

Devon Suicide Prevention Statement and Action Plan 2023-24

Introduction

Suicide can have a devastating impact upon families, friends, neighbours, work colleagues and whole communities. Being bereaved by suicide can increase the risk of a person ending their own life by suicide, therefore suicide prevention is a priority.

Suicide prevention is everyone's business. Whilst local government have the responsibility to produce and deliver an annual action plan to prevent suicide, they need to do this in partnership with Health, Blue light, statutory services, the voluntary sector and communities.

To achieve this, Public Health facilitate a Devon – wide Strategic Group to oversee the delivery of the Suicide Prevention Action Plan.

The national context

Devon takes the priority areas set by the national suicide prevention strategy for England to inform the local strategy and associated action plan.

A new updated National Suicide Prevention Strategy is expected during 2023, and when published any new priority areas will be considered for action locally, as appropriate.

The [existing National Strategy framework](#) outlines two principle objectives: reduce the suicide rate in the general population and provide better support for those bereaved or affected by suicide. This is reflected in the seven priority areas:

1. Reduce the risk of suicide in key high-risk groups
2. Tailor 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
7. Reducing rates of self-harm as a key indicator of suicide risk

[National suicide prevention planning guidance](#) developed by the Suicide Prevention Strategic Advisory Group (SPSAG) recommends that local areas should aim to tackle all seven areas of the national strategy in the long-term, with a co-ordinated system approach to priorities for short-term action set out below:

1. Reducing risk in men, especially middle age with a focus on economic factors

2. Preventing and responding to self-harm with a range of service for adults and young people in crisis, and psychosocial assessment for self-harm patients
3. Mental health of children and young people with joint working between health and social care, schools and youth justice, and plans to reduce drastic increase in suicide risk 15-19 years
4. Treatment of depression in primary care with safe prescribing of painkillers and antidepressants
5. Acute mental health care with safer wards and hospital discharge, adequate bed numbers and no out of area admissions
6. Tackling high frequency locations including working with local media to prevent imitative suicides
7. Reducing social isolation, for example through community based support, transport links and working with third sector
8. Bereavement support, especially for people bereaved by suicide

The [Samaritans and University of Exeter independent progress report](#) on local suicide prevention planning in England recommended that local areas should consider the following when refreshing or redeveloping their Suicide Prevention Plans:

1. Local Government Association (LGA) and the Association for Directors of Public Health (ADPH) should encourage local authorities to consider working with other local authorities to achieve economies of scale and maximise resources.
2. Local Authorities and multi-agency groups should avoid spreading their resources too thinly by trying to cover all areas of the national strategy too soon. Those at the earlier stages of their response may benefit from embedding and improving the quality of activity already taking place rather than implementing multiple new activities. Similarly, it may be helpful to begin by playing to local strengths and focusing efforts on strategy areas where there is already effective partnership working before tackling national strategy areas that prove more difficult to implement in the local context.
3. LGA and ADPH should support local areas to move past the preparatory stage of building partnerships and planning actions, and into delivery of actions themselves where this is not already happening.

Taking these principles into account Devon continues to work closely with Torbay and Plymouth to deliver suicide prevention activities across the system. Devon is also a member of regional and national networks to maintain connections with a wide range of colleagues, to benefit from shared learning relating to good practice and challenges in delivering suicide prevention activities.

The Local Context

One Devon: Integrated Care Board - Joint Forward Plan

[One Devon](#) is a collaboration of the NHS and local councils, as well as a wide range of other organisations like the voluntary sector, who are working together to improve the lives of people in Devon.

One Devon is developing a 5 Year Joint Forward Plan (expected to be published at the end of June 2023) which will set out how health, care and other support services will be planned and organised so that joined-up, preventive care is available to everyone in the population across the course of their lives.

Within the 5 Year Forward Plan there is a strategic goal for suicide prevention:

“Every suicide will be regarded as preventable, and we will work together as a system to make suicide safer communities across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay and reduce suicide deaths across all ages”

To deliver this strategic goal, there are four objectives:

- The Local Suicide Prevention Groups to each have a published annual action plan which sets delivery for the year
- Local Suicide Prevention Groups to report annually on their suicide rates and their annual action plan to their respective Health and Wellbeing Boards
- Public Health Teams to monitor suicide rates in their areas and for the whole ICB and compare it to the England average
- Local Suicide Prevention Groups to prioritise ongoing provision of suicide training programmes to continue to expand system knowledge of suicide and suicide prevention

These overarching objectives, along with the national strategy, help to inform the work of the Devon County Council Suicide Prevention Strategic Implementation Group.

