



To: **Coventry Health and Wellbeing Board**

Date: **28th November 2016**

From: **Jane Moore, Director of Public Health**
Sue Frossell, Consultant in Public Health

Title: **Coventry Suicide Prevention Strategy 2016-19**

1 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement from the Coventry Health and Wellbeing Board for One Suicide // One Too Many: A Suicide Prevention Strategy for Coventry 2016-19. Suicide prevention became a local authority responsibility in 2013 and this strategy aims to set out the scale of this issue and suggest what action Coventry can take to address it.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 Health and Wellbeing board is recommended to:
- Endorse the Coventry Suicide Prevention Strategy 2016-19;
 - Consider how their individual organisations could make a contribution to reducing suicide in Coventry;
 - Agree that a multiagency task and finish group be set up to develop the plan and integrate the actions into the relevant boards and agencies represented in the HWB and beyond;
 - Monitor progress against the action plan on an annual basis.

3 Background Information

- 3.1 Every year more adults under the age of 50 die from suicide than die as a result of road traffic accidents; it is the leading cause of death for this age range. National and international experience has shown that we can, and must, take action to avoid these unnecessary deaths.
- 3.2 Suicide prevention has been recognised as a priority at a national level with the All Party Parliamentary Group on Suicide and Self Harm in the process of reviewing local progress against the national prevention strategy issued in 2012. This has been supported by the recent Public Health England publication of guidance for local authorities in producing suicide prevention plans. The national recommendation is that every local authority should develop a suicide prevention action plan, access data on local suicide characteristics (a 'suicide audit') and develop a multi-sector agency approach to reducing suicides. In addition, suicide prevention has been identified as an area of focus for the West Midlands Combined Authority.

- 3.3 Suicide as an event is devastating to those close to it, causing pain, grief and isolation, as the stigma associated can limit attempts to seek support. The financial cost of a single suicide has been estimated at as much as £1.6 million in total.
- 3.4 An initial draft strategy for suicide prevention was developed by Terry Rigby from the suicide prevention Social Enterprise Forward for Life in 2015. This work has been updated to reflect the national recommendations and the progress made locally, with a particular focus on the strategy work completed in Warwickshire. This has led to a document which reflects a joint strategic vision across the Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) footprint, but which plans city-wide action through a Coventry based multi-agency Task and Finish Group.
- 3.5 Whilst the strategy does address issues around improving mental health care, in particular discharge planning and crisis response within these services, it is a fact that over 70% of those who die by suicide nationally have no contact with mental health services in the year prior to their death. A diagnosed mental illness is not a prerequisite to taking the decision to end one's life; factors such as debt, unemployment, relationship breakdown and other crises can trigger a suicidal crisis. These life events bring people in touch with a wide range of services and we must make sure that staff, employers and communities in Coventry are prepared to recognise when people are in crisis and have interventions available to prevent suicidal behaviour.
- 3.6 There are a range of complex interactions that make a person more likely to consider suicide. To work upstream of the crises which result in suicide, we need to tackle those factors which make a person more likely to consider suicide as an option. This strategy cannot be read in isolation as much of the work already happening contributes towards reducing suicide; for example, as a Marmot City, Coventry is already reducing inequalities and trying to increase mental and physical wellbeing in the city all of which reduces individual risk of suicide. Drug and alcohol recovery services play a significant role in providing support that mitigates against suicidal behaviour. Improving emotional resilience is a cornerstone of our plans to improve the lives of children and young people in our city; providing a solid emotional foundation in the early years reduces the risk of suicide if these children face difficulties as they grow into adulthood. The strategy is explicit that addressing these socio-economic factors is a key feature of our plan.

