

From: Colin Thompson, Public Health Specialist, KCC
To: Thanet Health and Wellbeing Board
Date: 12th January 2017
Subject: Suicide Prevention update
Classification: Unrestricted

Introduction:

In November 2016, Secretary of State for Health Jeremy Hunt wrote to all local authorities highlighting their role in suicide prevention planning. Alongside the letter, Public Health England published guidance to local authorities called “Local Suicide Prevention Planning: A practice resource”. The guidance can be seen [here](#). This paper provides an update on the suicide prevention work Public Health is leading on behalf of KCC. It sets out how we currently meet the majority of the recommendations for best practice, and highlights those areas where improvements could be made.

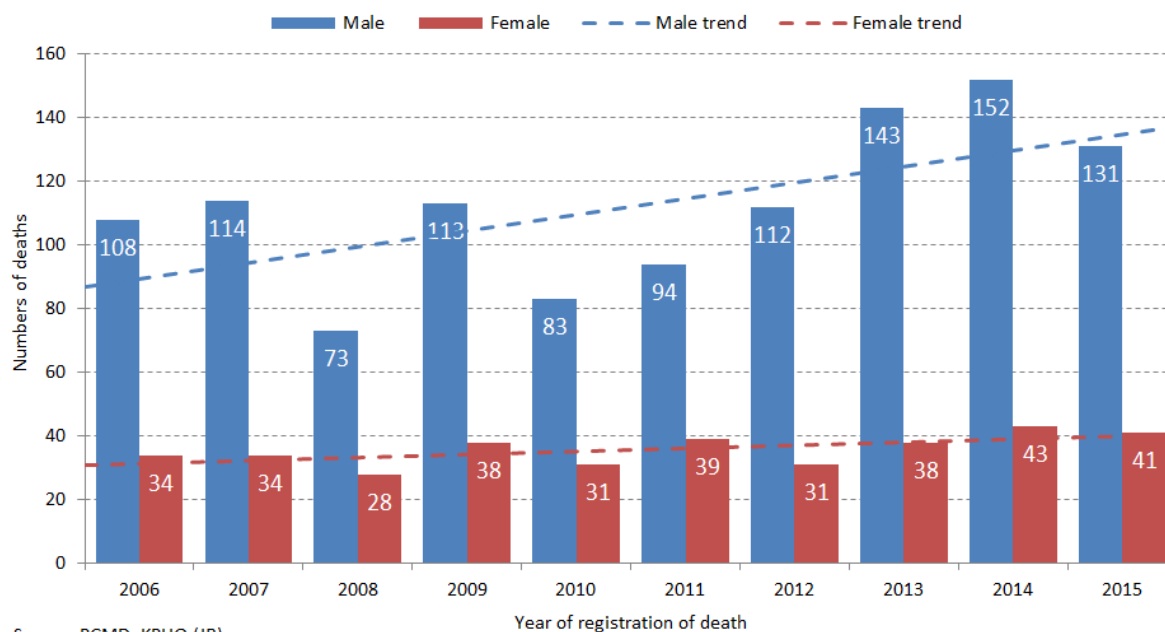
Recommendation:

Thanet Health and Wellbeing Board are asked to note the contents of the report and make comments and suggestions on the progress update.

1.0 Kent context

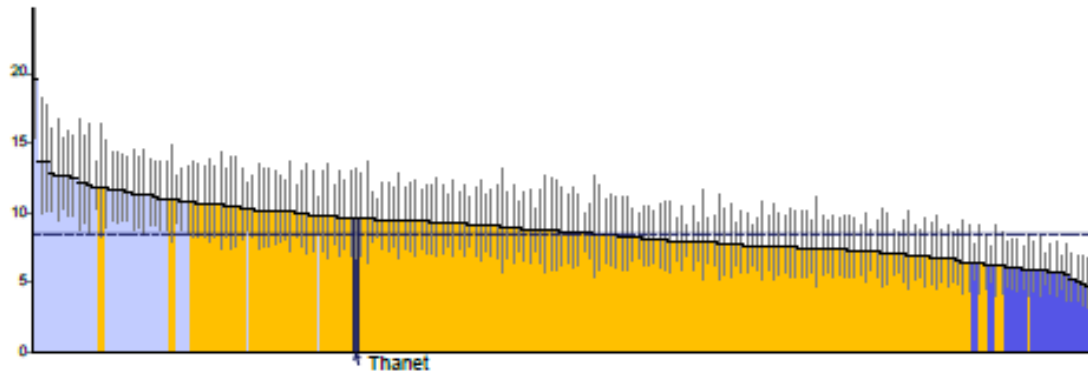
- 1.1 Every suicide is a tragic event which has a devastating impact on the friends and family of the victim, and can be felt across the whole community.
- 1.2 There were 172 deaths by suicide or undetermined causes registered by coroners in Kent in 2015. (Undetermined deaths are accepted as probable suicides for the purposes of statistics). This is a slight fall from 185 in 2014.
- 1.3 76% of suicide victims registered by coroners in Kent in 2015 were men.
- 1.4 The suicide numbers for Thanet is variable each year. The rate is greater than the England average, but not statistically significant higher

**Numbers of deaths from suicide and undetermined causes, Kent and Medway, 2006-2015,
by gender and year of registration, aged 15+**



