

REPORT TO: Health Policy & Performance Board
DATE: 28th November 2017
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, People
PORTFOLIO: Health and Wellbeing
SUBJECT: Halton Suicide Prevention Strategy : Update
WARD(S): Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present an update on progress in implementing the Halton Suicide Prevention Strategy (2015-2020), attached at **Appendix 1**.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION that the Board:

- 2.1
- a) Notes the content of the report and associated appendix; and
 - b) Supports the continued implementation of the strategy, recommendations and actions.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Suicide is a major public health issue, and a major cause of years of life lost. Each suicide in Halton is an individual tragedy and a terrible loss to our local families and communities. The numbers of people who take their own life in Halton each year are low however those ending their own life should be viewed as the tip of an iceberg and locally levels of distress and suicide attempts will be much higher.

3.2 In times of economic and employment insecurity rates of suicide often increase. This trend has been observed nationally following the 2008 financial crisis when after a decade of falling suicide rates have started to rise. A small fluctuation in the number of suicides across Cheshire and Merseyside suggests that national trend may be being observed locally. The number of deaths by suicide in Halton remains low but there is still need for continuing vigilance and action around suicide prevention.

Halton Suicide Prevention Strategy 2015-20

3.3 Suicide is not inevitable and can be prevented. The Halton Suicide prevention strategy was written in partnership and sets out evidence-based actions, based upon national policy, research and local insight, to prevent suicide and support those bereaved or affected by suicide in Halton.

3.4 The strategy is supported by a detailed action plan outlining actions, responsible leads, timescales and outcomes to be achieved and has recently been updated as part of a mid-way review. The plan is monitored by the Halton Suicide Prevention Partnership, and outcomes reported to the Safer Halton Partnership, Health and Well Being Board and all other relevant bodies.

3.5 The strategy includes background information which sets out the policy context in which the strategy has been developed, considers the factors that influence why a person may take their own life and reviews the evidence on suicide prevention, outlines what we know about suicide in Halton and sets out actions to reduce the risk of suicide in Halton.

Halton Suicide Prevention Strategy - vision, areas for action and outcomes

3.6 Our vision is for a community where:

- We understand the root causes of suicide through effective collection and analysis of key information
- We have created a "listening" culture where it is okay to talk about feelings and emotional wellbeing
- We pro-actively communicate so that those directly and indirectly impacted by suicide know what support is there for them
- We provide readily accessible support through services working in partnership with other agencies and organisations
- We take positive, co-ordinated action to tackle prioritised root cause issues in order to prevent suicides

3.7 In order to achieve this vision and based upon national policy, research evidence and local insight 6 areas for action have been identified and agreed. All 6 areas for action have equal priority:

1. Improve the mental health and wellbeing of Halton residents
2. Promote the early identification and support of people feeling suicidal
3. Reduce the risk of suicide in known high risk groups
4. Reduce access to the means of suicide
5. Provide better information and support to those bereaved or affected by suicide
6. Support research, data collection and monitoring

Halton Suicide Prevention Partnership

3.8 The Halton Suicide Prevention Partnership will monitor outcomes related to high level indicators included within the Public Health and NHS Outcomes Framework this includes:

- the suicide rate
- self-harm rates
- excess under 75 mortality in adults with a serious mental illness

3.9 The Halton Suicide Prevention Partnership is a multi-agency group with representation from both Adult and Children's Services at the Council, the Police, service providers, the voluntary and community sector and other key partners:

HBC - Public Health	HBC – Elected Members
Halton Clinical Commissioning Group	Cheshire Police
HBC – Children's Commissioners	Cheshire Fire
HBC – Emergency Planning	Halton Housing Trust
Riverside College	Crime Reduction Initiative (CRI)
5 Borough Partnership NHS Foundation Trust	HBC - Early intervention team
HBC – Health Improvement Team	Halton Citizens Advice Bureau
MIND	Age UK
Samaritans	HBC – Adult social care

Suicides across Halton

- 3.10 Due to the small numbers, there is a need to suppress individual data and therefore we are unable to report on the number of deaths by suicide in some circumstances.

The results of the annual audit of deaths by suicide in Halton highlight that in 2016 there were 12 suicide inquests with 7 resulting in a Suicide verdict and 5 reporting a narrative verdict. This is not dissimilar to previous years. The number of deaths by gender is equally distributed for men and women and the average age of death was 40 years of age with the greatest proportion of deaths occurred in those aged 45 – 54 years of age. The suicide rate in Halton (9.1 per 100,000 population) is slightly lower than the England average (10.1 per 100,000).

