

## SAMH'S VIEW:

# SUICIDE PREVENTION

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### 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.<sup>1</sup> The Scottish Government's Suicide Prevention Strategy 2013-2016 provides the national framework.<sup>2</sup> This is due for review in early 2017.

## Key points

- An average of two people per day die by suicide in Scotland.
- There were 672 deaths by suicide across Scotland in 2015.<sup>3</sup>
- Scotland's suicide rate is the second highest in the UK behind Northern Ireland.<sup>4</sup>
- The suicide rate fell 17.8% between 2000-2004 and 2010-2014<sup>5</sup> but remains higher than the UK average, with 14.5 per 10000 deaths in Scotland compared to 10.8 per 10000 in the UK.<sup>6</sup>
- In 2015, the suicide rate for men was more than two-and-a-half times than for women, and three times higher in the most deprived areas than the least deprived.<sup>7</sup> Men aged 35-55 are particularly at risk.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup>
- Sixty per cent of those who died between 2009-14 had been prescribed a mental health drug in the year prior to their death; 6% had a mental health outpatient appointment in the 30 days before their death and one in four had attended A&E in the month prior to their death.<sup>10</sup>
- 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 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 2018.
- 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.<sup>11</sup> 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 2016)
- Scottish Public Health Observatory [Suicide: Key Points](#)
- University of Manchester [National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Homicide by People with Mental Illness](#) (October 2016)

### 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 Public Health Observatory [Suicide: Key Points](#)
- 4 University of Manchester [National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Homicide by People with Mental Illness](#), October 2016
- 5 ISD Scotland [Scottish Suicide Information Database](#), August 2016
- 6 University of Manchester [National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Homicide by People with Mental Illness](#), October 2016
- 7 Scottish Public Health Observatory [Suicide: Key Points](#) (accessed November 2016)
- 8 ISD [A profile of deaths by suicide in Scotland 2009-2014: a report from the Scottish Suicide Information Database](#), 2016
- 9 Harris, C, and Barracough, B, "Suicide as an Outcome for Mental Disorders", British Journal of Psychiatry, 170, 205-28, 1997
- 10 ISD [A profile of deaths by suicide in Scotland 2009-2014: a report from the Scottish Suicide Information Database](#), 2016
- 11 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)