Devon County Council Suicide Prevention Strategic Implementation Group

Suicide prevention is everyone's business - local Government have a responsibility to produce and deliver an annual Suicide Prevention Action Plan, working with key partners to do so. Public Health Devon co-ordinate a strategic implementation group to oversee the Action Plan.

The DCC Suicide Prevention Implementation Group (SPIG) is a collaboration of partners and stakeholders – working together to understand local needs and priorities, agreeing and taking action, as well as reviewing progress on delivery of the action plan.

Working with Public Health Teams

Devon routinely collaborates with colleagues in Plymouth & Torbay on system wide and population level suicide prevention programmes and initiatives. This enables us

to maximise the resources available to deliver these programmes and reduces duplication.

The key Devon-wide priorities are:

1. Supporting the Real Time Suicide Surveillance System
2. Delivering Suicide Prevention training for:
 - Communities – public & professionals
 - Primary care – GP practice clinical staff
3. Communications and media reporting

Working with Devon Partnership NHS Trust

As well as working with partners in Public Health, we continue to work closely with our local Mental Health Trust who take the lead on suicide prevention in community and acute mental health services.

The Safe from Suicide Team are working to address areas of the NCISH 10-point safety plan, with a particular focus this year around clinical risk, safer wards, and family involvement.

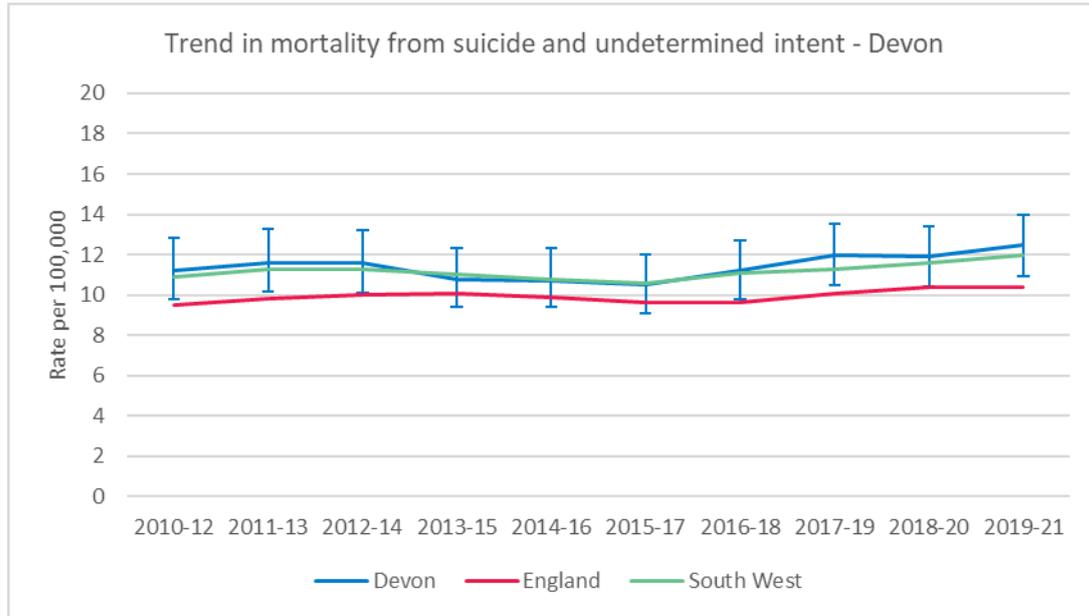


Source: NCISH

Looking Ahead: Devon Suicide Prevention in 2023-24

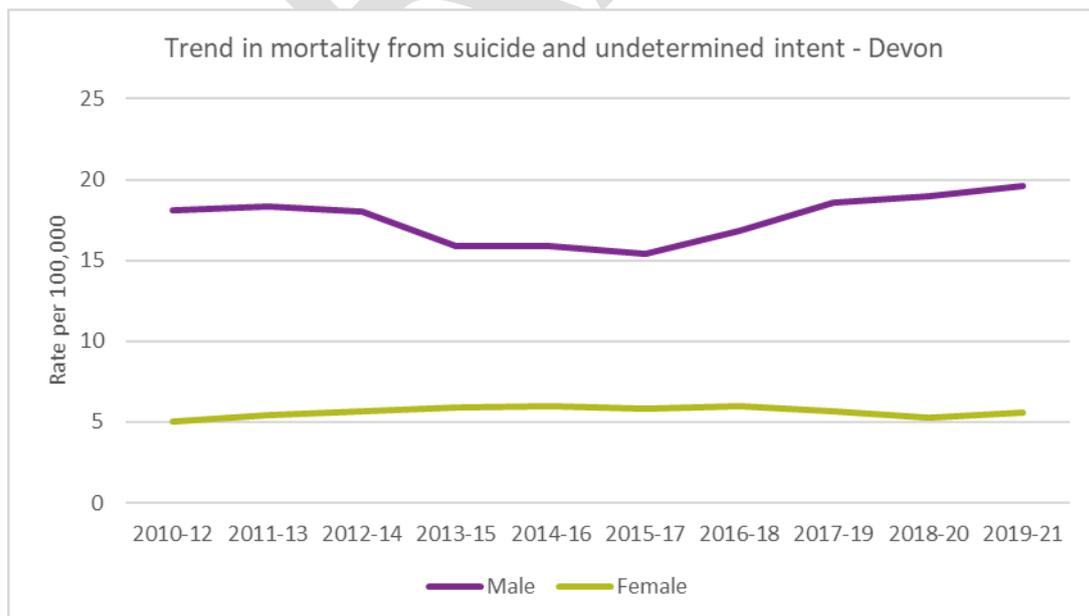
Understanding local trends: key data

In 2019-21 the suicide rate in Devon rose to 12.5 per 100,000 from 11.9 per 100,000 in 2018-20. The rate for Devon is statistically significantly higher than the rate for England, and is slightly higher than the rate for the South West.



(OHID, Fingertips, sourced from ONS data; Devon Public Health Intelligence Team)

In Devon, the male and female suicide rates are 19.6 and 5.6 respectively – male rates are 3.5 times higher than the female rate (2019-21)



(OHID Fingertips, sourced from ONS data; Devon Public Health Intelligence Team)

The Priorities for 2023-24

In Devon, there are **four key priority areas** where the suicide prevention strategic group will lead, collaborating to taking action:

1. Prevention of suicide in Public Places

