

[Date]

Oxfordshire Mental Wellbeing and Suicide Prevention Update

Purpose / Recommendation

1. **The Health Improvement Board is asked to note the report and consider further steps that could be taken to promote mental wellbeing and suicide prevention across Oxfordshire.**

Background

2. The factors leading to someone taking their own life are complex. Suicide is both a public health concern and everyone's business. Some subgroups are more exposed and vulnerable to unfavourable social, economic, and environmental circumstances. These subgroups, interrelated with ethnicity, gender and age, are at higher risk of mental health problems.
3. A new national suicide prevention strategy is being finalised (previously published 2012¹) and will reflect new evidence and national priorities for preventing suicides across England, including actions to tackle risk factors and targeted actions for groups of concern. The strategy is expected in the Autumn 2023.
4. Oxfordshire has a wide ranging, well-established multi-agency group that is dedicated to preventing suicide and self-harm. There are over 20 organisations who have all made a commitment to both the development and delivery of the [Oxfordshire Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention strategy](#)². These range from public and private sectors to national and local charity sector organisations.
5. The strategy has four focus areas: Safer Oxfordshire Communities, Safer Professionals and settings, Accessible support for those effected, Strong integrated prevention network. This is underpinned by four action areas:
 - Real-time surveillance and analysis,
 - Identifying and reducing high-risk groups and behaviours,
 - Supporting after suicide and self-harm, including living experience,
 - Promote resilience and wellbeing.
6. In 2021³, there were 5,583 suicides registered in England and Wales, equivalent to a rate of 10.7 deaths per 100,000 people; while this was statistically significantly higher than the 2020 rate of 10.0 deaths per 100,000 people, it was consistent with the pre-

¹ [Suicide prevention in England: fifth progress report - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/544442/suicide-prevention-in-england-fifth-progress-report-2021.pdf)

² <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/adult-social-and-health-care/OxfordshireSSHPreventionStrategy.pdf>

³ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/suicidesintheunitedkingdom/2021registrations>

coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic rates in 2019 and 2018. *NB: Data for 2022 published in September 2023 from ONS.*

7. The fall in the suicide rate in 2020 was likely to have been driven by a decrease in male suicides at the start of the coronavirus pandemic, and delays in death registrations because of the pandemic.
8. In Oxfordshire there were 181 suicides during 2019-2021, 138 were male and 43 were female. This is a rate of 10.0 per 100,000 population compared to 10.6 in South-East and 10.4 in England. Data⁴ is provided by districts and numbers do fluctuate per location. In 2021 there were 18 deaths in Vale of White Horse, 16 in Cherwell, 13 in South Oxon, 9 in West Oxon and 9 in Oxford City. The age groups 30-49 years have the higher number of suicides.

Key Areas

There are a number of established partnership groups supporting Suicide Prevention and Self-Harm and Mental Health Prevention across the county, through strategies, frameworks, action plans alongside insights and views of local residents. The information below provides some detail on what is happening, but it is not an exhaustive list.

