

## Health Improvement Partnership Board

27 May 2021

### Report on the Oxfordshire Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy to the May 2021 Health Improvement Board

#### Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to describe the work of the Suicide Multi Agency Group since the launch of the Oxfordshire Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy in March 2020.

#### Background

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.

In 2019, the suicide rate in England was 10.8 deaths per 100,000 population (a total of 5,316 deaths). This is consistent with the rate observed in 2018 (10.3 deaths per 100,000) and is the highest rate seen since 2000.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Oxfordshire Context*

The suicide rate in Oxfordshire in 2017-19 was 8.9 per 100,000 of population (all ages) compared to the England rate of 10.1 per 100,000. This is a slight increase from the rate observed in 2016-18 of 8.6 per 100,000.<sup>2</sup>

The suicide rate in Oxfordshire males is statistically similar to England with a rate of 14.9 per 100,000 in 2017-19. This is a slight increase on the previous year (2016-18) which showed a rate of 14.2. Among females in Oxfordshire, the rate of suicide per 100,000 in 2017-19 was 3.1, down from 3.2 in the previous year. Compared to a 4.9 per 100,000 population in England.

Oxfordshire has a wide ranging, well-established multi-agency group (MAG) 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. These range from public and private sectors, to national and local charity sector organisations.

The Oxfordshire strategy, based on national policy, combined with the local knowledge, insight and personal experiences, has four focus areas which are underpinned by four

<sup>1</sup> Ons.gov.uk. 2021. *Suicides in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics*. [online] Available at: <[Suicides in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/peopleandplaces/healthandsocialcare/deathsandmortality/suicidesinenglandandwales)> [Accessed 11 May 2021].

<sup>2</sup> (Public Health England), P., 2021. *Suicide Prevention Profile - PHE*. [online] [Fingertips.phe.org.uk](https://fingertips.phe.org.uk). Available at: <[Suicide Prevention Profile - PHE](https://fingertips.phe.org.uk)> [Accessed 11 May 2021].

action areas. The Suicide and Self-Harm (SSH) Prevention Strategy<sup>3</sup> sets out the long-term focus and commitment of the Suicide Multi Agency Group partners to reduce suicide and self-harm in Oxfordshire over the next 4 years. It represents the combined work of the Oxfordshire Suicide Prevention Multi-Agency Group combined with residents' views.

## Strategy Update

Below is a summary of the main achievements of the group in the first year since the launch of the Oxfordshire strategy. The work highlighted below is not exhaustive and there have been more achievements which have not been included here.

Real Time Surveillance System (RTSS) continues to monitor deaths by suspected suicide. The RTSS launched in 2016 through partnership working with Public Health, Thames Valley Police and the Coroner. Public Health receive weekly updates from the Coroner's Office on recent unexpected deaths which allows an early identification of patterns and surveillance across the County.

Through partnership working, Public Health delivered geo-targeted digital campaigns to raise awareness of support available for mental health and wellbeing in West Oxfordshire and Cherwell. These campaigns promoted support services for mental health and wellbeing using Facebook and Google adverts.

The Oxfordshire strategy has an objective to prevent suicides at public places. British Transport Police (BTP) have worked in conjunction with Network Rail to carry out a review of the rail line in Oxfordshire to determine if there were any mitigating actions which could be completed to make the rail line less accessible. Locations on the rail line which have historically been used to gain access for fatalities are frequently patrolled by officers, and Network Rail staff are encouraged to report concerns to the BTP.

Suicide and self-harm prevention training has been a key deliverable for the partners of the Suicide MAG with many focusing on delivering training to front line staff and volunteers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The format and type of training has varied across the county and varied by agency. The Samaritans have worked in partnership with the Archway Foundation, British Transport Police, HMP Bullingdon, Network Rail and Oxford Brookes University to offer online training workshops and training modules.

The pilot Thames Valley Suicide Bereavement Support Service (funded by NHS England) is being delivered by providers across Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB) in conjunction with Thames Valley Police. Oxfordshire County Council Public Health, on behalf of the BOB locality, are conducting an evaluation of the programme.

Local third sector partners of the Suicide MAG have continued to provide support for the mental health needs of high-risk groups throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Oxfordshire Mind provides a wide range of Wellbeing Services including peer support, psychoeducation & coping skills courses and the 'Benefits for Better Mental Health' service, offering benefits advice for service users.

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<sup>3</sup> Oxfordshire Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy (2020). [online] Available at: <[OxfordshireSSHPreventionStrategy](#)> [Accessed 11 May 2021]

- Rethink mental illness have continued to provide emotional support to carers of people living with mental illness, including suicide and self-harm.
- The Samaritans helpline became 24/7 over the first COVID-19 lockdown and continues to be accessible 24 hours a day.
- The Archway Foundation have provided telephone support for service users and pathways of referral for those at risk of suicide are in place.

Post incident support and employee wellbeing has been delivered by many of the Suicide MAG partners since the launch of the strategy. BTP and HMP Bullingdon offer Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) to staff post serious incident or fatality. Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust offer Post Incidence Psychological Support (PIPS) to staff. Also, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust and the Oxford Centre for Suicide Research have worked collaboratively to produce a resource for psychiatrists who experience the death of a patient by suicide.

### **Next Steps**

As we move into Year 2 of the strategy, we will continue to work with a wide range of partners to prevent suicide and self-harm in the community. We will monitor and review our actions as more information becomes available on the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups.

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