
Making Suicide Prevention Everyone's Business: Because together we can save lives

The third annual report of the National Suicide Prevention
Leadership Group

September 2021



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Foreword



This is the third annual report of the National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group (NSPLG), established in September 2018 to support the delivery of Scotland's Suicide Prevention Action Plan Every Life Matters, published in August 2018.

People are at the heart of everything we do. We know that every loss of life to suicide is a tragedy for families, for friends and for communities, which is why we put the insight of our Lived Experience Panel at the core of all our action. Their experience, combined with the expertise of our Academic Advisory Group and the hard work of NSPLG delivery leads, enables us to do our work. The compassion and commitment they all bring really does save lives.

Suicide prevention remains a long-term challenge for Scotland. Clearly, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health and life circumstances are likely to be felt widely and over the long term. In working to reduce loss of life to suicide we also recognise the continuing risks presented by inequalities and that we must address these across the full range of our work.

This report highlights our work to support delivery of Scotland's Suicide Prevention Action Plan over the last year, and outlines some of the work planned in its final year ahead.

Our commitment to our work remains as strong as ever, as does our conviction that everyone can have a role to play in preventing suicide and that we can all help to save lives.

Because every life matters.

Rose Fitzpatrick CBE QPM

Chair of the National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group



Councillor Stuart Currie
COSLA Spokesperson for
Health and Social Care



Kevin Stewart MSP
Minister for Mental Wellbeing
and Social Care

We welcome this third annual report, which clearly shows the success of the strong partnership working between the members of the NSPLG, the Lived Experience Panel, the Academic Advisory Group, Scottish Government, COSLA and local suicide prevention leads. We all have a role to play in preventing suicide and it is through collaboration to deliver on the commitments that we can have the biggest impact. There is no doubt the challenges placed on individuals and communities over the last 18 months, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, have been significant. The impact on mental health is well documented and will likely continue for many years to come, we are therefore encouraged to see the progress made on delivering the actions aimed at reducing suicide within *Every Life Matters* despite the restrictions which have been in place.

We want to see a reduction in those dying by suicide and believe that action in local communities involving community planning partners is the best way to deliver this. The guidance launched this year will ensure that local action plans are developed in partnership to meet local needs, and the implementation of these plans will ensure the greatest impact across Scotland.

The continued campaigning through United to Prevent Suicide supports the call to action and allows for everyone to make suicide prevention their business. The huge reach on social media of the @_FCUnited campaign demonstrated the desire for the people of Scotland to do what they can to support those in need.

Each life lost to suicide has a devastating impact on those affected and we are therefore pleased to see the launch of the pilot bereavement support service across NHS Ayrshire & Arran and NHS Highland. This will not only provide much needed support to those affected but will help determine how this support should be delivered across Scotland in the future.

These and the other areas of work described within this report provide a strong basis for the continuation of *Every Life Matters* over the next year and will support the commitment of both Scottish Government and COSLA to the development of the next suicide prevention strategy.

