

SAMH'S VIEW:

SUICIDE PREVENTION

DATE ISSUED
NOVEMBER 2017

POLICY LEAD
CRAIG
SMITH

FOR REVIEW BY:
NOVEMBER 2018

ABOUT THE SAMH'S
VIEW SERIES

SAMH's View statements set out SAMH's position on a particular policy topic. They are produced by the Public Affairs team.

Context

In Scotland, suicide prevention activities are delivered locally through Choose Life, which was initially established in 2002.¹ The Scottish Government's Suicide Prevention Strategy 2013-2016 provides the national framework.² The Scottish Government have confirmed a suicide prevention new action plan will be published in 2018.³

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 2015.⁴
- Scotland's suicide rate is the second highest in the UK behind Northern Ireland.⁵
- The suicide rate fell 17.8% between 2000-2004 and 2010-2014⁶ but remains higher than the UK average, with 14.2 per 10000 deaths in Scotland.⁷
- 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.⁸ Men aged 35-54 are particularly at risk.⁹ 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.¹⁰
- 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.¹¹
- 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.¹² 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.

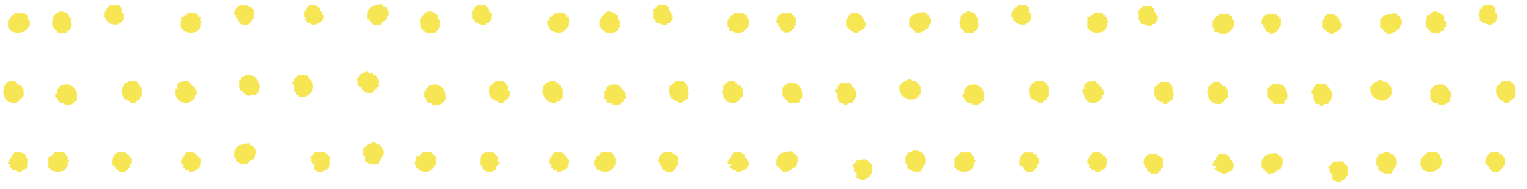
Further detail:

STATISTICS

- ISD Scotland [Scottish Suicide Information Database](#) (August 2017)
- Scottish Public Health Observatory [Suicide: Key Points](#)
- University of Manchester [National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Homicide by People with Mental Illness](#) (October 2017)

FURTHER READING

- SAMH [Ask Once Get Help Fast 2016](#)
- Scottish Government [Suicide Prevention Strategy 2013-2016](#)
- Choose Life [website](#)
- The Samaritans [Men and Suicide](#) (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

¹² Police Scotland & NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde [Community Triage – NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Crisis Out of Hours CPN \(Community Psychiatric Nurse\) Service Pilot Evaluation Report](#) (2015)