

3 October 2016

Review of Suicides and Mental Health and Wellbeing in County Durham – Scoping Report

Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive

Purpose

1. To provide the Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a scoping report in advance of a scrutiny review looking at suicide rates and Mental Health and Wellbeing in County Durham.

Background

2. Members of the Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee indicated their intention to carry out a focused piece of work on suicide rates and mental health and wellbeing in County Durham at its meeting held on 4 July 2016.
3. The 2015/16 Quarter 4 Performance Management report indicated that the suicide rate (deaths from suicide and injury of undetermined intent) per 100,000 population for County Durham is 13.3 which is higher than both the National figure of 8.9 and the North East figure of 11. During consideration of the Quarter 3 Performance Management report and refresh of the Adults Wellbeing and Health OSC 2016-17 Work programme, members expressed concern around the suicide rates within County Durham and suggested that a review on suicide rates in County Durham and mental health and wellbeing be undertaken.

National Policy and Research

4. In September 2012, the Government published “Preventing suicide in England: A cross-government outcomes strategy to save lives”, a new strategy intended to reduce the suicide rate and improve support for those affected by suicide. The strategy sets out key areas for action; states what government departments will do to contribute; and brings together knowledge about groups at higher risk, effective interventions and resources to support local action.
5. The strategy sets out overall objectives to :-
 - Achieve a reduction in the suicide rate in the general population in England; and
 - Provide better support for those bereaved or affected by suicide.

6. There are six key areas for action to support delivery of these objectives:-
 - (i) Reduce the risk of suicide in key high-risk groups;
 - (ii) Tailor approaches to improve mental health in specific groups;
 - (iii) Reduce access to the means of suicide;
 - (iv) Provide better information and support to those bereaved or affected by suicide;
 - (v) Support the media in delivering sensitive approaches to suicide and suicidal behaviour, and
 - (vi) Support research, data collection and monitoring.

7. There is also a national mental health strategy, published in 2011, entitled “No Health without Mental Health”. The implementation framework sets out what local organisations can do to turn the strategy into reality, what national organisations are doing to support this, and how progress will be measured and reported. This is vital, because suicide prevention starts with better mental health for all - therefore “Preventing suicide in England: A cross-government outcomes strategy to save lives” has to be read alongside that implementation framework.

Local Policy

8. The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) 2014-30 is an overarching plan that underpins all other strategies and policies. The SCS includes within its Altogether Healthier priority theme, the high level objective to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of the population. An important element of this objective is to reduce suicides through the implementation of the Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Strategy. This includes a local workplace health programme which will support employers to promote healthy workplaces, and tackle the causes of mental ill health at work. Access will be improved for individuals into support and recovery, through early provision of activities such as supported employment, housing support, and debt advice. The Strategy commits that the Council and partners will work to reduce stigma and discrimination towards people who experience mental health problems through awareness raising campaigns.

9. The Council Plan 2016-19 also identifies that mental health improvements and suicide prevention are key priorities for the county, particularly as suicide rates in County Durham are higher than the national average. The plan states that the Council “will work with partners to improve mental health in County Durham and address the priority areas including suicide prevention, stigma and discrimination and recovery.”

10. The County Durham Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2019 includes a strategic objective to “Improve the mental and physical wellbeing of the population” as well as a key outcome to reduce self-harm and suicides. Key strategic actions set out within the Health and Wellbeing Strategy include a refresh of the Public Mental Health Strategy for County Durham, including the Suicide Prevention Framework and working in partnership through the Crisis

Care Concordat action plan to improve outcomes for people experiencing mental health crises in the community and in custody.

Reviews by Other Authorities

11. There are a number of local authorities that have undertaken review activity in respect of suicide prevention in recent years. Appendix 2 provides details of some of these reviews and links to the review reports and recommendations.

Terms of Reference

Rationale

12. The rationale for the Review stems from the Adults Wellbeing and Health OSC concerns during consideration of Quarterly Performance Management reports which highlighted that suicide rates for County Durham are above the National and North East average figures. Members decided to examine the performance information in more detail and also assess the measures that the Council and its partners have put in place to ensure improved mental health and wellbeing and which aim to reduce the incidence of suicides within County Durham.

Scope

13. The Review will examine the incidence of suicide within County Durham and consider the key findings and outcomes of the Director of Public Health's 2016 report "Deaths by suicide, suspected suicide and undetermined injury 1st January 2015 to 31st December 2015". The Review will examine historical data regarding suicide rates within County Durham and also seek to profile suicides within County Durham.
14. The Review will examine the policies and procedures that the Council and its partners have put in place to ensure improved mental health and wellbeing of the population of County Durham and how they aim to reduce the incidence of suicides within County Durham.