Continuing to work with key partners across the system to identify and take action in relation to potential high frequency locations.

2. Suicide and Self-Harm in Children and Young People

Recognising the importance of the positive mental health and wellbeing for children & young people, we will continue to understand the ongoing impacts of the pandemic on children and young people, raising awareness of the identified range of risk factors.

3. At risk groups

Targeted approaches for at risk groups will be developed in response to identified local or national needs. At risk groups for priority action may include:

- Men – all ages, particular focus on children & young people, and middle-aged men
- Unemployed
- Inclusion health groups

4. Exploring the links between suicide and DSVAs

There is growing interest both locally and nationally in the links between domestic and sexual violence and abuse and suicide (in both victims and offenders). We will work to better understand local needs and in collaboration with local commissioners and providers identify opportunities for local action.

There are **three additional priority areas** where the strategic group will contribute to and enhance wider system work, identifying opportunities to target suicide prevention activity as needed:

- Financial Pressures and Debt

Evidence shows that suicide rates increase in times of economic downturn and debt is a recognised risk factor. We will work with key partner organisations to look at additional support around wellbeing/ Suicide Prevention for those experiencing financial pressures and/or debt.

- Loneliness and Isolation

Evidence shows that social isolation, as well as life events including relationship breakdown and bereavement, are risk factors for suicide. We will work with key

partner organisations to look at additional support around wellbeing and Suicide Prevention to target those who are/at risk of experiencing loneliness and isolation.

- Engagement with People with Lived Experience

People with lived experience of suicidality or bereavement from suicide have an important role to play in the delivery of our action plan. We aim to link with wider system work on establishing a Lived Experience Reference Organisation, to include suicide prevention as one of a range of expert by experience subject areas, rather than creating specific suicide prevention lived experience groups. In addition, we will engage with any existing lived experience groups and forums that relate to the agreed suicide prevention priority areas.

