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

The fourth annual report of the National Suicide
Prevention Leadership Group

October 2022

Contents

Foreword	page 2
Introduction	page 5
Supporting Delivery of the Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2018-2022	page 6
Significant Milestones	page 10
NSPLG Lived Experience Panel (LEP)	page 15
NSPLG Youth Advisory Group (YAG)	page 16
NSPLG Academic Advisory Group (AAG)	page 17
Conclusion	page 18
Annex A Scotland's Suicide Prevention Action Plan: Every Life Matters	page 19
Annex B NSPLG Members Current and Former	page 21

Foreword



This is the fourth annual report of the National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group (NSPLG), established by the Scottish Government in September 2018 to support delivery of its Suicide Prevention Action Plan - *Every Life Matters*.

This report highlights milestones over the last four years in our work to make suicide in Scotland preventable and everyone's business. That work has only been possible because, at the outset, we established both our NSPLG Lived Experience Panel (LEP) and NSPLG Academic Advisory Group (AAG). Our NSPLG network is soon to be joined by our new NSPLG Youth Advisory Group (YAG).

Bringing together on an equal footing the diverse expertise of those experiencing the impacts of suicide, suicide prevention practitioners and academic experts has been a first for Scotland. Its effectiveness has been recognised internationally by the World Health Organisation (WHO), it has underpinned the development of Scotland's new Suicide Prevention Strategy - *Creating Hope Together* and it will strengthen the delivery of that strategy over the next ten years.

We have never lost sight of the fact that every loss of life to suicide is a tragedy for the families, friends and communities left behind. While the suicide rate in Scotland is now below the five year average and the number of deaths has reduced in each of the last two years, every one of the 753 people who lost their lives to suicide in Scotland in 2021 is grieved for, and their loss compels us to do more.

Our NSPLG, LEP, YAG and AAG roles will now evolve to serve the vision of the new strategy: to reduce the number of suicide deaths in Scotland, whilst tackling the inequalities which contribute to suicide. The strategy has been launched at a time when post-pandemic pressures and the cost of living crisis give rise to grave concerns. We welcome the fact that, alongside mental health policy, it broadens suicide prevention into the social determinants of suicide, such as poverty and inequalities.

Over the years to come the terms of reference and membership of our NSPLG network may change, but our absolute commitment to making suicide in Scotland preventable will remain unshakeable and we will do our best to make suicide prevention everyone's business.

Rose Fitzpatrick CBE QPM

Chair, National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group



We are delighted to welcome the fourth annual report from our National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group (NSPLG). This report highlights the many significant achievements made over the last four years in delivering the Suicide Prevention Action Plan (2018-2022), *Every Life Matters*.

Over the past four years, the NSPLG's work has brought real drive and visibility to suicide prevention across Scotland. The Group's leadership approach offers a great example of partnership working, united by our shared mission of preventing suicide.

We are grateful to all NSPLG members for their contribution, commitment and insights which have together made a real difference in preventing suicide. Recent highlights include:

- Creating innovative ways to raise awareness and tackle the stigma of suicide. This includes continuing to build Scotland's social movement '*United to Prevent Suicide*' and the recent campaigns '*FC United to Prevent Suicide*' and '*Better Tomorrow*', which was designed to reach children and young people.
- Finding new ways to ensure our work is grounded in lived experience. The new Youth Advisory Group will be instrumental to ensuring the views of children and young people are central to designing responses that meet their needs. The established Lived Experience Panel is a great model to build on.
- Increasing support for local suicide prevention, with a new implementation team established to support local areas to plan and evaluate their work, as well as ensuring good practice and learning is shared right across Scotland. There has also been excellent engagement and collaboration with partners to support work on locations of concern.
- Continuing to support families bereaved by suicide through the pilot service in Ayrshire & Arran and Highland. We know from the recently published first evaluation report that the service has already made a real difference in supporting families with their practical and emotional needs.

The NSPLG's work over the last four years has created an excellent platform to now drive forward the new strategy, *Creating Hope Together: Scotland's Suicide Prevention Strategy 2022-2032*. The NSPLG's experience in driving suicide prevention in Scotland over the last four years has also guided the Scottish Government and COSLA in developing the new strategy, consistently offering positive and constructive support and insight. We have also benefited greatly from

the incredible contributions from the Lived Experience Panel and the Academic Advisory Group.

