

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

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AN UPDATE ON SUICIDE PREVENTION WORK IN MEDWAY

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Summary

This report updates Members of the Medway Health and Wellbeing Board on the delivery of the suicide prevention programme in Kent and Medway. This initiative is forms part of an overall suicide reduction programme, resourced centrally by NHS England.

1. Budget and policy framework
 - 1.1. Kent and Medway were one of eight sustainability and transformation partnerships (STPs) across the country that were successful in receiving 'wave one' funding to develop local suicide prevention programmes.
 - 1.2. The amount of funding for Kent and Medway was £668,000 in 2018/19 and in 2019/20. In 2020/2021, the funding reduced to £356,459. NHS England have confirmed that the contribution will be reduced to zero from 2021 onwards.
 - 1.3. The oversight of the suicide prevention programme within Kent and Medway is provided by a key stakeholder group. This group meets monthly and includes representatives from Medway Council Public Health Department, Kent County Council Public Health Department and Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust (KMPT).
 - 1.4. Medway Council's strategic priorities includes 'supporting residents to realise their potential'. Preventing suicides specifically correlates to the aspiration of ensuring we have 'resilient families'.
 - 1.5. Theme 4 of the Medway Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy is focused on improving mental and physical health and well-being. Specific actions within the Strategy include supporting people with mostly good mental wellbeing to consciously maintain a good mental health and to support the implementation

of the suicide prevention plan.

2. Background

- 2.1. Suicide is a major issue for society and a leading cause of life years lost. Suicides are not inevitable and while numbers are small, the impact of suicide on families, friends, colleagues and communities is significant.
- 2.2. The Kent and Medway Suicide Prevention Strategy (2015-2020) has been a driver to reduce local suicides. It is led by a Kent and Medway multi-agency suicide prevention steering group. There is an implementation plan setting out actions and accountabilities. A new Strategy for 2020-2025 is in development and will go out for consultation in the autumn.
- 2.3. Analysis has been undertaken that estimates that each suicide costs the economy in England around £1.67 million. This is based on estimates from Knapp et al (2011)¹ and includes direct costs (i.e. services used by the individual leading up to and immediately following the suicide such as GP visits, prescribed medication, counselling, funeral costs, court costs, use of emergency services, insurance claims and medical services), indirect costs (i.e. the costs to society of each suicide such as the time lost from work) and lost production and human costs (i.e. i.e. lost years of disability free life in addition to the pain and grief experienced by family and friends).
- 2.4. The Kent and Medway multi-agency suicide prevention steering group is comprised of representation from a variety of agencies including Medway Council, British Transport Police, Canterbury Christchurch University, Kent Coroners, Kent County Council, Kent Police, Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group, KMPT, Network Rail, NHS England, Kent and Medway CCG the Samaritans and carers. It is chaired alternately by a Public Health Consultant from Medway Council and Kent County Council.
- 2.5. The directly standardised rate for suicides in Medway for 2016-18 was 9.4 per 100,000 population. This is statistically similar to the England rate.
- 2.6. The number of deaths for each year for Medway residents is shown in Table 1. Please note that there can be a time lag in the reported data due to the time taken by a coroners inquest. The inquest can take several months or years in some occasions. For deaths caused by suicide, this generally means that around half of the deaths registered in a given year will have occurred in the previous year or earlier.

¹ https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-09/Economic_case_for_promotion_and_prevention.pdf

