

One Devon Suicide Prevention Action Plan, March 2025

Report of the Director of Public Health

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

1) Recommendation

We recommend that the Health and Wellbeing Board supports the development of an Integrated Care System (ICS) level suicide prevention action plan. This plan would maintain local elements key to suicide prevention, as well as accountability to each Health and Wellbeing Board, and provide annual reports to the boards.

2) Background

A death by suicide is a tragic and traumatic event. Its most fundamental impact is the loss of the opportunity for that person to experience all that life holds. It is also a devastating bereavement for family and friends and the pain and grief can be immense and long lasting. The impact also extends into the wider community, workplaces and to all services involved.

The causes of suicide are complex and individual. There is rarely a single cause, but suicide is more often the result of a complex combination of risk factors and stressing events. These risk factors often reflect wider inequalities in social and economic circumstances.

Suicide can be preventable, but it is essential that the preventative approach addresses the complexity of the issue. No one organisation is responsible for suicide prevention and there are no simple measures to prevent suicide. Suicide prevention is broad and includes measures to improve emotional wellbeing, support for people with mental health issues (from early intervention through to crisis care provided by our NHS partners) and support for people who are bereaved by suicide.

Suicide prevention is everyone's business. A whole systems approach is required between national and local organisations, communities and individuals so that partners are working in collaboration towards the same priorities.

Our vision is for every suicide to be understood as a tragedy from which learning and understanding can be taken and that suicide prevention is everyone's business. Our system aspires to make Devon, Plymouth and Torbay suicide safer communities that builds personal and community resilience and supports people in times of crisis. We aspire to deliver a consistent reduction in the suicide rate for all areas of Devon, Plymouth and Torbay so that they are at least in line with the national average, with an ambition to be below the national average.

3) Proposal

Currently, each Local Authority in the Devon ICS area has its own suicide prevention action plan that is accountable to their respective Health and Wellbeing Boards. Each local plan is based on the strategic approach and priorities of the national [suicide prevention strategy for England: 2023 to 2028](#) and therefore there is significant overlap between plans. Each local authority already operates in collaboration with other system partners, including the NHS and voluntary, community and social sector (VCSE), to form the Suicide Prevention Oversight Group (SPOG) which meets quarterly and reports into the ICS Joint Forward Plan Suicide Prevention Priority.

In concert with Plymouth and Torbay Public Health, we recommend transitioning to a single, ICS wide, action plan with core system partners. This shared action plan would continue to be based on the national strategy but importantly it would maintain the focus on the local elements of each area based on local priorities.

The national suicide prevention strategy provides a platform and framework to facilitate a One Devon Suicide Prevention Strategy, with local collaboration across key partner organisations, including NHS, VCSE, employers and individuals.

There are several **benefits** of a single, ICS-wide, integrated plan, including:

- Coordination of interconnected actions through oversight of a single plan (including opportunities for joint work, mutual support and innovation). This will reduce duplication of effort and maximise impact of limited resources.
- Enhanced collaboration with core system partners (such as, but not limited to: Police, NHS Devon, DPT/LWSW, Devon Mental Health Alliance, Network rail, Highways England, Pete's Dragons). Many organisations that are key to suicide prevention work across larger footprints than local authorities. Engaging these organisations once, rather than three times across Devon ICS, would reduce the risk of duplication and improve engagement.
- Stronger collective voice in advising and identifying priority action with respect to suicide prevention within the Devon system.

Mapping of the three existing suicide prevention action plans from Plymouth, Torbay and Devon local authorities has demonstrated the feasibility of a shared plan and highlighted:

- All existing action plans align to the priority areas of the national [strategy](#).
- Some areas of local work are mentioned across all three plans, highlighting existing effective collaboration, but areas of duplicated reporting.
- Overlap in membership of locality suicide prevention partnerships placing increased demands on some roles and organisations who work across boundaries.

The Plymouth and Torbay Health and Wellbeing Boards approved this recommendation at their meeting earlier this month.