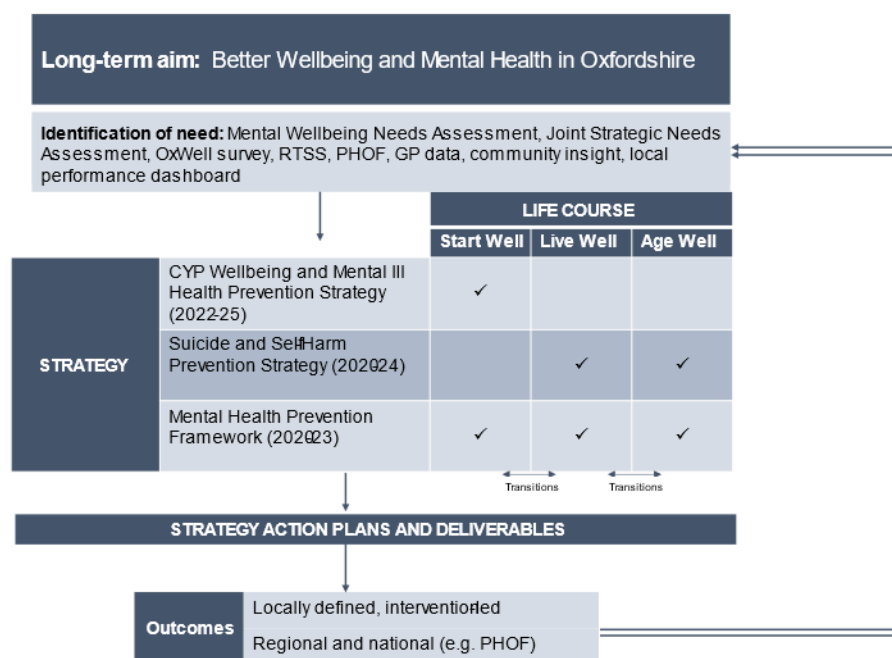
9. The **Oxfordshire Mental Health Prevention Framework**⁵ aims to promote good mental health and wellbeing. The Prevention Concordat Partnership is responsible for overseeing and driving forward the framework and its action plan. Its four focus areas are 'Informed partnerships', 'Insight and evaluation', 'Confident Professionals', and 'Resilient Communities'. The Mental Health Prevention Concordat Partnership Group was established in May 2020 bringing together partners from across local health, voluntary sector organisations, and county and district council partners. The group coordinates and delivers mental health prevention activity across the county.
10. **Oxfordshire Children Young People Emotional Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2025**⁶ focuses on both promoting emotional wellbeing, which can be understood as how people feel and function and deal with the ups and downs of everyday life, and on preventing mental ill health, which is defined clinically and includes depression and anxiety. It has four aims: provide early help and create supportive environments; develop a confident workforce; ensure positive transitions for 16-25 year olds; and improve access. There is a system action plan which includes provision of whole school approach for wellbeing, training on mental health and suicide prevention, digital support.

⁴ [Suicides in England and Wales by local authority - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandlife/articles/briefing-suicides-in-england-and-wales-by-local-authority-2019-and-2020)

⁵ <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/adult-social-and-health-care/OxfordshireMentalHealthPreventionFramework.pdf>

⁶ [Oxfordshires Better Wellbeing and Mental Health Strategy for Children and Young People SEPTEMBER 2020.pdf](https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/adult-social-and-health-care/OxfordshiresBetterWellbeingandMentalHealthStrategyforChildrenandYoungPeopleSEPTEMBER2020.pdf)

11. The county's three overarching strategies across the life-course are presented below.



12. **Oxfordshire's Mental Wellbeing Needs Assessment⁷** was published in December 2021 and provides a broad picture of mental wellbeing across Oxfordshire and the life course. It makes recommendations to understand local data and provide opportunities to improve mental wellbeing within our local communities.

13. **Healthwatch⁸** wanted to hear the views from working men on health and care. They surveyed men in Carterton in 2023. Men told researchers that it was getting easier to talk about health and wellbeing, particularly for the younger generation. Male friends and men in workplaces could be important in giving peer support for men to talk about health. Men did not always know where to turn for help and support and were not always aware of local services and what they offer. This insight is so valuable in suicide prevention and wellbeing promotion.

14. **West Oxfordshire District Council** conducted a children and young people needs assessment⁹ 2022 which asked questions on wider determinants for health and wellbeing. Information was collected from secondary school pupils covering a wide range of topics including mental health and is being used locally to provide support.

15. Oxfordshire schools and colleges have participated in the **OxWell Survey¹⁰** again in 2023. The survey is an online study that measures the wellbeing of school-aged children and young people, allowing us to learn about the many interconnected factors that might be influencing their health and happiness. The 2023 results are being analysed and shared with schools, school health nurses, mental health support teams in schools.

⁷ https://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/system/files/documents/MWBNA_Oxon_Dec21_forweb.pdf

⁸ <https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Men-in-Carterton-February-2023.pdf>

⁹ [Youth Needs Assessment - summary report for informal Cabinet Aug 2022.pdf \(www.oxfordshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/media/123456/YouthNeedsAssessment-summaryreportforinformalCabinetAug2022.pdf)

¹⁰ <https://oxwell.org/>

16. **The Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2023**¹¹ provides data on wellbeing at district levels as part of its Healthy Place Shaping Indicators. This shows in 2021/2022 South Oxfordshire had the highest percentage of people with a high anxiety score. West Oxfordshire had the highest percentage of residents reporting a low happiness score in 2021/2022.