Objectives

15. The aim of the review is to examine the incidence of suicides within County Durham; to identify the Council and partners' policies and action plans which have been developed to improve the mental health and wellbeing of the population of County Durham and to investigate how intervention and support can be improved following key lines of enquiry:
 - What policies and procedures does Durham County Council have in place to help, support, prevent and intervene where vulnerable adults and young people have identifiable mental health and wellbeing problems and are at risk of suicide?
 - How reliable/accurate is the performance data and what does it tell us about suicides in this area compared to regional and national data?

- What services are available in the community for people with anxieties or mental health problems to talk to people and how accessible are these services?
- How can awareness of suicides and the availability of support and advice for people with have mental health and wellbeing problems be improved?
- What steps are being taken by the Council and its partners to address some of the potential root causes of suicide?
- What services are available to support families of suicide victims in coping with their loss?

Approach

16. In undertaking the proposed review, the Working Group will aim to hear from a full range of stakeholders including representatives from the NHS and criminal justice system. The group will review existing policies and plans which seek to address the increase in suicides which have been reported with on performance reports and which identifies Durham as having significantly worse statistics for the incidence of suicide than both the North East region and England.
17. The working group will review data in respect of the incidence of suicide and closely examine the key actions of the Council and its partners aimed at improving mental health and wellbeing and reducing suicides across County Durham.
18. The working group will also consider evidence and information from support groups within the community which provide an opportunity for those family and friends impacted by suicide to discuss the effectiveness of mental health and wellbeing services and also how lessons learned from suicides can be shared.

Membership

19. The Review Group will consist of members of the Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and be chaired by Councillor John Robinson.

Reporting

20. The Review Group will report back to the Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and the Health and Wellbeing Board on its findings and recommendations.

Timescale

21. The review will commence in October 2016 with the aim of a report being presented to Cabinet by April 2017.

Recommendation

22. Members of the Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to:

- a. Provide comment and approve the draft terms of reference for the review of suicides and mental health and wellbeing in County Durham.
- b. Agree the project plan attached at appendix 3.
- c. Receive periodic verbal updates on the review as it progresses.

Background Papers

- Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) 2014-30
- Council Plan 2016-19
- County Durham Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2019

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – None

Staffing - None

Risk - None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – None

Accommodation - None

Crime and Disorder – None

Human Rights - None

Consultation – None

Procurement - None

Disability Issues – None

Legal Implications – None

Background Reading

Reviews into Suicide prevention by other Local Authorities

London Borough of Camden

Suicide Prevention Scrutiny Panel – July 2004

https://www.camden.gov.uk/ccm/cms-service/stream/asset/final_report.pdf?asset_id=425499

Sunderland City Council

Public Health, Wellness and Culture Scrutiny Panel – Policy Review 2014/15 – Strategies for the prevention of suicide.

<http://www.sunderland.gov.uk/Committees/CMIS5/Document.ashx?czJKcaeAi5tUFL1DTL2UE4zNRBcoShgo=gos6LyNp7GTkrvd9sp5gO8ypa%2FvodCob73MqMlggXc9YhKNTDvDBtw%3D%3D&rUzwRPf%2BZ3zd4E7lkn8Lyw%3D%3D=pwRE6AGJFLDNlh225F5QMaQWctPHwdhUfCZ%2FLUQzgA2uL5jNRG4jdQ%3D%3D&mCTIbCubSFfXsDGW9lXnlg%3D%3D=hFfiUdN3100%3D&kCx1AnS9%2FpWZQ40DXFvdEw%3D%3D=hFfiUdN3100%3D&uJovDxwdjMPoYv%2BAJvYtyA%3D%3D=ctNJFf55vVA%3D&FgPIIEJYlotS%2BYGoBi5olA%3D%3D=NHdURQburHA%3D&d9Qjj0ag1Pd993jsyOJqFvmyB7X0CSQK=ctNJFf55vVA%3D&WGewmoAfeNR9xqBux0r1Q8Za60lavYmz=ctNJFf55vVA%3D&WGewmoAfeNQ16B2MHuCPMRKZMwaG1PaO=ctNJFf55vVA%3D>

Lincolnshire County Council

Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire – May 2015 – Review of Suicides and deliberate self-harm with intent to die within Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

<http://lincolnshire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s10182/Review%20of%20Suicides%20and%20Deliberate%20Self-Harm%20with%20Intent%20to%20Die%20within%20Lincolnshire%20Partnership%20NHS%20F.pdf>

Lancashire County Council

Health Equalities Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task Group – May 2002 – Suicide prevention in Lancashire

<http://www3.lancashire.gov.uk/council/meetings/displayFile.asp?FTYPE=A&FILEID=1817>

Devon County Council

Health and Adults Services Scrutiny Committee – January 2011 – Suicide Prevention

<http://democracy.devon.gov.uk/documents/s1812/Suicide%20Prevention.pdf>

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