Number of Suicides in Thanet local authority, England, 1996-2010

Year	deaths
1996	13
1997	13
1998	15
1999	8
2000	12
2001	13
2002	6
2003	6
2004	8
2005	7
2006	8
2007	10
2008	7
2009	10
2010	8



- 1.5 Research conducted during the production of the 2015-2020 Suicide Prevention Strategy showed that only 20% of suicide victims in Kent and Medway had been in contact with secondary mental health services in the 12 months before they died.
- 1.6 KCC Public Health chairs and co-ordinates the multi-agency Kent and Medway Suicide Prevention Steering Group and wrote the 2015-2020 suicide prevention strategy.
- 1.7 Membership of the Steering Group includes individuals from:
 - British Transport Police
 - Canterbury Christ Church University
 - Carers Representatives
 - DGS CCG
 - Kent Coroner Service
 - Kent Fire and Rescue Service
 - Kent and Medway Partnership Trust (KMPT)
 - Kent County Council (PH and social services)
 - Kent Police
 - HMP Prisons
 - Medway Council (PH and social services)
 - Network Rail
 - NHS England
 - Rethink Mental Illness
 - South Kent Coast CCG
 - The Samaritans
 - West Kent CCG
- 1.8 The 2015-2020 Suicide Prevention Strategy highlighted that middle-aged men, not known to secondary mental health services are a high risk group in Kent. To address this, KCC Public Health developed and launched the Release the Pressure social marketing campaign.



1.9 The campaign deliberately avoided using the words 'mental health' as most stressed men don't believe that what they are suffering is a mental illness. In addition, the campaign used the experiences of real men to make other men aware of a 24/7 charity helpline (already commissioned by KCC) and actually make a call.

1.10 The impact has been strong, in the first 7 months of the campaign:

- a total of 10,583 people called the helpline
- of which 3385 were men
- the helpline received nearly 500 male callers a month which is a 56% increase on before the campaign launched (this is nearly 200 extra calls from men every month)
- total number of calls per month (including men and women) are up 30%.

1.11 The feedback from callers to the helpline has been just as reassuring as the increase in call numbers:

Release the Pressure really spoke to me. I was panicking but I feel so much better now, thank you.

Getting your number was the best thing that has happened to me. Thank you for your help, I feel I have a good plan in place and I can settle now.

2.0 KCC's contribution to national suicide prevention policy development

2.1 Tim Woodhouse (KCC Public Health Programme Manager) was a member of PHE's national expert panel which helped developed the new PHE guidance which accompanied the Secretary of State's recent letter

2.2 The approach to partnership working that KCC's Public Health team take on suicide prevention is used as a case study in the new [PHE Guidance](#) (p.18)

2.3 The Terms of Reference for the Kent and Medway Suicide Prevention Steering Group are included in the new [PHE Guidance](#) as a sample of good practice (Appendix 3 p.76)

2.4 The Release the Pressure social marketing campaign has recently been awarded Silver Medal in the Best Public Sector Campaign of the Year by the Chartered Institute of Public Relations

2.5 The Local Government Association are including a case study on KCC's suicide prevention work in their new good practice document (to be published in Feb or March 2017).

3.0 How KCC meets the recommendations from the Secretary of State and the related PHE guidance

3.1 In his letter to local authorities the Secretary of State refers to a new target to reduce the number of suicides by 10% by 2020. If the 2015 number of suicides (172) is used as a baseline, the target equates to 17 fewer deaths a year. Through the existing Steering Group KCC Public Health will work with all local partners (including CCGs) to ensure that target is met and exceeded if possible.

3.2 Within the PHE Guidance, there are three main areas of responsibility for local authorities

i. Building a partnership approach

KCC Public Health facilitate and chair the Kent and Medway Suicide Prevention Steering Group with extensive membership from statutory agencies, public sector partners, voluntary sector groups, mental health charities, academics and individuals. The Steering Group meets quarterly.

ii. Making sense of national and local data

The Kent Public Health Observatory produces an annual audit of suicide statistics using data from the Primary Care Mortality Dataset. Local media monitoring is undertaken on an ongoing basis and all partners regularly share information between meetings if unusual suicide activity is identified.

iii. Developing a suicide prevention strategy and action plan

With strong input from the Steering Group, KCC Members and the public, Public Health published the 2015-2020 Kent and Medway Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan in Sept 2015. The Action Plan is monitored and updated at every quarterly Steering Group meeting

4.0 Areas for development

KCC Public Health have identified the following actions as priorities for 2017:

- i. In-depth analysis of coroner verdicts
Public Health and the Kent Coroner Service have agreed to work together on a more in-depth analysis of coroner verdicts than has previously been possible. The purpose will be to identify any common patterns or trends that are not possible to spot through analysis of top level statistics
- ii. Release the Pressure – phase two
Another wave of publicity is planned for spring 2017 to reinforce the awareness created by the social marketing campaign
- iii. Better support for bereaved families
This is currently a priority within Kent and Medway Suicide Prevention Strategy but it is an area that could be developed. Public Health will work with charities, CCGs and the Kent Coroner Service to strengthen the support available.

5.0 Recommendation

Thanet Health and Wellbeing Board are asked to note the contents of the report and make comments and suggestions on the progress update.

6.0 Contact details

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