



Northumberland

County Council

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

12 FEBRUARY 2022

Northumberland Suicide Prevention Strategy 2021-2025

Report of: Liz Morgan Interim Executive Director of Public Health and Community Services

Cabinet Member: Cllr Wendy Pattinson

Purpose of report

This report describes progress to date to reduce suicide in Northumberland and sets out priorities for continuing to help reduce suicide over the period 2021-2025. Following approval of the strategy (attached at Appendix 1), a detailed action plan will be produced.

Recommendations

The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

- Comment on progress made to date in preventing suicide.
- Approve the revised suicide strategy 2021-2025.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to all priorities in the corporate plan as all can contribute to preventing suicide.

Key issues

Suicide remains a national and local public health priority. It has an immense impact on family, friends, colleagues, and the wider community at both an emotional and economic level.

There were 93 suicides in Northumberland between 2018-20, a rate of 11.7 per 100,000 population higher (but not significantly) than the national average of 10.4 per 100,000 nationally and lower than the regional value of 12.4 per 100,000.

Northumberland follows national trends but has a higher number of years life lost in persons overall and in males, reflecting the incidence amongst young males. The last two years have brought incredible challenges and change to each of our lives, with disruption to our way of living and day to day life. Whilst for some people, this change has been manageable, many people have reported feelings of worry, anxiety, frustration, and loneliness either directly or indirectly because of the pandemic - enhanced by the uncertainty that an unprecedented global event like this brings

COVID-19 has brought different challenges for diverse groups of the population, for example, education and employment opportunities have changed, which have left people feeling overwhelmed to maintain their standards of work while adapting to different learning and working environments.

Whilst mental health services, statutory and voluntary, have seen increased demand, the standardised mortality rate in England in 2020 was 10.0/100,000, statistically significantly lower than the 2019 rate of 11.0/100,000. The decrease is likely to be driven by two factors; a decrease in male suicides at the start of the coronavirus (COVID 19) pandemic, and delays in death registrations because of the pandemic. This data does not give any indication as to what the longer term impacts might be but we do know that age standardised suicide rates in the north east in 2020 (13.1/100,000) was nearly twice the rates of London (13.3/100,000).

Background

Suicide is often the end point of a complex history of risk factors and distressing events, but there are many ways in which services, communities, individuals, and society can help prevent suicides. A strategic approach to suicide prevention should be multifaceted to secure the best outcomes for the population. Northumberland's strategy outlines a shared approach to preventing suicide and has a clear ambition to identify vulnerability in people and across environments; ensure effective collaborative working across agencies; and work alongside related national and local strategies.

Since 2019 Northumberland Multi-Agency Suicide Prevention and Better Mental Health Strategy Group has overseen a prevention-focused approach to improving the public's mental health shown to make a valuable contribution to achieving a fairer and more equitable society. The Strategic Group is supported by an Operational Group.

The Northumberland Zero Suicide Ambition Strategy reflects the framework of the national cross-government strategy *Preventing Suicide in England. A cross government outcomes strategy to save lives.*¹ It uses the same six priority areas of action outlined in the national strategy. These priorities are to:

1. Reduce the risk of suicide in high-risk groups
2. Engineer approaches to improve mental health in specific groups
3. Reduce access to the means of suicide
4. Provide better information and support to those bereaved or affected by suicide
5. Support the media in delivering sensitive approaches to suicide and suicidal behaviour
6. Support research, data collection and monitoring

Using this framework, the strategy identifies the key issues we need to understand and manage to support vulnerable individuals who are at risk of suicide. The plan will help secure a whole system approach in identifying, understanding, and preventing suicide and

¹ HM Government/DH (2012). Preventing suicide in England. A cross-government outcomes strategy to save lives. HMG/DH. 10 September 2012.

self-harming behaviours across high-risk groups and improve resilience across populations.

The report also details progress made including work with the community and voluntary sector, Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group, the NHS, Police, Ambulance Service and other partners.

Appendices

1. Northumberland Suicide Prevention Strategy 2021-2025.
2. Northumberland JSNA Mental Health Chapter Zero Suicide Ambition June 2021.

Implications

Policy	As part of the council's Health in All Policies approach, all policies and programmes should consider physical and mental health as part of the development process
Finance and value for money	Analysis estimates that each suicide costs the economy around £1.67 million (based on 2009 prices). This is based on written evidence from DHSC as part of a parliamentary interim report on suicide services in 2016. Available from: http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/health-committee/suicide-prevention/written/37662.html
Legal	None
Procurement	None
Human Resources	Anyone can undertake basic suicide prevention training available free of charge https://www.zerosuicidealliance.com/training
Property	N/A
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) No	Other EIAs suggest that suicide is more common in men, those who have undergone gender reassignment, some BAME groups, those in more deprived communities and some other groups. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Zero Suicide Ambition topic indicates that the evidence between suicide and socio-economic status is inconclusive in Northumberland.
Risk Assessment	N/A
Crime & Disorder	N/A
Customer Consideration	The suicide strategy is focused on prevention, responding to and meeting the needs of residents at higher risk.
Carbon reduction	N/A
Health and Wellbeing	This strategy is focused on preventing suicide as part of a wider public mental health action plan to promote and improve mental wellbeing.
Wards	This strategy applies to all residents in all wards

Background papers

None

Report sign off.

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	Liz Morgan
Chief Executive	Daljit Lally
Portfolio Holder(s)	Wendy Pattison

Author and Contact Details

Pam Lee, Public Health Consultant
Email: pam.lee@northumberland.gov.uk