

Committee: Health and Wellbeing Board	Date: 29 January 2016
Subject: Suicide Prevention Action Plan	Public
Report of: Director of Community and Children's Services	For Decision

Summary

This report introduces the City of London Suicide Prevention Action Plan and gives an overview of the progress of 'The Bridge Pilot' initiative to reduce the number of suicides that occur from London Bridge.

In January 2014 the HM Government Preventing Suicide in England 'One Year On'¹ report was published which called on local authorities to:

- Develop a suicide prevention action plan
- Monitor data, trends and hot spots
- Engage with local media
- Work with transport to map hot spots
- Work on local priorities to improve mental health

As a result a City of London Suicide Prevention Action Plan has been developed. The action plan sets out six priority areas for actions and how each of these will be delivered.

One key action resulting from the plan is 'The Bridge Pilot'; a joint initiative between the City of London Corporation, City of London Police, the Metropolitan Police and the Samaritans to reduce the number of suicides that occur from bridges within the City of London by training.

Recommendations

The Health and Wellbeing Board members are asked to:

- Approve the Suicide Prevention Action Plan
- Review the progress of the actions within the Suicide Prevention Action Plan annually.
- Note the progress of 'The Bridge Pilot' and endorse this initiative.

Main Report

Background

1. Following the transfer of public health from the NHS to local government in April 2013, suicide prevention became a local authority led initiative involving close collaboration with the police, clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), NHS England, coroners and the voluntary sectors.

2. Suicide is one of the top twenty leading causes of death for all ages worldwide. Suicide is a major issue for society and a serious but preventable public health problem. Suicide can have lasting harmful impact- economically, psychologically and spiritually on individuals, families, and communities. While its causes are complex and no strategy can be expected to completely prevent suicide, there is much that can be done to ensure that we reduce the likelihood of suicide and to ensure support is available for people at their most vulnerable.
3. The City has three potential population groups who are at risk of committing suicide: residents who live in the City; those who work in the City; and those who travel to the City with the intention of committing suicide from a City site, but have no specific connection to the City.
4. Data from the coroner confirmed that there were 34 completed suicides in the City of London in the five years from 2009 to 2014. Seven of these were residents of the City of London and 27 were non-resident.
5. The most common method is drowning in the Thames (32%), followed by falling from a height (26%). Nationally hanging is the most common method in both men and women. This inconsistency with national data is likely due to the preponderance of structures (tall buildings and bridges crossing the River Thames) in the City providing the means to commit suicide. Drowning as a method of suicide had a particular increase in recent years.

Current Position

6. A task and finish group including stakeholders from the Metropolitan Police, the City of London Police, Public Health, The Clinical Commissioning Group, Port Health and Public Protection, the City of London coroner and the Samaritans was set up to aid the development of the City of London Suicide Prevention Action Plan. The group signed off the plan on 3rd November 2015.
7. The action plan outlines the ways in which City of London public health and local partners aim to work towards a reduction in suicides among the resident and worker populations of the City of London as well as those who may travel to the City of London with the intention of committing suicide.
8. The City of London Suicide Prevention Action Plan (attached as Appendix Two to this report) outlines actions across six priority areas for action taken from the National Suicide Prevention Strategy (NSPS) with accompanying recommendations which have been tailored to address our local needs.
9. Overall objectives of this action plan are to are to:
 - Reduce Suicide rates in the at risk populations (residents, workers and those who may travel to the City to commit suicide)
 - Provide better support for those bereaved or affected by suicide
10. The following areas have been identified as priority areas for action in the City of London

- Reduce the risk of suicide in key high risk groups
 - With a focus on young and middle-aged men
- Tailor approaches to improve mental health in specific groups
 - With a focus on people with untreated depression and children and young people
- Reduce access to the means of suicide
 - One action to come of this priority area is 'The Bridge Pilot' which is described in more detail below
- Provide better information and support to those bereaved of affected by suicide
- Support the media in delivering approaches to suicide and suicidal behaviour
- Support research, data collection and monitoring.

11. A monitoring template is to be developed by the public health team to track the progress of the implementation of the action plan. A group consisting of those organisations leading on actions from the plan will meet every six months and a lead officer from each organisation will be asked to give an update. An update report on the action plan progress with a review of suicide data in the City of London will be produced for the Health and Wellbeing Board annually.

The Bridge Pilot

12. The Bridge Pilot is a joint initiative between the City of London Corporation, City of London Police, the Metropolitan Police and the Samaritans to reduce the number of suicides that occur from bridges within the City of London. From London Bridge in 2014 there were 52 calls for help and eight who jumped. One of the recognised approaches to reducing suicide at iconic sites is to encourage help seeking behaviour such as signposting to support.

13. Six signs with the Samaritan's free phone number have been placed on London Bridge (shown in appendix 1). Further to this the Metropolitan Police have put together a training package to be rolled out to frontline staff free of charge. The training will be a 6 hour session and will address the stigma of suicide and encourage approaching people who are at risk.

14. Westminster and Lambeth Councils have been contacted regarding involvement in this pilot. We are planning that Samaritans signs encouraging help seeking behaviour will also be placed on Waterloo and Hungerford bridges as these bridges see the highest numbers of attempted suicides.

15. The Bridge pilot will begin in February 2016 and it will last 12 months to see if this impact levels of suicide attempts in from London Bridge. The rate of suicide calls and incidents will be monitored and compared to baseline figures from 2014 and 2015.

Conclusion

16. The Suicide Prevention Action Plan has been developed in conjunction with local stakeholders and sets out the City of London's intention to reduce suicides rates in residents, workers and those from outside the square mile.
17. The Bridge Pilot is an outcome of the Suicide Prevention Action Plan and it will begin in February 2016.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Sign which has been placed on London Bridge
- Appendix 2 – City of London Suicide Prevention Action Plan

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¹ Department of Health, Preventing suicide in England: One year on, First annual report on the cross-government outcomes strategy to save lives, 2014