Suicide Prevention

Context

In Scotland, suicide prevention activities are delivered locally through Choose Life, which was initially established in 2002. The Scottish Government’s Suicide Prevention Strategy 2013-2016 provides the national framework. The Scottish Government have confirmed a suicide prevention new action plan will be published in 2018.

Key points

- An average of two people per day die by suicide in Scotland.
- There were 728 deaths by suicide across Scotland in 2016, up from 672 in 2015.
- Scotland’s suicide rate is the second highest in the UK behind Northern Ireland.
- The suicide rate fell 17.8% between 2000-2004 and 2010-2014, but remains higher than the UK average, with 14.2 per 100,000 deaths in Scotland.
- In 2016, the suicide rate for men was more than two-and-a-half times than for women, and more than two and a half times higher in the most deprived areas than the least deprived. Men aged 35–54 are particularly at risk. The suicide risk is higher for people experiencing virtually all mental health problems, with many having had recent contact with the NHS prior to their death.
- Fifty nine per cent of those who died between 2009–15 had been prescribed a mental health drug in the year prior to their death; 7% had a mental health outpatient appointment in the 30 days before their death and 27% had attended A&E in the month prior to their death.
- Responses to crisis and distress are inadequate. People presenting in distress to emergency and health services too often receive a stigmatising or inappropriate response.
- Suicide prevention funding lacks transparency. Until 2009 suicide
prevention funding from central government to local authorities, to deliver the Choose Life Strategy, was ring-fenced. This is no longer the case, making it hard to track funding.

**SAMH calls for:**

- A new Suicide Prevention Strategy for Scotland to be published after a full public consultation.
- A national Scottish Crisis Care Agreement to be developed and enacted across the statutory, emergency and non-statutory sectors, with all local Health and Social Care Partnerships developing and implementing local delivery plans by 2019.
- Allied Health Professionals to be provided with suicide intervention training, both as part of core training and continual professional development.
- Transparency in funding for suicide prevention with local authorities publishing clear reports on their use of suicide prevention funding.
- Health and Social Care Partnerships to commission evidence-based, gender sensitive services, including peer support and activity based services, to tackle health inequalities impacting men and suicide. These should be targeted in areas of deprivation.
- National roll out of Community Triage following the successful pilot in NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. Community triage provides police officers direct access to mental health professionals to support decision making and reduce inappropriate detentions of people in psychiatric distress or crisis.

---

**Further detail:**

**STATISTICS**

- ISD Scotland [Scottish Suicide Information Database](http://www.isdscotland.org) (August 2017)
- Scottish Public Health Observatory [Suicide: Key Points](http://www.spho.org.uk)
- University of Manchester [National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Homicide by People with Mental Illness](http://www.nationalconfidentialinquiry.org.uk) (October 2017)

**FURTHER READING**

- SAMH [Ask Once Get Help Fast 2016](http://www.samh.org.uk)
- Scottish Government [Suicide Prevention Strategy 2013-2016](http://www.gov.scot)
- Choose Life [website](http://www.chooselife.org.uk)
- The Samaritans [Men and Suicide](http://www.samaritans.org) (2012)
Notes

1 Choose Life website (assessed November 2016)
2 Scottish Government Suicide Prevention Strategy 2013-2016
3 Scottish Government Reducing Suicide and Self-Harm (accessed November 2017)
4 ISD Suicide Statistics for Scotland 2017
5 University of Manchester National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Homicide by People with Mental Illness October 2017
6 ISD Scotland Scottish Suicide Information Database August 2017
7 University of Manchester National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Homicide by People with Mental Illness October 2017
8 Scottish Public Health Observatory Suicide: Key Points (accessed November 2017)
9 ISD A profile of deaths by suicide in Scotland 2009-2015: a report from the Scottish Suicide Information Database 2017
10 Harris, C, and Barraclough, B, “Suicide as an Outcome for Mental Disorders”, British Journal of Psychiatry, 170, 205-28, 1997
11 ISD A profile of deaths by suicide in Scotland 2009-2015: a report from the Scottish Suicide Information Database 2017