2023-24 Audit

It has been agreed that a full retrospective annual audit of Coroner files will not take place in 2023-24. However, if a need is identified for a sample or topic focussed audit in response to local needs then this will be progressed as appropriate.

An annual suicide prevention topic overview of key data & demographics is developed, and is comparable to similar audit overviews produced in Plymouth & Torbay

Next steps and actions

In order to progress action in the priority areas, we will continue to utilise resources from the NHSE funding and our own Public Mental Health Grant.

In addition, Public Health Devon have established an All Age Mental Health Group, which will help to ensure broader Public Mental health plans link to and complement the Suicide Prevention workstreams.

An action plan is set out below to describe key actions required for each priority area. This action plan will be monitored, reviewed and updated through the DCC Suicide Prevention Strategic Implementation Group, other relevant partnerships & forums, and task and finish groups as required.

Public Health Devon
July 2023

Devon County Council Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2023-24

1. Prevention of Suicide in Public Places				
National Suicide Prevention Strategy Priorities: 3,5,6 National Suicide Prevention Strategic Advisory Group priorities: 6				
Action	Outcome / measure	Target date	Leads & partners	Comments
1a Contribute to any response activity as a result of high frequency locations (HFLs) identified via Real Time Suicide Surveillance (RTSS)	Attend meetings – take action as required	Ongoing work: responsive in relation to identified HFLs	Public Health Devon RTSS partners As identified	Core business for Public Health Devon, and RTSS partners Response will be initiated as required.
1b Scope potential to use 'concern for welfare' data to develop mapping of locations that people in distress attend – to inform and target prevention and early intervention programmes	Data shared by key partners Mapping directly informs activity	March 2024	Public Health Blue light services Network Rail / BTP	
1c Continue to engage in local system response work relating to railways	Include Network Rail colleagues in SPIG Support local & system work and actions	Ongoing	Public Health Devon RTSS Network Rail	Network Rail included in SPIG membership from June 2023
1d Explore potential for 'Designing Out' – influence local planning guidance and decision-making	Good practice guidance shared with local Planning colleagues Guidance informing local decisions	March 2024	Public Health Devon DCC Planning	
2. Prevention of Suicide and Self-Harm among CYP				
National Suicide Prevention Strategy Priorities 1, 7 National Suicide Prevention Strategic Advisory Group priorities 2,3				
Action	Outcome / measure	Target date	Leads & partners	Comments
2a Continue to support the development of a PostVention resource for education settings – for use when there is a (suspected) suicide that impacts an education setting	Resource complete and launched for use	Autumn 2023	Pete's Dragons Public Health CAMHS Educational Psychology	This project was initiated in 2022-23, completion anticipated this year with ongoing review/refresh of resource as required following launch
2b Contribute to the Devon Schools	Content developed and	September	Public Health	Part of wider DSWP project work

Wellbeing Partnership – online resource for schools to access information, good practice and signposting on range of health and wellbeing topics	online for key topics i.e. self-harm, suicide, 5 ways to wellbeing	2023	Devon	
2c scope out need for Young People Connect 5 training offer and implement if agreed	Training offer available Training activity	March 2024	Public Health Devon	
2d continue to promote suicide prevention, emotional resilience and Connect 5 training to workforces supporting CYP	Training activity	Ongoing to end of March 2024	Public Health – Devon, Plymouth & Torbay SPIG members	Suicide prevention & emotional resilience funded across 3 x LA areas Position of all training from 2024-25 to be confirmed.
2e Utilise suicide prevention grant funding to support CYP targeted initiatives	Grant funding allocated – to include those aimed at CYP	End of March 2024	Public Health Devon Grant recipients	Grant funding is resourced by ICS wider NHSE prevention money – delivered across 3 x LA areas
2f utilise ‘support the supporters’ grant funding to support initiatives for those caring for CYP	Grant funding allocated	End of March 2024	Public Health Devon Grant recipients	Grant funding resources by Public Health Devon
2g ensure links to DCC suicide prevention web pages from relevant CYP websites	DCC web pages in place Links established with key partner websites	September 2024	Public Health Devon	
3. At Risk Groups National Suicide Prevention Strategy Priorities: 1, 2 National Suicide Prevention Strategic Advisory Group Priorities: 1				
Action	Outcome / measure	Target date	Leads & partners	Comments
3a Continue with focus on ‘men at risk’ – utilise risk factor data to inform prevention activity e.g. training offers, targeted communications	Training activity for workforces supporting men	Ongoing	Public Health Devon Relevant partners	Continue to learn from March 2023 engagement event
3b Continue to support system wide Men’s Mental Health work in partnership with Plymouth & Torbay	Specific work programmes & activities identified and implemented for 2023-24	Ongoing - March 2024	Public Health – Devon, Plymouth & Torbay	Ongoing work programme in collaboration with Public Health colleagues
3c Identify opportunities for suicide prevention work based on identified needs/challenges for Inclusion Health groups e.g. homeless, personality disorder	Improved understanding of suicide prevention for Inclusion Health groups. Specific work programmes	March 2024	Public Health Devon Devon Drug & Alcohol Strategic	