4 Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

- 4.1 Our vision is to realise a city that has zero suicides. It is an ambitious aim but one which recognises the tragedy of each life lost and emphasises that death by suicide is preventable. It is a philosophy based on work completed in the Henry Ford Health System in Detroit where service improvements and a proactive approach towards this goal drastically cut the rate of suicide. By aiming high, for perfection, better results are achieved than by aiming low.
- 4.2 In working towards this vision, our strategy sets out 3 core aims:
- Raise the level of understanding and awareness across Coventry of suicidal ideation, behaviours, acts and the impact of suicidal acts across our communities.
 - To highlight key areas of service development and demonstrate ways forward to assist services in supporting Coventry to be 'Suicide Safer'.
 - To set out a clear action plan to mobilise all sectors to reduce suicidal behaviour across the city.

- 4.3 In working toward this vision, we are also recommending adopting a close working relationship with Warwickshire. Where possible, we believe action should be shared across Coventry and Warwickshire – the efforts in prevention and the support available to those bereaved by suicide should be equable across the region. Our Action Plan is designed to be flexible and is intended to be regularly updated and adapted. The Task and Finish group will include an experienced membership that will be open to collaboration with their Warwickshire counterpart.
- 4.4 We have worked closely with Warwickshire in developing this strategy. In the context of the Health and Wellbeing Boards' concordat it is only right that we provide a joint strategic vision for our services and citizens, therefore both strategies have action set against seven priority areas:
- **Reducing the risk of suicide in key high risk groups** - These groups include men in mid-life, people with known mental health problems and/or history of self-harm, and people involved in substance misuse. The strategy supports the work of 'It Takes Balls to Talk', a suicide awareness campaign focused on sports events that aims to increase men's willingness to access support. We would expect the existing Health and Wellbeing Strategy focus on improving the lives of people with multiple complex needs to have a corollary impact on the risk of suicide for these individuals.
 - **Tailoring approaches to improve mental health in specific groups** - This includes engaging with young people to improve emotional resilience through our 0-19s work and reducing the stigma around seeking help for suicidal thoughts.
 - **Reducing access to the means of suicide** - We know that rail suicide is an issue in our locality and we support the work of the Samaritans in addressing this. We are also in contact with Network Rail who will be our partners in reducing rail suicide in the city. In addition, overdose of prescribed opiates is an issue nationally and we will ensure that our local Primary Care practitioners are aware of this. We also know that alcohol is all too often a contributing factor in suicide, and this strategy aims to support measures which tackle problem drinking in the city.
 - **Reducing the impact of suicide** – we support the work of charitable organisations in the city in their efforts to support those bereaved by suicide but recognise that there is much more we can do. We recommend the use of the 'Help is at Hand' booklet as a starting point for improving post-suicide support, however a much more robust response is needed. One of the early areas of work for the Task and Finish group will be to engage with the organisations already providing support and those who have been bereaved by suicide personally to find out what we can do to improve our response.
 - **Supporting the media in delivering sensitive approaches to suicide and suicidal behaviour** – we encourage local media outlets to utilise the Samaritans guidance around the reporting of suicide and will use participation in World Suicide Prevention Day as an opportunity to remind the press of their role in reporting suicide responsibly. We also recognise the positive force of the media in promoting awareness campaigns and reducing stigma and will use our communications networks to this end.
 - **Improving data and evidence** – we are working with the coroner to undertake a 'suicide audit' to learn from the deaths which have occurred in Coventry. Network

Rail are sharing information with us about rail suicides in our city and we will work together to reduce these.

- **Working together** – the strategy makes clear that tackling the problem of suicide in Coventry requires whole system action. We therefore propose that a Task and Finish group is set up to include membership from relevant commissioners, providers and third sector agencies. This group will be responsible for leading the implementation of the strategy action plan as well as providing a forum for setting further specific goals. It is expected that this group will provide a forum for open communication with our colleagues in Warwickshire with both areas sharing and learning from one another. Furthermore, this group will be kept up to date with the latest data developments as they arise from the local suicide audit and publications distributed by Public Health England.

4.5 This strategy sets out our vision and priorities. If approved, the next step will be to bring together a variety of partners in a Task and Finish group to discuss and take forward practical action that addresses suicidal behaviour and the reasons underlying it in our city with a safer suicide community approach and in harmony with both national, regional and local goals, policy and service and community strengths.

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Appendices: Coventry Suicide Prevention Strategy 2016-2019