



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Talk to me

The National
Action Plan to
Reduce Suicide
and Self Harm
in Wales
2009-2014

Working Together to Save Lives –

Welsh Assembly Government, NHS Wales, local authorities, justice agencies, voluntary organisations, employers, education and community groups.

This document is available in the following formats and languages upon request:

Large print fonts 16 and 18

CD

Braille

Urdu

Vietnamese

Arabic

Bengali

Punjabi

Hindi

Somali

Chinese

Gujerati



75% wedi'i ailgylchu
recycled

ISBN 978 0 7504 5276 2

© Crown copyright September 2009

CMK-22-307/18251

E278 0910

Introduction

Suicide and self harm are important issues in Wales. They affect people of all ages, young and old, male and female. They affect families, friends and whole communities.

Every suicide is a life and family member lost. For those left behind, suicide leaves a wound that does not easily heal. It is one of the highest causes of death among children and young people, but people of all ages die by suicide.

Far more people harm themselves than die by suicide. For many people harming themselves is a way of coping with problems and memories of difficult things that have happened to them. When people harm themselves it shows that they have a lot of emotional pain to cope with. Some people who harm themselves will die by suicide. Helping people who harm themselves will help them to cope with their pain and will help to stop some of them from dying by suicide. Preventing suicide and reducing the number of people who harm themselves is an important issue which needs a Wales-wide approach.

To ensure action is taken, the Welsh Assembly Government is launching a national plan to reduce suicide and self harm. It will also aim to help people of all ages to feel good about themselves.

The Welsh Assembly Government's vision is to promote the mental health and wellbeing of the people of Wales; to encourage people to talk more about their personal difficulties and to make sure people get help quickly when they need it.

The five year action plan will raise awareness of suicide and self harm and help people understand that it is often preventable. The plan is aimed mainly at people who are at highest risk. It looks at seven key commitments:

- Helping people to feel good about themselves.
- Providing help early to those in need.
- Responding to crises in peoples' lives.
- Dealing with the effects of suicide and self-harm.
- Increasing research and improving information on suicide.
- Working with the media to make sure reporting on mental health and suicide is sensitive.

- Making sure that, where possible, people at risk do not have access to things which could be used for suicide.

The national action plan outlines the challenges and priorities and how organisations, working together, will deal with them. It also looks at the causes of emotional distress and tackles many of the issues which people, including young people, may face.

Talking about suicide and self harm to people responsibly does not create or increase risk, it reduces it. The best way to help people considering suicide or harming themselves is to talk to them. We need to encourage people to talk openly and to ask for help. We also need to ensure that we offer the right sort of help.

By working together, this 'Talk to Me' action plan can make a real difference. It will help people, particularly young people, to cope with difficult experiences in life.

Preventing suicide and reducing the number of people who harm themselves is everyone's business. Please be part of it.

If you want to see the full 'Talk to Me' plan or facts and figures about suicide and self harm in Wales and other countries, they will be available on-line at:

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/health/improvement/mental/?lang=en
www.nphs.wales.nhs.uk/

If you want to find out more or talk to someone about preventing suicide and self harm, a list of helpful services and helplines are provided at the end of this booklet.

Suicide and Self Harm in Wales - the Facts

The most up-to-date statistics show that between 1996 and 2006, around 300 people in Wales died each year as a result of suicide. Within this figure, rates vary between ages, men and women and local areas.

Suicide is one of the highest causes of death among young people in Wales. There are roughly

twice as many deaths in people of all ages each year as a result of suicide than due to road traffic accidents.

Around 21 in 100,000 men die as a result of suicide in Wales. The rate for women is around six for every 100,000. Suicide rates in Wales are higher than in England but lower than in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

At least 6,000 people are taken into hospital each year because they have harmed themselves. In reality, the number of people who harm themselves is probably much higher than this figure, as many people who harm themselves are treated as outpatients or do not ask for help.

Self harm is common in young people. It can be a way of coping with difficult emotional problems.

While few people who harm themselves will die from suicide, there is evidence to show that in many suicide cases the person will have a history of self harm.

National Action Plan for Wales

The plan builds on work already happening to tackle poverty, homelessness and inequality. It looks at ways to help people feel part of their community.

The plan builds on improvements in mental health services and support for people with alcohol and drug problems.

The plan looks at things that make people consider suicide or harming themselves.

These include:

- relationship problems
- losing their job
- difficulties at work or school
- being bullied or feeling like an outsider
- problems with alcohol and/or drugs
- having a serious physical or mental illness.

The plan recognises that the things in this list can affect anyone. It also recognises that some people are more likely to be affected by these things. People more likely to be affected include

young men and women, especially if they are not in school, college or work, people in prison and secure environments, older people, people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered, and people from ethnic minorities.

There is a real need to provide more help to people who show signs of suicidal thoughts or harming themselves. This support needs to be non-judgemental and readily available. The stigma linked with emotional distress and unhappiness, particularly in young men, must be removed.

People must be encouraged to talk openly about their problems and feelings.

This national plan draws together a number of actions which will help those most in need to feel better about themselves. It will have a particular focus on children and young people.

