

Preventing suicide in Kent and Medway: 2021-2025 Strategy

In order to reduce suicide and self-harm in Kent and Medway as much as possible; we are adopting the six priorities from the national suicide prevention strategy and adapting them for our local circumstances. We are also adding a seventh priority highlighting the system leadership ambitions within the Strategy.

1. Reducing the risk in high priority groups

We will continue to promote the Release the Pressure social marketing campaign, including the 24-hour helpline and the new text support service.

Where funding allows, we will support innovative approaches to reduce suicide and self-harm amongst high-risk groups.

We will ensure more integrated and effective support for individuals with both mental health and substance misuse conditions.

We will offer more effective and sustained support for individuals who self-harm.

We will continue to offer a range of free to access suicide prevention or mental health training.

We will also work with all relevant partners on specific projects to reduce the risk of suicide and self-harm in high-risk groups including but not limited to:

- Middle aged men.
- People with previous suicide attempts / self-harm.
- People known to secondary mental health services.
- People who misuse drugs and alcohol.
- People who are impacted by domestic abuse.
- Children and young people (see separate strategy).
- New high-risk groups as identified by real time suicide surveillance.

2. Tailor approaches to improve mental health and wellbeing across the whole population

We will continue to monitor the impact of Covid-19 on the mental health and wellbeing of the population.

We will develop and implement a Kent and Medway Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health.

We will continue our integrated and multi-level approach to reducing suicides within the higher and further education communities in Kent and Medway.

We will develop increased support for individuals with problematic debt.

We will also work with all relevant partners to improve the mental health and wellbeing in high-risk groups including but not limited to:

- LGBTQI+.
- Military and veterans.
- People with learning disabilities.
- Ethnic and religious minorities.
- Individuals impacted by family breakdown.
- Prisoners and other people in contact with CJS.
- Families of people who self-harm.
- Health and care staff (those who have worked throughout the pandemic)
- Young women (particularly pre- and post-natal).
- Children and adults with neuro-development disorders.

3. Reduce access to the means of suicide

We will strengthen our Real Time Surveillance System, ensuring we work with partners, such as Kent Police, Network Rail, KCC and Medway Council Highways, Highways England and others to identify, intervene and respond to high-risk locations and means.

4. Support research, data collection and monitoring

We will review the latest available statistics and evidence about suicide and self-harm.

We will conduct regular analysis of our Real Time Suicide Surveillance, which will give us the ability to design targeted and evidence-based interventions.

We will conduct or commission bespoke research into emerging or high-risk topics.

5. Support the media in delivering sensitive approaches to suicide

We will work with local, national and social media outlets to promote positive stories about mental health and help-seeking behaviours.

We will monitor media coverage of incidents and remind journalists of the Samaritans' guidelines for reporting on suicide.

We will ask editors and reporters to amend inappropriate reporting.

6. Provide better information and support for those bereaved by suicide

We will commission a new Support Service for People Bereaved by Suicide.

We will also continue to work closely with the charity Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide with the objective of increasing the number of groups there are available in Kent and Medway.

7. Demonstrate system leadership and quality improvement across the system and within services

We will continue to develop and strengthen the multi-agency suicide prevention networks.

We will continue to adopt a whole systems approach to suicide prevention.

We will work with commissioners and service providers to improve access to high quality service (for example, through the Community Mental Health Transformation Programme).

We will design and implement a 'Learning from Suicide' system and structure.

We will encourage all partners to play their part in suicide prevention.