Oxfordshire Suicide Prevention Group

17. Oxfordshire operates a **Real Time Surveillance** system between Coroners, Thames Valley Police and Public Health. The aim is to prevent suicides by reviewing up-to-date information which enables partners to mobilise and support individuals, local communities and target any messages to high-risk groups or high-risk locations. This provides a data-led approach to suicide prevention.

18. People who have been bereaved by suicide have used their experiences to lead the revision of a support guide to help others affected by someone taking their own life. This **Help is at Hand**¹² document is shared when police attend incidents and suicide is suspected.

19. Individuals bereaved by suicide are able to access help and support through the following organisations

- Oxfordshire Bereavement Charity **SeeSaw**¹³ provide support for families bereaved by suicide through early support, parent advice and support, 1:1 grief support for CYP and schools Support. SeeSaw have recently published their 'Finding the Words' booklet to support children when someone has died by suicide.
- **Amparo**¹⁴ provides emotional and practical support for anybody who has felt the impact of suicide. This is a joint approach across Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire to offer bereavement support and it is self-referral and the service was launched in 2022.

20. Below is a selection of some of the **suicide prevention initiatives** in 2023:

- Through the multi-agency group we were able to mobilise support for a Parish Council who wanted to come together and discuss ways to support wellbeing in the community. A meeting was held in the Village Hall following suicides within their local community. Colleagues from the District Council, Oxford Health, Samaritans, the local GP surgery, and Oxfordshire MIND attended to provide an overview of their work, support available and to answer any questions that arose.
- Oxfordshire County Council has partnered with R;pple¹⁵ to have their browser on all employee laptops providing a potentially life-saving tool in place for wellbeing. The charity was founded by Alice Hendy after losing her brother, Josh, to suicide at 21 years old. Josh had been researching techniques to take his own life through harmful internet searches. The tool works by

¹¹ https://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/system/files/documents/HPS_Wellbeing_indicators_2023.pdf

¹² [You are not alone: Help is at Hand for anyone bereaved by suicide - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/help-is-at-hand-for-anyone-bereaved-by-suicide)

¹³ [Finding the words | SeeSaw](#)

¹⁴ [About us - Amparo](#)

¹⁵ [R;pple Suicide prevention](#)

intercepting harmful content relating to self-harm and/or suicide through innovative technology to redirect users to mental health support if they are struggling to cope or in need immediate help.

- Thames Valley Suicide Prevention Network recently launched a website¹⁶ for carers and people going through a mental health crisis for ease of access to the right support and recovery. The website also provides a digital resource for professionals to support people in crisis. This resource was funded by NHS England and Health Education England. Members of Oxfordshire Suicide Prevention Multi-agency group were part of the development of this resource.
- The multi-agency group partnered with University of Birmingham to deliver a Suicidality in Care Givers webinar in spring 2023.
- Public Health are currently commissioning a mental wellbeing and suicide prevention training offer for frontline staff and volunteers in local communities starting by the end of 2023.
- University of Oxford have signed up to the University of Mental Health Charter¹⁷ which requires institutions to co-ordinate a staff and student mental wellbeing approach. Also University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes University are reviewing local arrangements using the national University UK Suicide - Safer Universities Guidance¹⁸.

Budgetary implications

National money to support suicide prevention does become available and this has been used locally to fund initiatives.

There will be a new round of Grant fund for Suicide Prevention Voluntary Community Social Enterprise organisations (VCSE): £10 million grant fund for suicide prevention VCSE organisations in England across 2023-24 to 2024-25. The funding is aiming to be launched the fund in the autumn.

Organisations can find out more by registering with the “Find a Grant” portal, if they are not already, so that they receive notifications once it is launched here

<https://www.find-government-grants.service.gov.uk/newsletter?href=%2F&searchTerm=>

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¹⁶ <https://tvsuicideprevention.uk/>

¹⁷ [University Mental Health Charter](#)

¹⁸ [Suicide-safer universities \(universitiesuk.ac.uk\)](#)