Our Commitments

The plan lists actions to deliver the following seven commitments:

1 Our Commitment...

To help people feel good about themselves by:

- encouraging people, particularly young people, to talk openly about their problems and feelings;
- removing the embarrassment linked with emotional problems and mental illness;
- developing healthier school, college and work places;
- improving awareness and understanding among the public and professionals;
- developing healthier and safer prison and secure environments;
- making sure children and young people feel safe and looked after.

2 Our Commitment...

To ensure early action is taken by:

- encouraging people to ask for help as soon as they are feeling stressed, considering harming themselves or having suicidal thoughts;

- providing more support services;
- making it easy to get information about people who can help;
- improving the way we diagnose and help people with depression and other mental illnesses;
- providing more help and better treatment for people with drug and alcohol problems;
- providing support to those in prisons and custody so they do not harm themselves;
- making sure specialist services respond more quickly to those most in need.

3 Our Commitment...

To respond to crisis in peoples' lives by:

- making sure people know about mental health services and how to contact them;
- improving professionals' understanding and response to people who harm themselves and the things that make people vulnerable like being lonely or bullied because of their sexuality, race or disability;
- monitoring services received by people to ensure they are meeting their needs.

4 Our Commitment...

To deal with the effects of suicide and self harm by:

- improving the care and support offered to people who have lost someone to suicide;
- improving the care and support offered to families who are coping with the distress of someone harming themselves;
- improving the support offered to professionals dealing with suicide;
- making sure support services are available to help communities cope with the fall out of suicide.

5 Our Commitment...

To increase research and improve information by:

- encouraging research and making sure information about suicide and self harm is available;
- learning lessons that inform future prevention plans;
- monitoring rates of self-harm and suicide to

ensure organisations can meet the needs of the communities they serve;

- establishing a national group to look at the needs of people who harm themselves.

Our Commitment...

6 To work with the media to ensure sensitive reporting on mental health and suicide by:

- discussing mental health issues with the Welsh media;
- encouraging the media to improve how suicide is reported;
- promoting national media guidance by working with the Samaritans and other government departments in the UK;
- using the media to deliver positive mental health messages and raise awareness of suicide and self-harm in a sensitive way.

Our Commitment...

7 To restrict access to things which could be used for suicide by:

- ensuring that where possible, access to things that could be used for suicide is made difficult for those at risk;

- putting signs up with phone numbers at places where people have died encouraging people to ask for help;
- ensuring all prison, custody and mental health settings are safe.

Achieving Success

Organisations and communities across Wales will need to work together to put the national action plan into practice. This includes local authorities, health and social care services, churches, youth workers, community groups, employers, schools, colleges, housing agencies, helplines, police, prison services, families and friends and voluntary organisations, especially ones that help people with relationship difficulties, ones that help people with mental health problems and ones that help people get over a death.

The Welsh Assembly Government will provide leadership to support the plan. It will also raise public and professional awareness of the need to move forward and make improvements.

Working with children and young people, and those who are most vulnerable, will be a vital part in delivering the plan. The plan will be regularly reviewed and reported to Ministers to make sure improvements are being made.

Some Helpful Services, Websites and Phone Lines

Samaritans

Samaritans provides confidential non-judgemental emotional support, 24 hours a day for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which could lead to suicide.

web: www.samaritans.org

phone: 08457 90 90 90 or email jo@samaritans.org

CALL Mental Health Helpline

Community Advice and Listening Line (CALL) offers a free 24-hour confidential listening and support helpline for Wales.

web: www.callhelpline.org.uk

phone: 0800 132 737 or text 'help' to 81066

ChildLine

The UK's free and confidential, 24-hour helpline for children in distress or danger.

web: www.childline.org.uk

phone: 0800 1111

NHS Direct Wales

Provides health and advice, 24 hours a day,
365 days a year.

web: www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

phone: 0845 46 47

Dan - The Wales Drug and Alcohol Helpline

A free and bilingual telephone drugs helpline
providing a single point of contact for anyone in
Wales wanting further information or help relating
to drugs or alcohol.

web: www.dan247.org.uk

phone: 0800 6 33 55 88

Mind Cymru's ASIST programme

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)
provides practical training for caregivers seeking
to prevent the immediate risk of suicide.

web: www.mind.org.uk

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)

This course is aimed at a wide range of groups
and individuals across Wales and teaches
people how to provide initial help to someone

in mental distress, how to deal with a crisis situation, and how to guide people towards appropriate help.

web: www.mhfa-wales.org.uk

All Wales Mental Health Promotion Network

Provides leadership and a focus for mental health promotion in Wales. The Network is one of the Welsh Assembly Government's flagship initiatives to help improve the mental health of the population.

web: www.publicmentalhealth.org

Cruse Bereavement Cymru

Cruse offers free bereavement care and support to people who have experienced the loss of someone close.

web: www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

phone: Day by Day Helpline 0844 477 9400

PAPYRUS UK

PAPYRUS UK is a national charity working in suicide prevention, focusing predominantly on the emotional well-being of children, teenagers and young adults.

web: www.papyrus-uk.org

phone: HOPELineUK 0800 068 41 41