Our main costs are training, hire of counselling rooms and telephone and travelling expenses for our volunteers. We get some funding from the NHS and local authorities, but looking forward this is being scaled down and becoming a lot less secure. However, demand for the service has increased sharply over the last year, as a result of cuts in public services and greater public awareness of bereavement and mental health issues.

In Maidstone & Medway in last financial year our 34 trained bereavement counsellors, supported by 9 management and office volunteers, dealt with over 800 initial inquiries, and gave follow-up support to almost half, while 295 progressed through to one to one counselling. We continue to respond to 100% of calls within 48 hours, which is remarkable for a voluntary organisation. Recently, some of our Bereavement Volunteers have also taken part in the Cruse response to the recent tragedies at London Bridge and Grenfell Tower by working in the emergency support centres.

If you would be interested in following this up, my contact details are below. Or you may want to contact your local Cruse areas whose email addresses are also shown.

I look forward to hearing from you.

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