

Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan Update

Report of the Director of Public Health and Communities

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

1) Recommendation

To approve the DCC Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan for 2024-2027

2) Background / Introduction

Devon County Council Public Health are System Leaders (along with Plymouth CC and Torbay Council) for the delivery of a Suicide prevention programme. The Devon Suicide Prevention Implementation Group (SPIG) meets three times a year to set priorities, oversee and review delivery of the Suicide Prevention Action Plan.

The new National Suicide Prevention Strategy for England was published in autumn 2023, and the Devon County Council Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan adheres to the priority areas, groups and risk factors set by the national strategy. It is further influenced by local data via the coronial process and from our Real Time Surveillance data, to identify two additional priority groups and two additional risk factors in addition to those set nationally.

The long-anticipated publishing of the new National Strategy has provided clear national direction to inform local plans, and enabled confidence in producing a local three-year strategy and action plan. Prior to the current 2024-2027 DCC strategy and action plan, the SPIG had undertaken local annual reviews and updates while the work to deliver the new National Strategy was delayed.

3) Main Body / Proposal

The DCC Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan 2024 – 2027 is attached. It was discussed with the SPIG on 15th May 2024, and a draft circulated to SPIG for comment before being finalised in July 2024.

To inform development of DCC Strategy and Action Plan, a benchmarking exercise to review the local position against the National Suicide Prevention Strategy priority areas, groups and risk factors was undertaken. The outcome was positive, identifying that the majority were already embedded through previous iterations of the local Suicide Prevention Strategy & Action Plans. Many are maintained in the new Strategy as ‘business as usual’ or

for ongoing development, and there are some new priority groups and risk factors identified for local action.

The key priority areas for the DCC 2024 – 2027 Strategy are:

1. Improving data and evidence
2. Tailored, targeted support for priority groups (7 specific groups stated)
3. Addressing common population level risk factors (6 specific risk factors stated)
4. Promoting online safety and responsible media content
5. Providing effective crisis support
6. Reducing access to means and methods of suicide
7. Providing effective bereavement support (“postvention”)
8. Making suicide prevention everybody’s business

Specific priority groups:

- Children and young people
- All aged men – particular focus on middle-aged men
- People who have self-harmed
- People in contact with mental health services
- People in contact with the justice system
- Autistic and neurodiverse people
- Pregnant women and new mothers
- People who are unemployed
- Inclusion Health groups – particularly homeless and vulnerably housed

Specific priority risk factors:

- Physical illness
- Financial difficulty and economic adversity
- Harmful gambling
- Substance misuse
- Domestic abuse
- Social isolation and loneliness
- Bereavement
- Relationship breakdown

In addition to the draft Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action plan, a summary of updates from 2023-24 was prepared and shared at the 15th May meeting to reflect progress made by SPIG group members (attached). This will be published alongside the finalised Strategy and Action Plan.

4) Options / Alternatives

Brief details of alternative options considered and rejected (i.e. status quo, alternatives or different proposals)

N/A

5) Consultations / Representations / Technical Data

Members of the SPIG were invited to an Online meeting in May and the draft Action Plan has gone out to members for consultation. Members include Anchor institutions (health, local authority, prisons, educational establishments) the VCSE and people with lived experience.

6) Strategic Plan

Clearly explain how the proposal, scheme or policy aligns with the vision and priorities in the Council's Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025 - <https://www.devon.gov.uk/strategic-plan>

This includes:

- Be ambitious for children and young people -
The strategy prioritises reducing suicide among children and young people
- Tackle poverty and inequality (address poverty, health and other inequalities) -
The strategy prioritises people who are experiencing/at risk of financial difficulty and economic adversity; people who are unemployed; and other 'at risk' groups and population risk factors as set out above, in recognition that these factors increase the risk of suicide
- Improve health and wellbeing, including any public health impacts -
The strategy seeks to support initiatives and action that promotes the emotional health and wellbeing of 'at risk' groups. It also takes a 'suicide prevention is everybody's business' strategic approach to ensure universal raising of awareness about suicide and suicide prevention (and mental wellbeing) in local populations, to challenge stigma and increase knowledge and understanding.
- Help communities be safe, connected and resilient –
Suicide prevention supports the wider Safer Communities agenda, links into DCC Domestic Abuse strategies, and the Devon Drug and Alcohol Strategic Partnership, to collaborate towards an Avoidable Deaths approach.

7) Financial Considerations

Devon County Council (alongside Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council) have been in receipt of NHSE Transformation funding of £236,000 per year for three years. The funding started in July 2020, but due to Covid, there was a delay in activities. This has meant that we have been able to carry forward any underspend, however the funds will run out this year and there is no indication of any further funding from NHSE.

From April 2025, we will be reliant on funds from our Public Health Grant to continue a limited programme to support the delivery of our Action Plan.

8) Legal Considerations

There are no legal considerations

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

Not applicable

10) Equality Considerations

Suicide Prevention activities give due regard to the Equality Act 2010 and consider positive actions necessary to challenge and address discrimination while promoting equality of opportunity.

11) Risk Management Considerations

No risks have been identified.

12) Summary / Conclusions / Reasons for Recommendations

For information only.

Name

Director: Steve Brown

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities: Councillor Roger Croad

Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers

Nil.

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