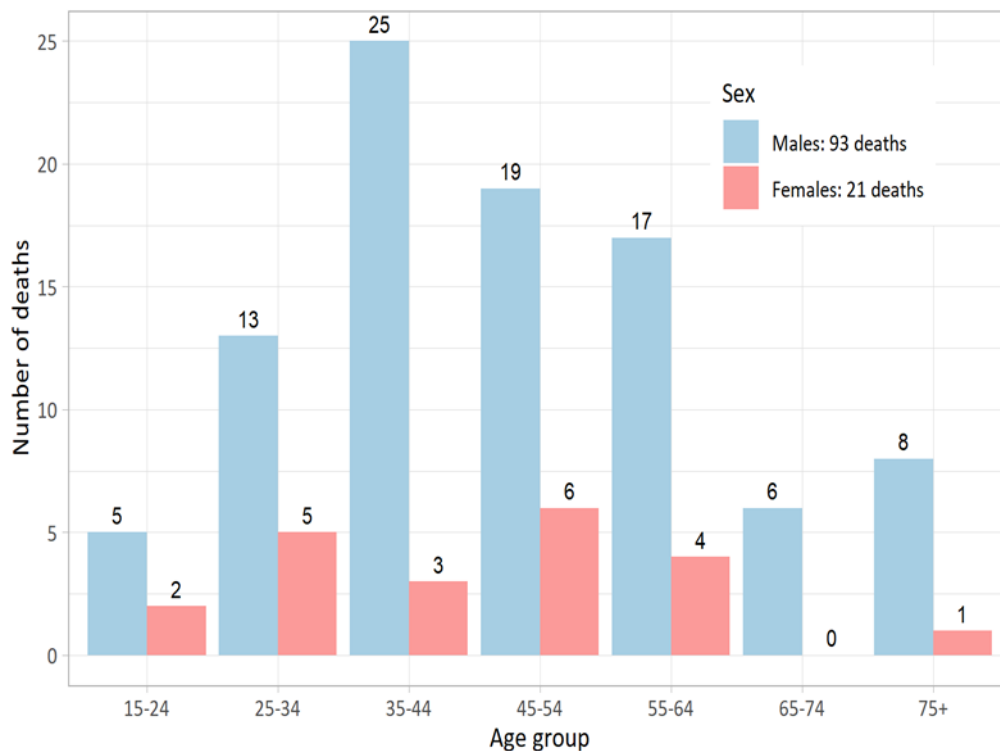
2.7. Figure 1 shows the number of deaths from suicide and events of undetermined intent of Medway residents by age group and sex for Medway residents, 2014-2018 registrations.

Table 1 : Number of deaths from suicide and event of undetermined intent, aged 15+ by gender, Medway residents, 2009-2018 registrations

Year	Male	Female	Total
2009	16	3	19
2010	10	4	14
2011	9	5	14
2012	15	5	20
2013	24	7	31
2014	22	8	30
2015	16	6	22
2016	25	<3	<28
2017	15	3	18
2018	15	<3	<18

Source: Primary Care Mortality database, Medway Public Health Intelligence team

Figure 1 Number of deaths from suicide and events of undetermined intent of Medway residents by method and sex 2014-2018



Source: Primary Care Mortality database, Medway Public Health Intelligence team

3. Overview of the suicide prevention programme in Medway
 - 3.1. A range of initiatives have been implemented to reduce the number of suicides and attempted suicides in Medway. This section provides a brief overview of these projects.
 - 3.2. A helpline called 'Release the Pressure' is available at any time for anyone in need of support and delivered by Mental Health Matters (MHM). Mental Health Matters is jointly commissioned by Kent and Medway CCG and Medway Council. Callers access online or telephone support from trained counsellors to prevent mental health crisis. The helpline is promoted through an extensive social marketing campaign which provides posters, leaflets and promotional products. The volume of calls to the helpline is monitored and averages at around 2000 per month. The most recent data shows that 78.8% of contacts reported their wellbeing to have been maintained or improved as a result of calling the helpline. 5.4% of the overall contacts were signposted, the majority of these were to the Kent and Medway NHS Partnership Trust crisis team.
 - 3.3. A crisis text service managed by Shout was introduced in April 2020. Support is available by texting the word MEDWAY to 85258. Messages are responded to by trained volunteers and supervised by mental health clinicians.
 - 3.4. A free Suicide Awareness training programme has been delivered by Maidstone Mind. In Medway, 401 people have received training since November 2018. A total of 14 courses were delivered between November 2018 and March 2020. From April 2020 until July 2020 the training has been delivered online via zoom. Those attending the training have found positive benefits including an improvement in knowledge of suicide signs and risks, increased confidence to support someone at risk of suicide and improved awareness of helpful resources and services.
 - 3.5. Time to Change is a national programme that aims to reduce stigma around mental health in the population. Medway is a regional Time to Change HUB and it is hosted by Medway Council and co-ordinated by Porchlight. A key element is to develop 'Champions'. These are people with lived experience of mental health problems who campaign to change the way people think and act about mental health. In Medway, 83 Champions have registered with Time to Change national Database. Another key element of this project is 'The Bright ideas Fund' which aims to encourage champions or the organisations that support them to delivery projects which spread the Time to Change message wider across the community.
 - 3.6. Adolescent Self-Harm support: This has included the establishment of a dedicated officer focusing on supporting self-harm and establishing a self-harm support service within Medway Hospital A&E. In addition, there has been a self-harm strategy for Medway produced, the delivery of self-harm training, development work aimed at raising awareness in local schools. A resulting element from this work has been setting up a self-harm working group that meets on a quarterly basis.