We would like to offer our sincere, heartfelt thanks to NSPLG members for their work to prevent suicide over the last four years. Their work has helped connect and grow the suicide prevention community across Scotland. Members should also feel proud that the excellent model of suicide prevention in Scotland has been commended on the international stage by the World Health Organisation.

We now look forward to working with the NSPLG as we take forward the priorities set out in the new strategy.

Kevin Stewart MSP

Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care

Councillor Paul Kelly

COSLA Spokesperson for Health and Social Care

Introduction

This is our fourth annual report, summarising progress in supporting delivery of [Scotland's Suicide Prevention Action Plan - *Every Life Matters*](#) over the four years since its publication in August 2018.

Our support for delivery of the Suicide Prevention Action Plan (SPAP) has continued to draw legitimacy from and be founded in the experience of those living with the impacts of suicide, those working in academic research and professional suicide prevention practitioners. Our NSPLG Lived Experience Panel (LEP) and NSPLG Academic Advisory Group (AAG), established at the outset, have continued to be at the heart of our work over the past four years. We are now in the process of establishing our new NSPLG Youth Advisory Group (YAG).

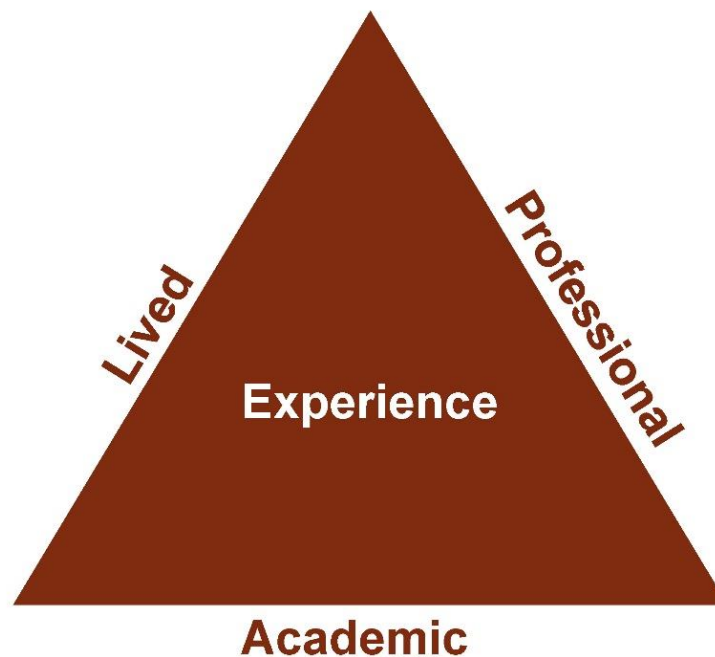
In August 2022, National Records of Scotland (NRS) published the [suicide statistics for 2021](#). We welcome the fact that fewer people died by suicide in 2021 than in 2020 and 2019, but each of the 753 lives lost last year is a person grieved for, whose death has impacted hugely on those they left behind. Scotland's suicide rate is now below the five year average, but the enduring impacts of the pandemic and the current cost of living crisis put pressures on people's life circumstances. We must redouble our efforts to tackle the social determinants of suicide, including poverty and inequalities.

On 29 September 2022 Scotland's new [Suicide Prevention Strategy - *Creating Hope Together*](#) was launched. Our role will now evolve to focus on supporting the Scottish Government, COSLA and the new suicide prevention Delivery Collective to achieve our shared vision: to reduce the number of suicide deaths in Scotland, whilst tackling the inequalities which contribute to suicide.

In reporting on work over the last four years we know we must continue over the next ten years to do all we can to ensure that no suicide is inevitable and that everyone in Scotland has a role to play in saving lives from the tragedy of suicide.

Supporting Delivery of the Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2018-2022

Over the last four years the NSPLG, including our Lived Experience Panel (LEP) and Academic Advisory Group (AAG) have worked with our Delivery Leads (DL) to support implementation of the Suicide Prevention Action Plan (SPAP) - *Every Life Matters*.



Much has been achieved and our partnerships across Scottish society continue to grow. Nevertheless each day we hold in mind that every life lost to suicide is a tragedy; a person who may never have known how much they mattered. We know there is always more to do.

Local Suicide Prevention Action Planning - Action 1: The launch of a new [toolkit](#) has been helping local communities develop effective suicide prevention plans and supporting the work of the Local Suicide Prevention Leads who are so passionate about saving lives. At least 21 local authorities have made use of the toolkit, with more to come. Their role in suicide prevention is critical, because local people know their own communities and what works best to support them.

