



HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
2nd June 2021

SUICIDE PREVENTION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Purpose of the Report

1. This report is to provide an update on developments in Suicide Prevention from Public Health and its partnership group, the LLR Suicide Audit and Prevention Group (SAPG). This report provides an overview of the current data and actions taken to address and prevent suicide within Leicestershire.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

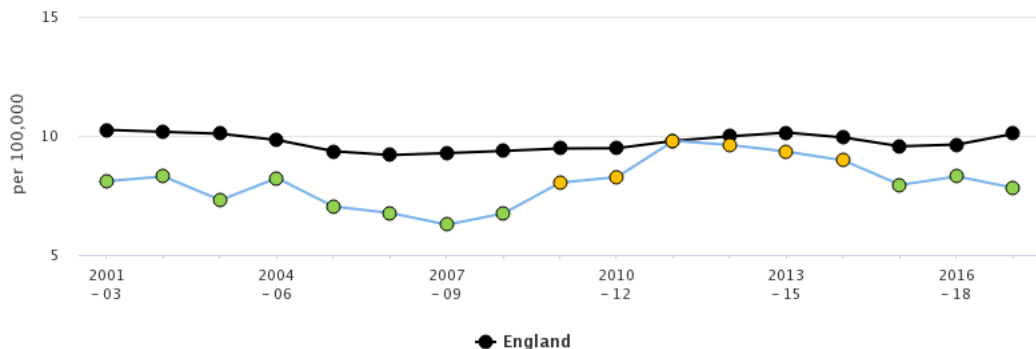
2. Suicide Prevention links closely with the strategic outcome of 'Well Being and Opportunity' which forms part of the Council's Strategic Plan.
3. In 2018, Public Health were tasked, by the leader of the council, to provide a more public facing approach to suicide prevention. This resulted in the development of the Start a Conversation campaign:
<https://www.startaconversation.co.uk/>

Background

4. In 2020 the LLR Strategic Approach to Suicide Prevention, developed by the SAPG, was agreed. The approach concentrates on key messages including that suicide is everyone's business and focuses on 9 key priorities including; high-risk groups, supporting primary care and protecting people with a history of self-harm.

Issues

5. The graph below is taken from Public Health England (PHE) 'Fingertips' and highlights the trends of Leicestershire compared to England from 2001/03 – 2017/19 with regards to suicide rates. This graph captures all recorded suicides. The County directly standardised rate (DSR) for 2017-19 (7.8 per 100,000), was lower than the national average (10.1 per 100,000), there were 144 county deaths during this time.



6. Real Time surveillance data (RTSD), provided by Leicestershire Police showed a peak in suicides in Leicestershire residents in 2018. The number of suicides in Leicestershire decreased in 2019, but in 2020 increased to a similar level to 2018.

N.B. RTSD is data collected around a death which may be due to suicide but before a coroners decision has been made. The RTS data enables support to be given around high risk individuals, in a timely way to help prevent further harm.

7. RTSD suggests that there have been higher than usual numbers of student suicides (RTS data) recorded in LLR in the past 12 months. Further work is being done to understand these deaths, to put in place support for those affected, and to assess robustness of the data.
8. The Impact of COVID-19 on suicides - Whilst the RTSD suggests that there may have been a slight increase in numbers of suicides in Leicestershire residents in 2020 compared to the previous year (though similar to 2018) it is too soon to say if there has been a significant impact due to COVID.
9. National ¹ and international ² studies to date, have not found a significant rise in the risk of suicide since the pandemic began.

¹ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanepi/article/PIIS2666-7762\(21\)00087-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanepi/article/PIIS2666-7762(21)00087-9/fulltext)

² <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2215-0366%2821%2900091-2>.

However, it is important to note that these are early figures and there may be increases in suicides in some populations or geographical areas.

10. The 'high-risk' groups in Leicestershire include middle aged men, those in the care of mental health services and those with a history of attempted suicide/self-harm. Source: RTSD.

Response to COVID-19

11. Weekly SAPG meetings were initiated to ensure clear communication between all partners, and suicides were captured on a weekly basis via the RTS data. This allows for rapid response to noticeable trends. A group has been established to map and focus on student suicides as per the rise noted above.
12. Working with Leicestershire Provider Trust, the City Council and the Police, suicide mental health resources and communication plans were developed, both for adults and for children and young people. The online resources are accessed by approximately 1,000 people per month via the Start a Conversation website and social media campaign.

Reducing Suicides

13. Several programmes have been developed to reduce suicides across Leicestershire:
 - **The Tomorrow Project** (Suicide Bereavement) continues to provide post intervention support to those bereaved by suicide, which, in itself, is a risk factor for suicide.
 - A **Community Self-Harm Programme** is being developed utilising the 'Contain Funding' to address self harm. This is an LLR programme led by Public Health, LCC. This will focus on both lower level prevention and early intervention work, as well a community-level service to support individuals who self-harm, which is a risk-factor of suicidality. This is supported by the CCG and the wider SAPG.
 - **Men's Mental Health Peer-Support Groups** are currently being procured. Men in middle-age are at greatest risk of suicide. Evidence shows that early intervention in the community, alongside other men, can reduce suicide risk.
 - A successful funding bid to the CCG has seen the development of **GP and Primary Care Suicide Mitigation** training to improve

clinical confidence and competence around suicide prevention. By March 2021, 60 clinicians will have undergone the training.

- The Rural Community Council are contracted to provide **Suicide Awareness and Self Harm Training**. For 2021, 8 suicide Awareness Sessions and 4 Self-Harm sessions will be delivered. Some specifically aimed at schools to tackle the anecdotal rises of self-harm which have been highlighted.
 - **Self-Harm Mobile App** (DistrACT) has been procured to provide an alternative source of support.
14. The Start a Conversation Campaign continues to be successfully delivered and promoted throughout LLR:
- The website serves as key resource for the public and professionals to access high-quality resources and signposting to services.
 - Since March 2020 the Covid-19 and Mental Wellbeing Page has received just under 5000 unique visits.
 - The second annual Suicide Prevention Conference was held virtually in September 2020, delivered by Public Health. The conference saw 16 events, spread over 5 days and was attended by over 450 individuals. A further event is planned for 2021.

Wave 4 Suicide Prevention

15. Through the NHS Long Term Plan, NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE/I) have committed to expand the Suicide Prevention Programme (previously piloted in other parts of the country, not including East Midlands) to all areas of the country. Working together with the CCG and Leicester City Council, we were successful in a Wave 4 bid to reduce suicide's across LLR.
16. A Suicide Prevention Project Officer will be recruited to oversee the development and the delivery of the project, which will focus on place and neighbourhood-based community mental health improvement work, to contribute to reducing suicides.

Conclusion

17. The impact of COVID-19: Whilst the RTS data we have to date appears to show an increase in suicides from 2019 to 2020, these numbers should be viewed with caution as this data may be incomplete, and has not yet been subject to the coronial process. Also

suicides tend to vary year by year e.g. numbers of suicides (RTSD) recorded in 2018 were similar to those in 2020.

18. A number of services and campaigns have been put in place with the aim of reducing suicides, supporting those who self-harm and providing services to those bereaved by suicides.
19. Work will continue to be developed, under the umbrella of the LLR Suicide Audit and Prevention Group.

Background Papers

20. None.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

21. None.

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List of Appendices

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