	& activities identified and implemented as appropriate		Partnership SCAA (?)	
3d Unemployment – learn from pilot work beginning in Plymouth to provide mental health support in Job Centres.	Use outcomes of pilot to inform action in Devon	March 2024 (& into 2024-25)	Public Health teams DWP/JCP	‘watching brief’ at present re Plymouth pilot, to review as needed
4. Exploring Links between DSVAs and Suicide National Suicide Prevention Strategy Priorities: 1, 6 National Suicide Prevention Strategic Advisory Group priorities 1,7				
Action	Outcome / measure	Target date	Leads & partners	Comments
4a Understand local needs – improving data & intelligence	Data & intelligence is available and used to inform local programmes	March 2024	Public Health Devon RTSS DSVA Commissioners & services	
4b Workforce training – promote uptake of suicide prevention training for DSVAs workforces, and DSVAs training for workforces supporting people with poor mental health & wellbeing	Training activity – by target workforce	March 2024	Public Health Devon DSVA Commissioners & services	
4c Plan & host a targeted engagement event – to bring together partners from suicide prevention, DSVAs and other key partners, to explore opportunities for intervention and action	Event planned & takes place Event outcomes captured & reviewed	Autumn 2023 March 2024	Public Health DSVA services	This will be a system wide piece of work across all 3 Public Health teams
5. Financial Wellbeing: debt, cost of living crisis, gambling National Suicide Prevention Strategy Priorities: 1 National Suicide Prevention Strategic Advisory Group Priorities: 1				
Action	Outcome / measure	Target date	Leads & partners	Comments
5a ensure suicide prevention training offers are targeted to workforces & communities supporting those who are or may be at risk of poor financial wellbeing	Training activity – inc by workforce	Ongoing	Public Health Devon	
5b ensure relevant financial wellbeing	Links to available within	September	Public Health	

resources are signposted to from suicide prevention pages	DCC suicide prevention webpages	2023	Devon	
6. Loneliness and social isolation				
National Suicide Prevention Strategy Priorities: 1				
National Suicide Prevention Strategic Advisory Group Priorities: 7				
Action	Outcome / measure	Target date	Leads & partners	Comments
6a ensure suicide prevention training offers are targeted to workforces & communities supporting those who are or may be at risk of social isolation	Training activity – inc by workforce	Ongoing	Public Health Devon	
6b ensure relevant financial wellbeing resources are signposted to from suicide prevention pages	Links to available within DCC suicide prevention webpages	September 2023	Public Health Devon	
7. Engagement with people who have lived experience				
National Suicide Prevention Strategy Priorities:				
National Suicide Prevention Strategic Advisory Group priorities:				
Action	Outcome / measure	Target date	Leads & partners	Comments
7a Scope ways of meaningfully engaging with and effectively supporting people who have lived experience to inform the work of the DSPSG	The experiences of people with lived experience demonstrably influences suicide prevention work	March 2024		NB – this area will be led as part of wider system work to establish Lived Experience Reference Organisation for DCC system, with suicide prevention as one aspect
7b Involve people with lived experience in development of suicide prevention 'It's Safe to Talk About Suicide' leaflet	Leaflet developed and shared for use	Autumn 2023	P/Health Devon Devon Partnership NHS Trust University of Exeter	The leaflet was developed approx. 10 years ago and is being reviewed and updated for re-print and circulation.