Suicide Prevention Training - Action 2: Removing stigma around the word 'suicide' continues to be critically important, as does providing people in all walks of life with the knowledge and confidence to make a difference. NHS Education for Scotland and Public Health Scotland have developed new multi-level suicide prevention resources for those working in health settings, viewed over 100,000 times on NHS Scotland's *Turas* platform.

Public Awareness and Engagement - Action 3: In recent years there has been an important shift towards people talking more openly about mental health and

wellbeing. Yet speaking specifically about suicide remains difficult for many, often because of a persistent myth that talking about suicide may put the idea in someone's head and could cause them to take their own life.

In fact, research shows that asking someone specifically if they are having thoughts of suicide can enable them to talk about it and encourage them to seek help. A pivotal part of our work has been focussed on dispelling this myth, encouraging people to become confident in talking about suicide, knowing that starting a conversation could help save a life.

For that reason, our social movement and public awareness campaign [United to Prevent Suicide](#) has become amongst the most high-profile and visible of our programmes of work over the last four years.

A national TV advertising campaign, overhead motorway signs and railway station signage launched our *United to Prevent Suicide (UTPS)* movement, to which around 4,000 people have directly signed up, with tens of thousands more following and engaging on social media.

Subsequent stages of the campaign have worked with partners across professional, amateur, national, local and community football clubs to harness the extraordinary power of football - particularly to reach men, who make up three quarters of those who lose their lives to suicide. The award-winning [FC United to Prevent Suicide](#) initiative has become "Scotland's second team", with its tweets being seen over 8 million times. *FC United* has worked with male and female role models across the sport to tell the powerful stories of the impacts of suicide in their own lives, aided by the support of Scotland's men's and women's national football teams.

Suicide Bereavement Support - Action 4: People who lose a loved one to suicide are themselves at heightened risk of attempting to take their own lives. Our *Suicide Bereavement Support Pilot*, led by Penumbra Mental Health and Support in Mind Scotland, has now been in place for over a year in the NHS Ayrshire & Arran and NHS Highland regions. Working closely with Police Scotland it offers support to every family within 24 hours of being bereaved by suicide. [Independent evaluation](#) has been positive and it is hoped that ultimately every family in Scotland bereaved by suicide will be offered support wherever they live.

Suicidal Crisis Support - Action 5: We have worked closely with our LEP on support for those who are in immediate suicidal crisis. Rather than develop another model of crisis support we believe that the culture at each and every point of contact for people in crisis is the key to better support. We have recommended an approach focussed on *Time, Space and Compassion* which is now to be rolled out across relevant public agencies.

Digital Suicide Prevention - Action 6: Online spaces carry risks for those who are vulnerable to suicide, but they are also places which can provide help and support. In partnership with NHS Inform, new [Surviving Suicidal Thoughts](#) resources have been launched online aimed at supporting people who are in suicidal distress. These have been designed with and featuring people who have themselves

experienced suicidal thoughts. A related proactive professional media campaign aims to reduce the chances of vulnerable people finding unhelpful or harmful results when using search engines.

Understanding Risk of Suicide - Action 7: Working with our AAG and other experts by experience and research, we have focussed on improving understanding of why certain groups are at greater risk of suicide. For example, we know from research into experiences of adversely racialised people that those who live in the most deprived areas are three times more likely to die by suicide and that the experiences of those in adversely racialised communities make them less likely to seek help. Improving our understanding by working directly with those so disproportionately affected by the risk of suicide will continue to be vital.

Children and Young People - Action 8: A strong focus of our work has continued to be on keeping young people safe. A new NSPLG Youth Advisory Group (YAG) has recently been established, in partnership with Children in Scotland and the University of Stirling. It will ensure that young people aged 16-25 years are directly involved in implementation of the new suicide prevention strategy.

Our Better Tomorrow campaign was recently launched to engage young people aged 16-20 years directly with helpful content on suicide prevention. Co-produced and tested with around 300 young people, it is spear-headed by three well-known TikTok influencers, and also stretches across YouTube and Instagram.