- 3.11 Data collected as part of the annual audit of deaths by suicide identify key risk factors which are reflective of national data. People who died as a result of suicide were more likely to have experienced social, economic or health issues such as:
- Divorce / family break up
 - Unemployed / out of work
 - Previous or current mental health diagnosis
 - Previous or current substance misuse
 - Previous experience of suicide in friends or family

Current Action

- 3.12 Halton is supporting the Cheshire and Merseyside 'No More Suicides' strategy and working across all 9 authority areas in Cheshire and Merseyside to implement the action planning which includes:
- Achieving Suicide Safer Communities status across Cheshire and Merseyside
 - Transforming care across health and social care systems to eliminate suicides
 - Support for those who have been affected by suicide
 - Developing a strong integrated suicide reduction network to provide oversight and governance
- 3.13 Locally the Halton Suicide Prevention Partnership action plan reflects our local vision and is working towards addressing the No More Suicides outcomes. Some examples of work includes:
- Rolling out suicide awareness and intervention training across multiple organisations, settings and profession
 - General awareness raising throughout the Borough aimed at professionals and the general public
 - Development of a network of trained facilitators to engage wider public conversations about suicide, awareness and prevention.
 - Development of mental health hubs in Widnes and Runcorn
 - Commissioning of a Postvention services which provides support and advice for those who have been affected by a suicide
 - Improving support, signposting and support available at key identified locations throughout the borough
 - Supporting the development of crisis intervention services
 - Supporting the development of Multi-Disciplinary Team approaches and dual diagnosis for those affected by mental health and substance misuse issues

3.14 Key Achievements

September has seen 2 Mental Health Hubs set up taking place each month in Widnes and Runcorn:

Runcorn Shopping City (Main Square), the first Thursday of every month, 9.00am – 2.00pm.

Widnes Market (Community Stall opposite circular D.I.Y stall), the third Wednesday of every month, 9.00am – 2.00pm.

The Hubs give Halton residents a direct link to the many different services out there who can provide you with help and support to manage your mental health. They encourage people to talk about mental health, come along and speak to those who can help. Hub staff will be able to signpost residents to appropriate services if needed.

- 3.15 Halton, in partnership with Cheshire and Merseyside Authorities and the Coroners Offices have set up a Real Time Surveillance System for suicide. This provides an early warning mechanism to let local areas know if the coroner has been informed of a possible suicide from one its residents. The system will enable public health to assess if there is any sudden change in trends, identify any potential linked cases or risk factors and put appropriate further prevention mechanism in place as appropriate. The data received in the surveillance system will be confidential, and cannot be used as a gauge to the overall annual suicide rate, as data receive will be for possible and not confirmed suicides.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Strategy sets the context for partnership working to prevent suicides and support those bereaved or affected by suicide in Halton. Suicide prevention is a national, regional and local priority. In 2012 the Government published its all-age suicide prevention strategy *Preventing Suicide in England: A cross-government outcomes strategy to save lives* which has informed the development of our local strategy. Locally the *Halton Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2012- 2015* identified the prevention and early detection of mental health conditions as one of its 5 priority areas for action. Suicide prevention activity is identified as a key action towards this priority.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The actions identified within the strategy are delivered through existing resources identified within each partner's budget or through attracting funding from external agencies and grant sources.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

Children and young people are identified as a high risk group within the strategy. The strategic actions aimed at promoting the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in Halton, preventing bullying within our local schools, ensuring the early identification and support of children and young people suffering from emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties, raising awareness of the signs of suicide among staff who work with children and young people in Halton, and ensuring support is available in a time of crisis.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

Suicide is a major public health issue, and a major cause of years of life lost. The economic impact of suicides is also high in terms of lost earnings and potential. It has been estimated that the average cost of a working age adult in England ending their own is £1.67million.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

This strategy forms a central strand of meeting the commitments to prevent suicide and support those bereaved or affected by suicide locally.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Suicide prevention is an important aspect of promoting community safety. Locally we have a known suicide hot spot in the Silver Jubilee Bridge (the Runcorn and Widnes Bridge). Responding to suicide threats and attempts places a considerable burden on the time and resources of partners locally. It is also recognized that the police are often the first responders to a suicide attempt. The strategy outlines actions related to promoting community safety which include the continued support and strengthening of Operation Emblem (a "street triage" service where a police officer and Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN) attend incidents where concerns for safety are identified), reviewing best practice evidence related to reducing the risk of suicide at the Silver Jubilee Bridge, advising on suicide prevention interventions planned for the new Mersey Gateway Bridge and other large new developments within the Borough.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

As part of the strategy, there is a commitment to reduce access to the means of suicide in the planning of new large developments within the Borough.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 The key risk is a failure to reduce the suicides among Halton residents. This risk can be mitigated through the regular review and reporting of progress and the development of appropriate interventions where under-performance may occur.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 The Strategy specifically aims to meet the needs of all residents in Halton to prevent suicides and ensure the adequate support of those bereaved or affected by suicide locally.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

- 9.1 None under the meaning of the Act.