

Committee	Dated:
Health and Wellbeing Board	14/06/2019
Subject: Suicide prevention in the City of London	Public
Report of: Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
Report author: Claire Giraud, Strategy Officer, Department of Community and Children's Services	

Summary

In 2017, the City of London Corporation established a multi-agency suicide prevention group, in accordance with best practice recommendations, and published a Suicide Prevention Action Plan containing numerous initiatives aimed at reducing the number of suicides in the Square Mile. This report provides an update on the suicide prevention action plan as well as on the number of attempted suicides and suicides occurring in the City of London.

Suicide figures for the City should be interpreted with caution, as they are extremely low – this means that any variations may not be statistically significant (i.e. the figures may be due to chance fluctuation); and additionally, recording practices have changed during the reporting period, which may impact upon the figures.

Recommendations

Members of the Committee are asked to:

- Note the progress made on the Suicide Prevention Action Plan
- Note the suicide figures in the City of London.

Main Report

Background

1. Suicide is the act of intentionally ending one's own life. It is often the end result following a complex range of risk factors, mental illness and significant negative life events; however suicide is preventable, rather than an inevitable event. In the UK, suicide is one of the most common causes of death in people under the age of 50, with 5,821 reported people dying in this way in 2017. It is estimated that each suicide further impacts between 6 and 60 people. Within the UK, suicide shows significant gender and social inequalities, and is associated with stigma for families affected by it.

2. Over the last 5 years, a number of key policies and reports have been published to improve suicide prevention nationally and locally. In the City, a local audit, suicide prevention plan and multi-agency suicide prevention group was established in accordance with best practice recommendations.
3. Public Health England (PHE) recommends several priority action areas to include in local suicide prevention plans:
 - reducing risk of suicide in men
 - preventing and responding to self-harm
 - mental health of children and young people
 - treatment of depression in primary care
 - acute mental health care
 - reduce suicides at known 'high risk' locations
 - reducing isolation
 - bereavement support for those affected by suicide

Overview of the Square Mile as a whole:

4. Between January 2017 to the end of October 2018, there had been a total of 18 suicides, with a total of 270 attempted suicides.

Between January 2017 to the end of October 2018, there had been a total of 128 incidents whereby the subject had contemplated suicide or had suicidal thoughts*

5. A Mental Health Triage Nurse attended 183 incidents during the last 12 months. As a result, an estimated 63% of S136 detentions were avoided.
6. There have been some issues with receiving feedback from hospitals regarding the outcome of the mental health assessments after S136. It is intended that City Police officers will be more proactive about liaising with hospitals for outcome information before incidents are closed off in future.

Emerging Trends at the end of 2018:

Temporal and Locations:

7. Individuals have come to notice on Saturday through to Tuesday, highlighting weekends and the beginning of the week to have the highest peaks. There is little pattern in relation to the time of day. There is a slight increase (56%) during Night Time Economy hours (6pm – 6am).
8. Suicide figures remain steady in line with seasonality, until the new year where they decrease. Suicides peak during October and July, followed by February, November and August. Attempted suicides peak during January, May and July.

9. A large proportion continue to occur on bridges, with a small minority of incidents occurring on the street and at hospital. It has been noted that better visibility on bridges may have an impact; as a result, Bridge House Estates will be putting up lights soon, hoping to assist in deterring individuals from attempting suicide.

Demographics at the end of 2018:

10. Age range was predominantly mid 20's
11. Gender: 67% of victims were male.
12. Home Address: The majority travelled into the City to try and take their lives
13. Q2 and 3 data as well as January and February 2019 police recorded data are presented below (please note that timely data from the coroner was not available for this report):

Month	Quarter	Suicide	Attempt Suicide	Contemplating Suicide
Jul-18	2	Under 5	8	9
Aug-18	2	0	11	8
Sep-18	2	Under 5	6	Under 5
Oct-18	3	0	11	7
Nov-18	3	Under 5	11	6
Dec-18	3	0	9	5
Jan-19	4	0	9	6
Feb-19	4	Under 5	6	Under 5

14. From looking at this data, it appears that progress has been limited; however, this trend must be taken with caution.
15. Some of the patterns observed in the above data can be attributed to improved reporting practices - for example, no attempted suicides were recorded from Jan - Sep 2017, whereas more accurate reporting from Autumn 17 to present shows a downward trend.
16. Additionally, the presence of the Street Triage Team has allowed engagement with individuals who might not otherwise have been picked up, and recorded as contemplating suicide.
17. In terms of the actual numbers of suicides, there has been a slight downward trend, although this is not statistically significant. As suicides generally rise in periods of economic and political uncertainty, it is good to see that the City of London has not seen a corresponding rise, and this may be attributable to the actions of the Suicide Prevention Partnership.

Recommendations:

18. Continue to use the Mental Health Triage Nurse to assist in reducing the number of Section 136 detainments. It has proved successful so far with 63% of incidents avoiding S136 (figures calculated for last 12 months).
19. Continue regular patrols on bridges (with higher attendance on London Bridge) during Night Time Economy hours, but mainly between 10pm and 1am.
20. Continue regular patrols during the summer period and ensure the City of London Police officers are aware of increased suicide/attempt suicide during the summer months.
21. City of London Police to continue their involvement with mental health campaigns and charities to help reduce the risk of suicide.
22. FIB to continue recording figures for 'contemplating suicide' to provide the bigger picture for mental health and suicide.