Learning from Evidence by Experience - Action 9: At every turn, those living with the impacts of suicide have been at the heart of our approach. Our NSPLG Lived Experience Panel (LEP), which is supported by SAMH, has been recognised by the World Health Organisation as an example of international best practice. LEP members have been involved in all our work and beyond, for example in suicide prevention policy design, service development, procurement, evaluation and communications.

Learning from Academic Evidence - Action 9: Supporting every strand of our work, our NSPLG Academic Advisory Group (AAG) has provided deep professional academic insight and international research evidence to ensure that our work and recommendations are well founded and objectively sound.

Reviewing Deaths by Suicide - Action 10: Learning from the circumstances in which someone takes their life is important both in itself and in improving our understanding of how best to prevent suicide. Currently only deaths by suicide of people who have engaged with a public agency in the months beforehand are investigated. Work has been taking place in three areas across Scotland to help develop sensitive and effective processes for reviewing all deaths by suicide.

A timeline highlighting a range of milestones over the last four years is set out below, with examples under each of the SPAP's ten actions of how people have come together across the NSPLG network and beyond to make a difference.

These initiatives have helped to increase suicide prevention awareness and confidence among all of us, whilst providing tools and support to those at risk and directly affected by suicide. We believe we can say with confidence that Scotland has never been more focused on preventing suicide.

Scotland's new Suicide Prevention Strategy 2022-2032 - *Creating Hope Together* puts local and national partnerships at the heart of its approach, and will build on the strong work undertaken since 2018 to deliver the Suicide Prevention Action Plan - *Every Life Matters*.

Supporting Delivery of the Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2018-2022

Significant Milestones

2018

August

- Launch of Scotland's Suicide Prevention Action Plan - *Every Life Matters* (SPAP).

September

- National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group (NSPLG) established. **Action 1**
- NSPLG Academic Advisory Group (AAG) established. **Action 9**

December

- Initial NSPLG Delivery Plan published. **Action 1**

2019

May

- Partner sought to support recruitment and work of NSPLG Lived Experience Panel (LEP). **Action 9**
- First package of *Ask, Tell, Save a Life* learning resources launched by NHS Health Scotland (now Public Health Scotland (PHS)) and NHS Education for Scotland (NES), in partnership with NSPLG. **Action 2**

June

- SAMH appointed to support recruitment and work of LEP. **Action 9**
- AAG conducts rapid review of the role of digital technology in the prevention or reduction of suicidal ideation. **Actions 6 & 9**

July

- Updated NSPLG Delivery Plan published. **Action 1**
- SPAP Programme Manager appointed.

September

- NSPLG Lived Experience Panel (LEP) launched on World Suicide Prevention Day 2019. **Action 9**
- First NSPLG Annual Report published and recommendations made to Scottish Government and COSLA accepted. **Action 1**
- SPAP Delivery Lead appointments approved. **Action 1**

2020

March

- COVID-19 pandemic lockdown adversely impacts SPAP delivery plans.
- March Rapid synthesis of current evidence on groups at risk of suicide. **Actions 7 & 9**

April

- Creation of Public Health Scotland (PHS).
- Engagement on suicide prevention public awareness campaign commences, involving 400 stakeholders and 2,000 members of the public. **Action 3**

May

- The Mental Health Foundation (MHF) commences study on models of suicide bereavement interventions and best practice, in partnership with NSPLG. **Actions 4 & 9**

June

- NSPLG Covid-19 Statement and recommendations published. **Action 1**
- PHS and NES launch suicide prevention online learning module for NHS staff working with adults, in partnership with NSPLG. **Action 2**

July

- AAG supports stakeholder consultation on digital technology to support suicide prevention. **Actions 6 & 9**
- AAG supports stakeholder consultation on suicidal crisis support. **Actions 5 & 9**
- Public consultation on suicidal crisis support and digital support for suicide prevention gains over 200 responses. **Actions 5 & 6**

August

- *NSPLG Covid-19 Statement* recommendations accepted by Scottish Government and COSLA, including development of joint, long-term, cross-policy, outcomes-focussed suicide prevention strategy to follow SPAP. **Action 1**
- PHS and NES launch *Ask, Tell, Respond* suicide prevention animations focussed on children and young people, in partnership with NSPLG. **Actions 2 & 8**

September

- Second NSPLG Annual Report published and recommendations made to Scottish Government and COSLA accepted. **Action 1**
- Launch of *United to Prevent Suicide* social movement. **Action 3**
- PHS and NES launch learning resources addressing mental health improvement and the prevention of self-harm and suicide by children and young people, in partnership with NSPLG. **Actions 2 & 8**
- PHS and NES launch facilitation package to support *Ask, Tell, Respond* suicide prevention resources for adults, in partnership with NSPLG. **Action 2**

