



The King's Fund

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

# **Kent charity supporting dads wins top national health award**

Ashford-based charity **Dads Unlimited** has won a major national award for its unique work supporting men across England and Wales who are undergoing family breakdown and as a result are at risk of experiencing poor mental health, including self-harm and thoughts of suicide.

Following a rigorous selection and assessment process, Dads Unlimited was chosen from more than 350 charities across the UK as one of the 10 winners of the 2022 GSK IMPACT Awards. Now in their 25th year, the awards are designed to recognise the outstanding work of small and medium-sized charities working to improve people's health and wellbeing in the UK. This year winners will receive £40,000 in unrestricted funding as well as expert support and leadership development provided by leading health and care charity The King's Fund.

Men aged 40–54 have the highest suicide rates in the UK and local research has identified that one of the most common suicide 'at risk' groups in the Kent region are those experiencing relationship difficulties, specifically the breakdown of a long-term relationship or marriage. Dads Unlimited was set up to promote a new, 'whole-family' approach to the entrenched issue of family breakdown and to raise awareness of it as a risk factor in male suicide rates. Established in 2017 by one dad who had direct experience of these issues, the charity's services aim to support the wellbeing and mental health of fathers going through family breakdowns – a need often overlooked – by helping them to achieve a positive ongoing relationship with their children and by improving co-parenting relationships.

Despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, Dads Unlimited has continued to offer a range of services to support dads and their families. These include one-to-one mentoring, with trained mentors providing telephone, email and face-to-face support to help dads navigate family separation, agree achievable goals, and understand their options to develop a positive co-parenting environment. The charity provides practical support focused on helping dads plan and manage their contact with their children and offers free family court support, including a unique affordable barrister representation service.

The award judges were particularly impressed by the speed with which Dads Unlimited has grown. Last year, Dads Unlimited delivered more than 6,100 hours of mentoring to help nearly 500 parents, and it supported 135 men with suicidal ideation and 153 male victims of

domestic abuse. The Covid-19 pandemic has led to a huge rise in demand for their support, with helpline calls rising from 578 a month pre-lockdown to 997 calls a month now.

The charity was also instrumental in influencing the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner and Ministry of Justice's decision to set up Kent's first male victim Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) service. Dads Unlimited now runs this service, working with other local services such as police and housing, to offer support and advice to victims.

**Katie Pinnock, Director of UK Charitable Partnerships at GSK, said:** 'Dads Unlimited is a young charity which has grown quickly and demonstrated huge impact in that time, with an impressive reach and influential local partnerships. Working to address an often-forgotten problem – the effect of family breakdown on men's mental health – their innovative package of emotional support combined with practical advice and affordable legal services has proved effective in engaging dads who may have been reluctant to access other help. Their work has a clear focus on the needs they have identified, filling a gap in suicide prevention services, and people from across the country are now contacting them to access their support.'

The 2022 GSK IMPACT Award recognises Dads Unlimited's significant impact on improving the health and mental wellbeing of dads in Kent and across England and Wales who are going through family breakdown. Developing leaders in the charity sector is a key aim of the GSK IMPACT Awards programme and all winners are invited to build on their success and take part in a tailored leadership development programme run by The King's Fund. Dads Unlimited will also be invited to join the GSK IMPACT Awards Network, a UK-wide network of more than 110 previous award winners who work together to develop leaders, find new ways of working and provide mutual support.

Commenting on the award, **Nav Mirza Chief Executive of Dads Unlimited**, said: 'We are all so honoured and humbled to be one of the worthy winners of a GSK IMPACT Award for 2022. To be recognised for our work in supporting dads across the country is a major endorsement and a real sense of appreciation for the community of dads who need our help, and for our team who support them. The men who come to us feel like no one listens, no one understands, or worse, no one cares enough to even try. To receive such a prestigious award, at what has been a very challenging time for everyone, delivers external validation and understanding of their challenges and experiences. This award could not have come at a better time for Dads Unlimited, as we work hard to support and care for more dads and their families.'

For more information about Dads Unlimited, visit: [www.dadsunltd.org.uk](http://www.dadsunltd.org.uk)

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### **Notes to editors**

Photos, interviews and case studies are available upon request. For further information please contact Gemma Umali, Press and Public Affairs Manager at The King's Fund, on 07584 146035 or [g.umali@kingsfund.org.uk](mailto:g.umali@kingsfund.org.uk)

### **GSK IMPACT Awards**

- 2022 marks the 25th anniversary of the **GSK IMPACT Awards**, GSK's flagship UK community investment programme. The GSK IMPACT Awards, run in partnership with The King's Fund, are designed to recognise the outstanding work of community-

based health care charities. For more information visit [www.gsk.com/en-gb/responsibility/charitable-programmes-and-partnerships/uk-charitable-partnerships/](http://www.gsk.com/en-gb/responsibility/charitable-programmes-and-partnerships/uk-charitable-partnerships/)

- The awards are open to small and medium-sized charities working in health and wellbeing with an annual income between £120,00 and £3 million that are at least three years old. The name 'IMPACT' derives from the criteria that winners must have demonstrated in their application submission: **I**nnovation, **M**anagement, **P**artnership, **A**chievement, **C**ommunity focus and **T**argeting need. For more information on the application process, visit [www.kingsfund.org.uk/projects/gsk-impact-awards](http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/projects/gsk-impact-awards). The 2023 GSK IMPACT Awards will open for applications in July 2022.
- This year £450,000 in unrestricted prize money will be awarded to UK charities through the GSK IMPACT Awards. To mark the 25th anniversary of the GSK IMPACT Awards, the prize has been increased so that the ten winners each receive £40,000 in unrestricted funding, a film and other promotional materials to promote the charities, as well as access to training and development activities estimated to be worth £9,500. At the award ceremony in London in June, an overall winner will be announced, and they will receive an extra £10,000, making a total of £50,000. 10 runners up will also each receive £4,000.
- The 2022 winners went through a rigorous assessment, including a half-day in-depth discussion with an independent assessor, and were selected by a judging panel of health and charity experts including Sir Jonathan Symonds, Chairman, GSK; Richard Murray, Chief Executive of The King's Fund; Emma Ackerman, Funding Strategy Director at The National Lottery Community Fund; Aleema Shivji, Executive Director of Impact and Investment at Comic Relief; John James, Chief Executive of the Sickle Cell Society; and Dr Dominique Allwood, Director of Improvement and Partnerships at UCLPartners.
- Since its inception in 1997, nearly 520 health and wellbeing charities have received a GSK IMPACT Award and funding totalling nearly £7.7 million.

**GSK** is a science-led global health care company. For further information please visit [www.gsk.com/about-us](http://www.gsk.com/about-us).

**The King's Fund** is an independent charity working to improve health and care in England. It helps to shape policy and practice through research and analysis; developing individuals, teams and organisations; promoting understanding of the health and social care system; and bringing people together to learn, share knowledge and debate. Its vision is that the best possible health and care is available to all. For further information visit [www.kingsfund.org.uk](http://www.kingsfund.org.uk)