- 3.7. Workplace support: this work has involved utilising existing workplace health teams in high risk industries such as construction, transport and agriculture to deliver suicide prevention messages. Mental Health First Aid/Connect 5 training has been delivered and a “train the trainer” process has been incorporated to ensure sustainability. Windmill training is enabling businesses to develop suicide prevention policies using the Public Health England and Business in the Community toolkits. In the spring of 2020, a new suicide prevention co-ordinator for workplaces was established as part of current funding.
- 3.8. The STP launched ‘The Saving Lives’ Suicide Prevention Innovation Fund to fund new or emerging programmes with innovative ideas designed to prevent suicides across Kent and Medway. The fund totalled just under £27,000 in grants for Medway projects for 2019/20. In Medway, projects have included:
- Recruitment of BAME Mental Health Ambassadors to highlight issues surrounding mental health and stigma at local youth clubs and schools. This was delivered by Medway Diversity Forum. The project supported BAME young people with mental health conditions and suicidal thoughts through social activities. It reduced stigma by raising awareness of effective mental health treatment, giving confidence to sufferers to ask for help, informing them about what community resources are available and importance of self-help. The amount of funding for this project was £3,000
 - Talk Club: Community based suicide prevention initiative targeting men within Medway. This was delivered by the Sunlight Development Trust. It involved the delivery of a community-based suicide prevention initiative targeting men in Medway, normalising male mental health issues, and reducing stigma. It identified a variety of high-quality resources relating to male mental health and wellbeing to be made available to Talk Club participants. The amount of funding for this project was £2,000
 - Intra Arts: An arts club for young people at risk of self-harm and suicide aged 15-24. This project works at improving self-esteem and resilience amongst young people at risk of suicide and self-harm. It also aims to reduce isolation reduced amongst the group of high-risk individuals. The funding for this project was £6800
 - Student Life: This is a young person led, multi-platform project that collaborates with schools, colleges and universities. It invites young people to write varied content for a monthly, cross-county print magazine, website and social media. This project has resulted in young people volunteering as Mental Health Ambassadors and graduating Mental Health First Aid training and Suicide Awareness training. There has also been an increase in the number of signposting referrals around mental wellbeing support. The amount of funding for this project was £15,000 across Kent and Medway.
- 3.9. A pilot project for a Real Time Surveillance System for suicide prevention is in development. It is being undertaken in partnership with Kent Police. The aim

is to monitor deaths by suicide in near real time and co-ordinate timely national and local suicide prevention efforts.

4. Risk management

- 4.1. The overall risk management of this project has been undertaken by the Kent and Medway STP.

5. Financial implications

- 5.1. There are no direct financial implications for Medway Council. This programme of work has been supported by external funding from NHS England. Should the NHS not provide additional funding, alternative options will need to be sought in order to deliver effective programmes in Medway.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1. There are no direct legal implications for Medway Council arising from this report.

7 Recommendations

- 7.1. To Health and Wellbeing Board are asked to note the contents of the report.

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Appendices

None

Background papers

None