October

- Partners sought to implement *Suicide Bereavement Support Pilot* in two NHS areas. **Action 4**
- Launch of first national *United to Prevent Suicide* public awareness campaign. **Action 3**

November

- LEP input to Police Scotland Negotiator Training commences. **Action 2**
- PHS and NES launch *Turas* suicide prevention learning resources on
 - Promoting Mental Health and Tackling Inequalities
 - Supporting People in Distress and Crisis
 - Supporting Recovery and Quality of Life for People
 - Living with Mental Ill Health in partnership with NSPLG. **Action 2**

December

- PHS and NES launch *Turas* suicide prevention learning resources on Supporting People at Risk of Self-Harm in partnership with NSPLG. **Action 2**

2021

January

- AAG undertakes Delphi study on potentially effective interventions to reduce access to means of suicide. **Action 9**
- PHS and NES launch *Turas* suicide prevention learning resources on Supporting People at Risk of Suicide in partnership with NSPLG. **Action 2**

February

- AAG reports on review of the first two years of SPAP. **Action 9**

April

- Local suicide prevention action planning guidance published, in partnership with COSLA. **Actions 1 & 9**

June

- Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care announces extension of SPAP for additional year to Sept 2022, when new joint Scottish Government and COSLA suicide prevention strategy to be published.
- LEP cited by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as an internationally significant case study in meaningful participation of people with lived experience in suicide prevention work. **Action 9**

July

- AAG completes literature review on suicidal behaviour in ethnic minority communities. **Action 7 & 9**
- NSPLG proposal to establish a Youth Advisory Group (YAG) approved. **Action 8 & 9**

August

- *Suicide Bereavement Support Pilot* service launched in NHS Ayrshire & Arran and NHS Highland, in partnership with Penumbra Mental Health and Support in Mind Scotland. **Action 4**
- NSPLG proposal to develop joint digital suicide prevention resources in collaboration with NHS 24/NHS Inform approved. **Action 6**
- *FC United to Prevent Suicide* suicide prevention campaign launched. **Action 3**

September

- Third NSPLG Annual Report published. **Action 1**
- PHS and NES launch *Turas* suicide prevention learning resources to support those working with children and young people, in partnership with NSPLG. **Actions 2 & 8**
- PHS and NES launch facilitation package to support *Ask, Tell, Respond* suicide prevention resources for children and young people, in partnership with NSPLG. **Actions 2 & 8**

October

- Recommendations made on implementing a *Time, Space, Compassion* approach to supporting people in suicidal crisis. **Action 5**
- Partners sought to recruit and support NSPLG Youth Advisory Group (YAG). **Actions 8 & 9**

November

- PHS and NES commence suicide prevention practitioner Masterclasses, in partnership with NSPLG. **Actions 2 & 9**
- First exploratory case review of suicide death in community setting completed in partnership with Grampian stakeholders. **Action 10**

December

- NSPLG Children and Young People suicide prevention participation network established. **Actions 8 & 9**
- New LEP recruitment round completed, in partnership with SAMH. **Action 9**

2022

January

- Suicidal Crisis Support Action Group formed to support implementation of *Time, Space, Compassion* approach. **Action 5**
- *Time, Space, Compassion* national implementation leads appointed. **Action 5**
- NHS 24 filming of LEP member and other video blogs for *Surviving Suicidal Thoughts* digital resources commences, in partnership with NSPLG. **Actions 6 & 9**

February

- First meeting of Suicidal Crisis Support Action Working Group supporting implementation of *Time, Space, Compassion* approach. **Action 5**

March

- Report into experiences of suicide and suicide prevention by adversely racialised people published. **Actions 7 & 9**
- Further exploratory case reviews of suicide death in community setting completed in partnership with local stakeholders. **Action 10**

April

- AAG completes rapid review of evidence of risk and protective factors for suicide in Scotland. **Actions 7 & 9**
- Evaluation of local suicide prevention planning and action across Scotland completed. **Actions 1 & 9**
- User research testing of NHS 24/NHS Inform *Surviving Suicidal Thoughts* website. **Action 6**
- YAG support partners Children in Scotland and University of Stirling appointed and recruitment commenced. **Actions 8 & 9**
- Evaluation of Suicide Bereavement Support Pilot service takes place. **Actions 4 & 9**

