

Committee: Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub Committee	Date: 02 November 2015
Subject: Suicide Prevention Action Plan Draft Summary	Public
Report of: Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information

Summary

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 is in the process of being developed. The action plan sets out six priority areas for actions and how each of these will be delivered.

One action resulting from the report 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

This report provides an overview of progress of the City of London Suicide Prevention Action Plan and 'The Bridge Pilot' and shows that we are on track to sign off the report on 3 November 2015.

Recommendation

The Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub Committee are asked to note the contents of this report.

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. Because a high proportion of the people who commit suicide within the City of London boundary are not City of London residents data collection is difficult.
4. An ONS study found seven cases of suicide in the City of London between 2009 and 2013 however the City of London coroner confirmed there were in fact 27. Including data from 2014, there were 34 completed suicides in the City of London in the five years from 2009.
5. Of the 34 suicides that occurred in the City of London between 2009 and 2014 seven were residents of the City of London and 27 were non-resident.
6. Men are three times more likely than women to commit suicide in the developed world. This is reflected in the City of London where 73.5% of suicides were men between 2009 and 2014.
7. 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 2014, 57% of suicides in the City were completed using this method.
8. 35% of those who committed suicide between 2009 and 2014 were aged between 25 and 34. In total 70% of those who committed suicide were aged between 25 and 54. 12% were over 54 and 18% were under 25.

Current Position

9. The City of London Suicide Prevention Action Plan is currently in draft form awaiting sign off from the task and finish group on 3 November ²⁰¹⁵. Prevention of suicide calls for working across all sectors at local and national level. The task and finish group includes 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.
10. The draft 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.
11. The City of London Suicide Prevention Action Plan 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.

12. Overall objectives of this action plan are to are to:

- Reduce Suicide rates in the three at risk population in the City of London (residents, workers and those who may travel to the City to commit suicide)
- Provide better support for those bereaved or affected by suicide

13. 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.

The Bridge Pilot

14. 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 alone 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.

15. Six signs with the Samaritan's phone number are to be placed on London Bridges by the end of October for a trial period of six months to see if this impact levels of suicide attempts in the Thames. The rate of suicide calls and jumps will be monitored and compared to the baseline figures.

Conclusion

16. Good progress is being made in developing the City of London Suicide Prevention Action Plan which is to be signed off on 3rd November 2015 by the task and finish group.

17. The Bridge Pilot is an outcome of the Suicide Prevention Action Plan and the signs are due to be in place week commencing 26th October 2015.

Appendices

Appendix 1:

Draft sign to be placed on City of London Bridges:



Partnership wording here

samaritans.org

A registered charity

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References

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