Action Plan Summary

23. Overall, 41 actions have commenced since the launch of the action plan, of which 6 are completed, 32 are in progress.

RAG Status Key and Summary

Status of Actions	
Major Problems	1
Minor Problems	2
In Progress/ongoing	33
Completed	6

24. Significant milestones include:

- The street triage pilot where NHS nurses accompany the City of London police on call out at peak time has secured funding for a second year. The service now runs seven nights a week and has been found to reduce incarceration by 40%, saving police time and resources.
- The success of the Dragon Café in the City which runs on every other Wednesday at Shoe Lane library – the café offers various wellbeing activities such as journal writing, massages, etc, for City residents and workers, Shoe Lane library staff have reported increased footfall on the days during which the café operates. Three-quarters of visitors (76%) agreed or strongly agreed that attending helped to improve their mental wellbeing.
- A tailored three hour suicide prevention training course for City workers and businesses provided by the Samaritans through the Business Healthy network. Feedback has been extremely positive; the training sessions take place three times a year and are always at capacity.

25. The one action not progressed as originally envisaged is:

- *To put cameras on City of London Bridges to allow fast identification of which Bridge a person is on if they call, with monitoring at high risk times - One Safe City is transitioning to a new programme called secure city. This work has been delayed as the transition occurs due to lack of resources in the police. There is no current timeline for when this work will be complete but a separate report on the matter is being brought to this meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board.*

26. A brief summary of key developments under each of the six themes identified in the Suicide Prevention Action Plan is provided below. These themes are: Reduce the risk of suicide in key high risk groups; Tailor approaches to improve Mental Health in specific groups; Reduce Access to the means of suicide; Provide Better information and support to those bereaved or affected by suicide; Support the media in delivering sensitive approaches to suicide and suicidal behaviour; support research, data collection and monitoring.

Theme One: Reduce Risk of Suicide in key high-risk groups.

27. This theme aims to reduce the risk of suicide for young and middle-aged men and women drawing on and enhancing the assets, strengths and skills already present within the City of London community.

28. A key initiative is to support City of London businesses to achieve the London Healthy Workplace Charter award and to comply with HSE Stress Management Standards and NICE Guidance: this work is spearheaded by the environmental health team in Port Health and Public Protection who have a wealth of expertise in this subject.

29. The City promotes a 24/7 crisis hotline with a marketing campaign targeting primarily male residents and City workers (the Release the Pressure campaign).

Theme Two: Tailor Approaches to improve Mental Health in specific groups.

30. The actions in this theme aim to tailor approaches to improving the mental health of children and young people in the City of London

31. The City also commissioned suicide prevention training specific to raising awareness of the risks to children and young people. City schools' staff were trained in Mental Health First Aid in May 2019 and will be trained in suicide prevention in September 2019.

32. The City's social care team has devised a training module to help parents feel competent in protecting their children from harmful suicide-related content online by raising awareness of e-safety education and good practice in creating a safer online environment for children and young people (as compiled by UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS).

Theme Three: Reduce access to the means of suicide.

33. This theme looks at how to reduce the opportunities people have to commit suicide in the City of London.

34. One focus area has been to replace the signage on the lifebuoys on the City of London Bridges to contain the message 'dial 999 and ask for the Coastguard'.
35. The City has been working with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and the London Borough of Southwark to get permission to place Samaritans signs on Tower and Southwark Bridges.
36. The City's Suicide Prevention Working Group officers have engaged with Transport for London, the British Transport Police and network rail to identify opportunities for further prevention of suicide at their locations.

Theme Four: Provide better information and support to those bereaved or affected by suicide.

37. The actions in this theme aim to ensure that those who are bereaved or affected by suicide to feel informed and supported throughout their experience— for example, The City has been promoting Public Health England 'Help Is At Hand' document to key partners and made it available in City libraries.

Theme Five: Support the media in delivering sensitive approaches to suicide and suicidal behaviour.

38. The actions in this theme aim to ensure that the media report on suicide and suicide behaviour sensitively, taking into account guidance and support from other stakeholders.
39. The City has been sharing the 'Samaritans' Media Guidelines for Reporting Suicide with City Corporation, City Police and NHS media teams and various media outlets to ensure that they are aware of the sensitive nature of suicides.
40. The City has promoted Business in the Community's "suicide post-vention toolkit for employers" to the Business Healthy network.

Theme Six: Support research, data collection and monitoring.

41. The City has worked with the local Coroner in order to aid accurate data collection and aid the development of targeted suicide prevention strategies.
42. The City of London has developed an overarching data sharing agreement to allow the sharing of personal level suicide data between partners including the London Ambulance Service, British Transport Police, City of London Police and the City Corporation.

Conclusion

43. The plan has moved forward since its creation and many of the actions are either complete or in progress.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Suicide Prevention Action Plan for 2017–20

Claire Giraud

Strategy Officer – Department of Community and Children’s Services

T: 020 7332 1503

E: claire.giraud@cityoflondon.gov.uk