May

- Online seminar event on bereavement by suicide hosted by PHS and COSLA. **Action 4**

June

- *Ask, Tell, Respond* suicide prevention resources translated into Polish, Urdu and BSL. **Action 2**
- NHS 24/NHS Inform *Surviving Suicidal Thoughts* website launched. **Action 6**
- Digital marketing campaign to support launch of NHS 24/NHS Inform *Surviving Suicidal Thoughts* website via GoogleAds, Facebook, Nano and Spotify. **Action 6**
- Launch of Samaritans Scotland suicide prevention initiative aimed at men in rural communities in West Highland and Skye. **Action 7**

July

- Launch of *Better Tomorrow, United to Prevent Suicide* campaign co-designed with and for children and young people. **Actions 3 & 8**

August

- NSPLG Network Event held for NSPLG, LEP, AAG, DLs and local suicide prevention leads. **Action 1**

September

- Initial prototype of *Time, Space, Compassion* framework developed. **Action 5**
- AAG conduct evaluation of *Surviving Suicidal Thoughts* initiative. **Actions 6 & 9**
- NSPLG LEP Celebration and Learning Event held for NSPLG Network and partner organisations. **Actions 1 & 9**
- Launch of Scotland's Suicide Prevention Strategy 2022-2032 - *Creating Hope Together*.

NSPLG Lived Experience Panel (LEP)



Since we established our NSPLG Lived Experience Panel in 2019, it has been supported by SAMH and its full-time LEP Co-Ordinator. The LEP's remarkable members past and present have influenced, co-designed and co-produced across the range of SPAP actions and our broader work. We have all learned from each other and we consider the NSPLG's foundational commitment to giving equal weight to evidence by experience and academic evidence as our strongest investment.

In 2021 the World Health Organisation recognised the effectiveness of this approach when it cited our LEP and its working practices as "an internationally significant case study in meaningful participation of people with lived experience in suicide prevention work"ⁱ.

In September 2022 to mark World Suicide Prevention Day the LEP held a Celebration and Learning Event for members of the NSPLG network and partner organisations, to promote personal and group learning. Individual LEP members generously shared their own backgrounds, their experiences of being part of the Panel and their pride in making change for the better across suicide prevention in Scotland and beyond. Their work will go on to be at the heart of Scotland's new Suicide Prevention Strategy - *Creating Hope Together*.

These are some of the views of NSPLG LEP members about their work over the last four years:

"A bunch of "normal" people, brought together by grief and sad times, but who are passionate about making a difference."

"Imagine a group of individuals from all walks of life, who have been impacted by suicide in one way or another, meeting once a month on Zoom during a pandemic.....result.....recognised by the World Health Organisation!"

"The word suicide is hard to say and not one any of us want to say. But it has been said many times with the work we've done on the LEP and will continue to be said out of respect to those we've lost."

"My time on the LEP has been one of the most rewarding of my life. I have been able to make a successful contribution to a program that will make a difference and save people's lives. I have felt valued and appreciated throughout. The LEP has been recognised by the WHO as a best practice and I am so proud to have been a part of it."

"Sharing my own lived experience and learning from the shared experiences of other courageous individuals from diverse backgrounds, has been a humbling and rewarding experience. As members of the LEP, our experiences have been validated and we have been recognised as experts by experience. By using our unique expertise we have been able to highlight gaps, identify areas for improvement and shape and develop change for the future of suicide prevention in Scotland."

NSPLG Youth Advisory Group (YAG)

The Suicide Prevention Action Plan - *Every Life Matters*, committed to ensuring that all its actions would consider the needs of children and young people. This was initially achieved by working with our existing Lived Experience Panel (LEP) and Delivery Leads and we are now in the process of establishing a NSPLG Youth Advisory Group (YAG) in addition to our adult LEP.

Children in Scotland and the Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professionals Research Unit (NMAHP-RU) at the University of Stirling have been appointed to recruit, host and manage the new YAG, to be made up of young people aged 16–25 years with lived experience relating to mental health and suicide. A broader Participation Network will additionally enable many other young people to help shape suicide prevention policy and practice through Scotland's new strategy.

Recruitment to our YAG is currently in progress and we look forward to working directly with young people and those who support them to ensure that their needs are at the forefront of suicide prevention work in Scotland.