Councillor Stuart Currie

Kevin Stewart MSP

Introduction

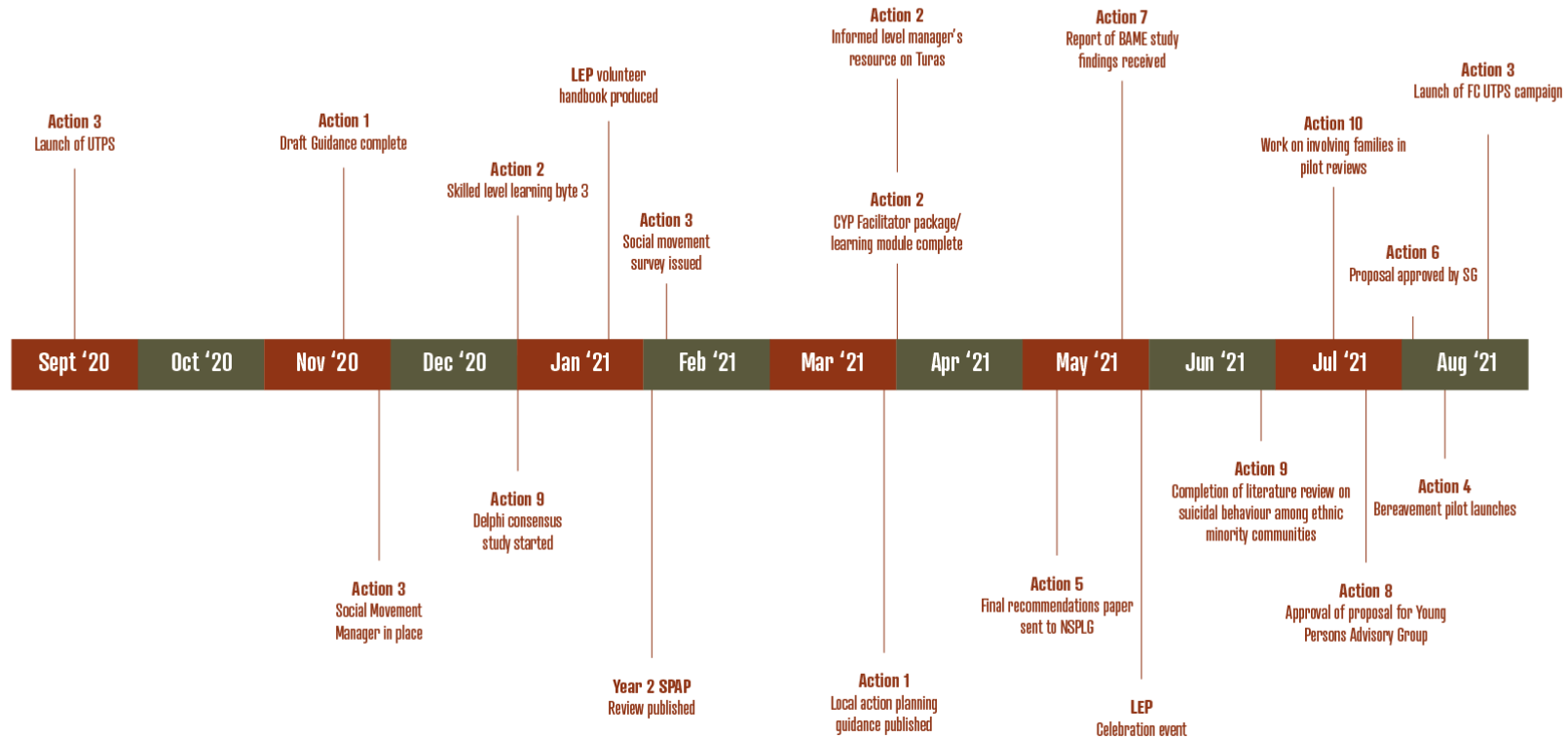
- This is our third annual report, summarising progress over the period September 2020 to August 2021 and looking forward to the final year of delivery of Scotland's Suicide Prevention Action Plan *Every Life Matters*.
- The last year has proved challenging for everyone continuing to face the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and evidence shows that the pandemic has impacted the mental health of some more adversely than others. We were pleased to see that the Scottish Government was proactive in publishing its Transition and Recovery Plan for Mental Health last October. We welcome its commitments on suicide prevention alongside additional funding through the Recovery and Renewal Fund. We are working alongside the Scottish Government, supporting delivery of those commitments.
- In August 2021, National Records of Scotland (NRS) published the suicide statistics for 2020. While we welcome the fact that fewer people died by suicide in 2020 than in 2019, each of the 805 lives lost is a tragedy and shows us that there is still much work to do to reduce suicide deaths in Scotland. We know that our collaborative approach to supporting delivery of the actions in *Every Life Matters* is now more essential than ever. We will therefore continue to reach across boundaries and do all we can to ensure that the impacts of the pandemic on people, families and diverse communities are mitigated.
- In June, the new Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care announced to the Scottish Parliament that *Every Life Matters* would be extended for a further year, up to the point of publication of the new suicide prevention strategy in September 2022. We welcome this recognition of the disruption caused by the pandemic and will use this year to redouble our support for delivery of *Every Life Matters*, our COVID-19 Statement recommendations, and the development of, and transition to, the new strategy.

Progress 2020-2021

- In September 2020 we launched Scotland's new social movement and public awareness campaign, [United to Prevent Suicide](#), co-produced with our Lived Experience Panel. It is aimed at reducing stigma and encouraging people to have confidence to talk about suicide.
- In February 2021 our Academic Advisory Group (AAG) completed a [review of the first two years](#) of the *Every Life Matters*. It concluded that there was clear evidence of progress, wide collaboration, and positive engagement of lived experience. However, it also identified delays caused by the pandemic and highlighted the need for continuing evaluation, monitoring, learning and a focus on outcomes.
- In April we published our [guidance](#) on local suicide prevention action planning in collaboration with COSLA. The guidance provides information required to develop robust, effective and sustainable local suicide prevention action plans.
- In June our Lived Experience Panel, supported by SAMH, was cited in the World Health Organization [implementation guide](#) for suicide prevention, as an internationally significant case study in meaningful participation of people with lived experience in suicide prevention work.
- In August our [pilot service](#) to support people bereaved by suicide went live in the NHS Ayrshire and Arran and NHS Highland areas. Penumbra and Support in Mind Scotland are working in partnership to deliver this service, providing practical and emotional support to families who have lost a loved one to suicide. Its evaluation will inform plans for future roll-out.
- During this pandemic year we worked with Public Health Scotland and NHS Education for Scotland to develop a range of online learning resources promoting awareness and learning on mental health, suicide prevention, and self-harm.
- In response to our June 2020 COVID-19 Statement recommendation on the need for more timely and local data, Public Health Scotland and Police Scotland have this year started to roll-out a new system providing local areas with regular data on suspected suicides. This data offers further valuable intelligence to support local planning.
- We are currently working with NHS 24 and other partners to establish new ways of providing appropriate digital advice and safeguarding for people seeking help online during a time of crisis, offering a gateway to engage wider support services.