Local suicide prevention partnerships

Devon, Plymouth and Torbay each have local suicide prevention partnerships, which bring together a wide range of statutory and voluntary organisations to understand local challenges and influence suicide prevention activity. These partnerships have strong engagement from across the system and are crucial to local suicide prevention activity and making suicide prevention everyone's business. Under this recommendation, local suicide prevention partnerships will continue their efforts, whilst reviewing their priorities and identifying opportunities for shared learning and action across the region.

Precedent for a single plan across an ICS/region:

Dorset ICS has a single suicide prevention strategy that is a partnership between the three local authorities, NHS commissioners, service providers, VCSE organisations and other statutory services, which reports to their respective Health and Wellbeing Boards.

Locally, a similar example to the proposition would be the Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (DCIOS) Health Protection Committee which works collaboratively across the Devon and Cornwall health protection system, providing one set of strategic priorities and annual report to their respective Health and Wellbeing Boards.

An annual review of progress against the current DCC Suicide Prevention Action Plan will be circulated in the summer.

4) Options

- a) Preferred: Development of an ICS level suicide prevention action plan
- b) Alternative: Continuation of existing approach with each Local Authority in the Devon ICS area maintaining its own suicide prevention action plan that is accountable to their respective Health and Wellbeing Boards.

5) Representations

To achieve this goal, we are seeking to:

- Confirm core partnership member agreement to transition to a One Devon Suicide Prevention action plan.
- Seeking views on the approach to this transition from multiple to one plan, including identification of the essential stakeholders required to develop the plan, and to ensure that the governance processes for this action plan are robust.
- Under this recommendation, the local suicide prevention partnership will play a key role in the development of the shared plan, ensuring that local priorities are captured. Furthermore, the local partnerships will continue to provide a forum for delivery of the plan at a local authority level.
- The national suicide prevention strategy provides a platform and framework to facilitate a One Devon Suicide Prevention Strategy, with local collaboration across key partner organisations, including NHS, VCSE, employers and individuals.

6) Strategic Plan

The One Devon Suicide Prevention action plan aligns with the vision and priorities in the Council's Strategic Plan 2021-2025 (<https://www.devon.gov.uk/strategic-plan/>).

- **Improve health and wellbeing, including any public health impacts.** This includes improving mental health by improving access to mental health and wellbeing services and strengthening support for young people at risk of emotional or mental health problems, which is a core focus for this action plan.
- **Tackle poverty and inequality (address poverty, health and other inequalities)** Addressing inequalities is another core focus for the One Devon Suicide Prevention Action Plan. For example, a priority of the action plan is the delivery of a high-quality, accessible and equitable drug and alcohol service.
- **Help communities be safe, connected and resilient.** The proposed One Devon Suicide Action Plan, bringing together existing actions plans, to address upstream community level drivers of suicide.
- **Being ambitious for children and young people.** The action plan recognises the need for early intervention to support children and young people with existing mental health problems, in addition to addressing factors that improve stability and safety for children. This also includes addressing the impact of the harms associated with drugs and alcohol.

7) Financial Considerations

There are no specific financial considerations and no funding being requested.

8) Legal Considerations

There are no specific legal considerations.

9) Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change, Sustainability and Socio-economic)

There are no specific environmental impact considerations.

10) Equality Considerations

Equality, diversity and inclusion are considered and promoted throughout existing suicide prevention action plans, and this will remain a core priority in the proposed One Devon Suicide Prevention Action Plan.

11) Risk Management Considerations

No risks have been identified.

12) Summary

We recommend that the Health and Wellbeing Board supports the development of an ICS level suicide prevention action plan. This plan would maintain local elements key to suicide prevention, as well as accountability to each Health and Wellbeing Board, and allow vital work to continue to improve the health and wellbeing of the population.

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Appendix

The purpose of a One Devon Suicide Prevention Strategy is as follows:

- Communication:
 - Of our vision, aim, priorities and need
- Identifying tangible actions:
 - What we will do and who will do it
- Engagement:
 - Of our core partners
 - Of wider audiences to raise awareness, promote suicide prevention as everybody's business
- Accountability:
 - Using identified measures of progress and appropriate governance
- Evaluation:
 - Effective and meaningful measures of progress
 - Identifying lessons learned
 - Building case for next steps