NSPLG Academic Advisory Group (AAG)

Since 2019 our NSPLG Academic Advisory Group (AAG) has provided expertise, advice, research evidence, evaluation methodology and much more to support delivery of the Suicide Prevention Action Plan (SPAP). The AAG has conducted rapid systematic reviews, provided research inputs, supported development of more timely data on suicide (prioritised during the COVID-19 pandemic), and advised on indicators, data, data collection, survey development, data analysis and evaluation.

In relation to Scotland's new Suicide Prevention Strategy - *Creating Hope Together*, members of the AAG and Public Health Scotland (PHS), have made significant contributions to the development of an outcomes-focused approach to suicide prevention, underpinned by the Integrated Motivational-Volitional Modelⁱⁱ of Suicidal Behaviour (IMV) which has also shaped the NSPLG's work on the SPAP. The AAG is currently working on the outcomes framework to be used to monitor progress of the strategy against short-, medium- and long-term outcomes.

The AAG is co-chaired by Professor Rory O'Connor (University of Glasgow) and Emeritus Professor Steve Platt (University of Edinburgh), who also act as advisers to the NSPLG and attend its meetings. Originally, the AAG comprised its co-chairs and invited academic colleagues with invaluable expertise in research and policy relating to suicidal behaviour and in evaluation design. Since January 2020, the Scottish Government has funded academic work to support delivery of the SPAP by experienced researchers Dr Tiago Zortea, Ms Heather McClelland, Ms Marianne Etherson and Ms Krystyna Loney employed at the University of Glasgow's Suicidal Behaviour Research Laboratory.

The creation of the AAG and its evolution in support of the NSPLG have been innovative. Rather than adopting the model typically used in national suicide prevention programmes, that of commissioning research and evaluation from external contractors, direct access through the AAG to relevant research and evaluation knowledge and expertise has reduced unnecessary delay and made more efficient use of resources. The AAG's influential contribution to supporting both delivery of the SPAP over the last four years and development of the new suicide prevention strategy is recognised in the commitment that "... academic research will continue to be a cornerstone of the refreshed NSPLG"ⁱⁱⁱ.

Conclusion

As members of Scotland's first National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group it has been our privilege individually and collectively to play our part over the last four years in supporting delivery of the Suicide Prevention Action Plan - *Every Life Matters*.

Our decision in 2018 to put those living with experience of the impacts of suicide at the heart of everything we do led us to establish our NSPLG Lived Experience Panel - and lately our NSPLG Youth Advisory Group. This decision has made our work over the last four years transformational rather than transactional. Giving lived experience equal weight with the academic evidence provided by establishing our NSPLG Academic Advisory Group has given our work legitimacy.

Much has changed over the last four years and we know post-pandemic pressures and the cost of living crisis are having a significant impact on people's life circumstances and mental wellbeing. While it is heartening that the number of lives lost to suicide has fallen in each of the last two years and the current rate of suicide in Scotland has now fallen below the five year average, much remains to be done.

In our June 2020 Covid-19 Statement we recommended that the Scottish Government and COSLA collaborate to develop a long-term, cross-policy, outcomes-based suicide prevention strategy for Scotland. We warmly welcome the recent publication of Scotland's new Suicide Prevention Strategy 2022-2032 — *Creating Hope Together* and commend its vision to reduce the number of suicide deaths in Scotland, whilst tackling the inequalities which contribute to suicide.

We are confident that the passion and commitment we have shared over the last four years with all those who work so hard to save lives from the tragedy of suicide will not falter over the next ten years.

As Scotland's NSPLG we commit unreservedly to go on playing our part in saving lives from the tragedy of suicide, and to help others play their parts, because suicide prevention must continue to be everyone's business.

National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group
October 2022

Annex A

Scotland's Suicide Prevention Action Plan: Every Life Matters

Action 1

The Scottish Government will set up and fund a National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group (NSPLG) by September 2018, reporting to Scottish Ministers - and also to COSLA on issues that sit within the competence of local government and integration authorities. This group will make recommendations on supporting the development and delivery of local prevention action plans backed by £3 million funding over the course of the current Parliament.

Action 2

The Scottish Government will fund the creation and implementation of refreshed mental health and suicide prevention training by May 2019. The NSPLG will support delivery across public and private sectors and, as a first step, will require that alongside the physical health training NHS staff receive, they will now receive mental health and suicide prevention training.