- During this year we have been working with community-engaged individuals and representative organisations, such as Poppy Scotland, to better understand the experience of seldom-heard people and communities, and the impacts of inequalities, to inform the full range of our work.
- We are committed to ensuring that all our support for the implementation of *Every Life Matters* is informed by children and young people to ensure their needs are met, and we continue to identify opportunities to further meet children and young people's needs across the actions. To support this focus, we are in the process of setting up a new NSPLG Youth Advisory Group, which will operate alongside our Lived Experience Panel. We are also engaging with other national pieces of work, such as The National Childhood Bereavement Project, to ensure children and young people's needs are considered in terms of suicide prevention.
- Our work on developing a new approach to providing timely help and support to people in suicidal crisis has resulted in a set of key principles: Time, Space, and Compassion. These principles were the result of the clear messages from our engagement with those with lived experience and those working in the field of suicide prevention. If embedded effectively into existing and new responses, these principles could radically change the experiences of those who need support at a time of crisis.

Delivery Timeline, Sept '20 - Aug '21



KEY: Actions: 1 – local suicide prevention planning; 2 – mental health and suicide prevention training; 3 – public awareness raising; 4 – bereavement support; 5 – suicidal crisis support; 6 – digital technology/online safety; 7 – groups at elevated risk of suicide; 8 – children and young people; 9 – using suicide data and evidence; 10 – review of deaths by suicide. LEP – lived experience panel. CYP – children and young people.

The year ahead

- We are grateful to local suicide prevention leads across Scotland who have been instrumental in developing initiatives such as our local suicide prevention action planning guidance, and the roll-out of more timely data, highlighting the importance of local knowledge and relationships. Over the coming year we will focus on aligning local and national suicide prevention work to ensure that they are mutually supportive, including through a regionalised approach to suicide prevention.
- Our United to Prevent Suicide social movement has continued to grow with the recent launch of [FC United to Prevent Suicide](#), a campaign developed to harness the reach of football. This is the first of the focused public awareness campaigns we will launch to engage specific groups.
- We will finalise governance and support arrangements that enable processes for the local review of all deaths by suicide to be piloted, initially in specific areas.
- We will recruit members for (and launch) our new Youth Advisory Group which will be made up of young people (16–26) who have experience of suicide, self-harm or poor mental health.
- We look forward to working with the Scottish Government, COSLA and our partners in the year ahead to see the recommendations in our Time, Space, and Compassion report embedded across suicide prevention and other services.
- We will work with Samaritans Scotland and other key partners to focus on locations of concern, supporting implementation of our COVID-19 Statement recommendation on reducing access to the means of suicide.

Conclusion

- The Scottish Government Programme for Government 2021-22 has committed to doubling suicide prevention funding to £2.8m per annum by the end of the current Parliamentary term. We welcome this undertaking and will offer advice to support strategic financial planning.

- We also welcome the work that is already underway by COSLA and the Scottish Government to develop a new long-term suicide prevention strategy for publication next September, as we recommended in our COVID-19 Statement. We look forward to engaging with this development process and in due course to supporting delivery of the strategy itself.
- We are grateful individually and collectively for the opportunity to continue to support delivery of Scotland's Suicide Prevention Action Plan *Every Life Matters* in this extended year.
- We greatly admire and are inspired every day by the generosity of our Lived Experience Panel members, and by the hard work of our delivery leads, academic advisors, local suicide prevention leads, many volunteers across the country and all who share our passion for preventing suicide and the terrible impact it has on those who are left behind.
- As members of Scotland's National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group, we believe that no suicide should be considered inevitable and that we all have our own roles to play in preventing suicide. Together with you, we will continue to play our role in saving lives, because every life really does matter.

Members of the National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group

Ms Rose Fitzpatrick CBE QPM	CHAIR
Dr Carol Buchanan ¹	Health & Social Care Partnerships
Ms Rachel Cackett	Executive Director, Samaritans Scotland
Ms Julie Cameron ²	Associate Director, Scotland and Northern Ireland, Mental Health Foundation
Dr Alistair Cook	Principal Medical Officer, Scottish Government
Ms Fiona Drouet	EmilyTest
Dr David Hall	Royal College of Psychiatrists
Mr Nigel Henderson	Chief Executive, Penumbra
Chief Superintendent Linda Jones ³	Police Scotland
Dr Amy Knighton	Royal College of General Practitioners
Ms Lara McDonald ⁴	Young Person Representative, nominated via Young Scot
Ms Jane O'Donnell	Director of People Policy, COSLA
Ms Nicky Reid	Chief Executive, SPFL Trust
Ms Angela Scott	Chief Executive, Aberdeen City Council
Ms Claire Sweeney ⁵	Director of Place and Wellbeing, Public Health Scotland
Mr Alan Thornburrow	Director, Business In the Community Scotland
Mr Billy Watson	Chief Executive, SAMH
Professor Rory O'Connor	University of Glasgow (Academic Advisor)
Emeritus Professor Steve Platt	University of Edinburgh (Academic Advisor)

¹ Replaced Dr Michael Smith in March 2021

² Replaced Mr Toni Giugliano in February 2021

³ Replaced Chief Superintendent David Duncan in January 2021

⁴ Resigned August 2021

⁵ Replaced Mr George Dodds in January 2021



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