



SUNDERLAND HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

15 JANUARY 2016

ACTION ON SUPPORTING SUICIDE PREVENTION

Report of the Executive Director of People Services, Sunderland City Council

Introduction

1. The report highlights a programme to implement a joined up communications campaign for suicide prevention which was developed on the back of a Scrutiny review into suicide and which will be active from April 2016.

Background information to support campaign rationale

2. In Sunderland the rate of suicide is higher than the national average (10.6 per 100,000 compared with England 8.8 per 100,000). In terms of actual numbers, deaths from suicide/self-harm have gone up from 17 in 2007 to 32 in 2012.
3. Overall the North East has the highest age standardised death rates from suicide and injuries of undetermined intent in both males and females aged 15 and over. Suicide is the biggest killer of young men in England and Wales. Suicide rates for males in the North East (20.4 per 100,000) are significantly higher than the England average (16.4 per 100,000).
4. Anecdotal evidence via GPs (CCG) and City Hospitals reporting increasing levels of people threatening to commit suicide presenting themselves at surgeries or Accident and Emergency departments.
5. Men were identified as high risk, with 35-55 year olds being the largest at risk group currently. Chronic pain is also a factor (9% of cases) and a new service for psychological wellbeing supports those in need.
6. Other individual risk factors include people with previous suicide attempts (22% in Sunderland have a history of self-harm). Around half the people who die from suicide have a history of self-harm therefore increased community awareness and understanding of self-harm whilst breaking down the taboo and stigma associated with self-harm/self-injury is vital.
7. Incidents of self-harm have increased significantly in Sunderland. Evidence suggests that across the country a record number of youngsters are being admitted to hospital for self-harm, eating disorders, depression and other psychological disorders. Experts say that exam stress, social media, bullying

and the pressure to look slim and attractive are combining to make children's lives unmanageable.

8. Emergency admissions for psychiatric conditions soared to 17,278 last year, double the number four years ago. There were 15,668 admissions of young women aged 15 to 19 for cutting, burning or harming themselves, compared with 9,255 admissions in 2004. A total of 2,965 children were treated on wards for anorexia and other eating disorders, a 12% jump in one year and double the number treated a decade ago.

The development of a Communications Campaign

9. It was agreed that in response to the needs highlighted through the scrutiny review process that a programme would be developed to implement a joined up communications campaign for suicide prevention from April 2016. This will involve Sunderland City Council, CCG, City Hospitals and other relevant partners. It will use the 'All Together Sunderland!' brand. It will be a two-pronged campaign (focussing on men and young people) to signpost to support, advice and guidance.

Campaign Outcomes

- Improved awareness of where to go to get help and support
- To help lower the number of deaths from suicide in Sunderland

Campaign Objectives

- Join up activities under a 'suicide prevention' campaign with a coordinated approach to increase awareness and sensitively highlight suicide and where to go for support and information
- To encourage people in Sunderland to support themselves by ensuring that the information they need is easy to find including signposting them to organisations that can provide help and advice so that they are able to make informed choices and help themselves and support their families and communities.

Target audience

- One strand targeted at young people (in response to local, regional and national trends)
- One strand targeted at men (in response to local and national trends)

Rationale for communications approach

- April 2015 Scrutiny Panel report conclusion that suicide prevention treated as a priority and that people know how to access advice, information and support.
- Regional project through ANEC around mental health issues of children and young people exploring potential triggers and best practice around what can be done differently.
- Government task force recommendation around hard-hitting anti-stigma campaign on self-harm and suicide focussed towards young people.¹
- Response to local and national trends around male suicide.

Actions:

10. The following actions were identified: -
 - Appointment of a Communications agency with specific experience working with Samaritans nationally on suicide prevention appointed December 2015
 - Meeting with relevant partners and Chair of Safeguarding boards to take place in January (tba) with agency to agree campaign objectives and next steps.
 - Presentation to regional Health and Wellbeing Board Chairs group to be scheduled.

Recommendation

11. The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to note the contents of this report