Action 3

The Scottish Government will work with the NSPLG and partners to encourage a coordinated approach to public awareness campaigns, which maximises impact.

Action 4

With the NSPLG, the Scottish Government will ensure that timely and effective support for those affected by suicide is available across Scotland by working to develop a Scottish Crisis Care Agreement.

Action 5

The NSPLG will use evidence on the effectiveness of differing models of crisis support to make recommendations to service providers and share best practice.

Action 6

The NSPLG will work with partners to develop and support the delivery of innovations in digital technology that improve suicide prevention.

Action 7

The NSPLG will identify and facilitate preventative actions targeted at risk groups.

Action 8

The NSPLG will ensure that all of the actions of the Suicide Prevention Action Plan consider the needs of children and young people.

Action 9

The Scottish Government will work closely with partners to ensure that data, evidence and guidance is used to maximise impact. Improvement methodology will support localities to better understand and minimise unwarranted variation in practice and outcomes.

Action 10

The Scottish Government will work with the NSPLG and partners to develop appropriate reviews into all deaths by suicide, and ensure that the lessons from reviews are shared with NSPLG and partners and acted on.

Annex B

Current and Former NSPLG Members

Current Member	Organisation	Term
Ms Rose Fitzpatrick CBE QPM	CHAIR	September 2018 - Present
Dr Carol Buchanan	Health & Social Care Partnerships	March 2021 - Present
Mr Mike Burns	Penumbra	September 2021 - Present
Ms Julie Cameron	Mental Health Foundation	February 2021 - Present
Dr Alistair Cook	Principal Medical Officer, Scottish Government	July 2020 - Present
Ms Nicola Dickie	COSLA	September 2021 - Present
Ms Fiona Drouet MBE	EmilyTest	December 2019 - Present
Dr David Hall	Royal College of Psychiatrists	September 2018 - Present
Dr Amy Knighton	Royal College of General Practitioners	September 2018 - Present
Mr Neil Mathers	Samaritans Scotland	September 2022 - Present
Professor Rory O'Connor	University of Glasgow (Academic Advisor)	September 2018 - Present
Emeritus Professor Steve Platt	University of Edinburgh (Academic Advisor)	September 2018 - Present
Ms Nicky Reid	SPFL Trust	September 2018 - Present
Ms Angela Scott	Aberdeen City Council	September 2018 - Present
Ms Claire Sweeney	Public Health Scotland	January 2021 - Present
Mr Billy Watson	SAMH	September 2018 - Present

Former Member	Organisation	Term
Ms Rachel Cackett	Samaritans Scotland	January 2020 - June 2022
Mr George Dodds	Public Health Scotland	September 2018 - January 2021
Chief Superintendent David Duncan	Police Scotland	September 2019 - January 2021
Mr Toni Giugliano	Mental Health Foundation	September 2018 - February 2021
Mr Nigel Henderson	Penumbra	September 2018 - September 2021
Chief Superintendent Linda Jones	Police Scotland	January 2021 - April 2022
Mr James Jopling	Samaritans Scotland	September 2018 - August 2019
Ms Lara McDonald	Young Person Representative, nominated via Young Scot	September 2018 - August 2021
Chief Superintendent John McKenzie	Police Scotland	September 2018 - September 2019
Dr John Mitchell CBE	Principal Medical Officer, Scottish Government	September 2018 - January 2020
Ms Ruth Moss	Lived Experience Representative	September 2018 – October 2020
Ms Jane O'Donnell	COSLA	September 2018 - September 2021
Dr Michael Smith	Health & Social Care Partnerships	September 2018 - March 2021
Mr Alan Thornburrow	Business In the Community Scotland	December 2019 - May 2022

ⁱ LIVE LIFE: An implementation guide for suicide prevention in countries (2021) World Health Organization

ⁱⁱ O'Connor, R (2011), Towards an Integrated Motivational-Volitional Model of Suicidal Behaviour, in R. O'Connor, S. Platt, J. Gordon (2011), International Handbook of Suicide Prevention: Research, Policy and Practice, John Wiley and Sons Ltd; O'Connor, R and Kirtley, The Integrated Motivational-Volitional Model of Suicidal Behaviour (2018) Phil. Trans. R Soc B 373

ⁱⁱⁱ Scotland's Suicide Prevention Strategy *Creating Hope Together* (2022) P.28



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