

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

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IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING AND PREVENTING SUICIDE IN WORCESTERSHIRE

Board Sponsor

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Priorities

This report is relevant to the following Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prevention & inequalities | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Homes, Communities & Places |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mental Health & Wellbeing | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jobs & Opportunities |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Healthy Living at All Ages | |

Safeguarding

This report has a direct impact on safeguarding children or adults. A number of people at risk of suicide may be under the care of local services that have a core safeguarding role e.g., mental health services, social care etc.

Item for Decision, or Information & Assurance

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decision | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information/assurance |
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Recommendation

- 1. The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to note and receive assurance of the breadth of partnership work being undertaken in Worcestershire to improve mental health and wellbeing and prevent suicides.**

Executive Summary

2. Our mental health and physical health are interconnected. Having good mental and physical health and wellbeing is the key to enable people to live happy, prosperous, and independent lives.
3. Suicide prevention remains a national and local priority since the national suicide prevention strategy, [Preventing Suicide in England: A cross-government outcomes strategy to save lives](#), was first published in 2012. Its key aims are to reduce the suicide rate in the general population in England and better support those bereaved or affected by suicide. A new national strategy is expected in 2023.

4. The latest Office for National Statistics (ONS) data shows that the overall suicide rate in Worcestershire is not statistically different than the England average.

5. A Suicide Prevention Partnership Group oversees activity in Worcestershire taken to prevent suicide and improve mental health and wellbeing. A robust Real Time Suspected Suicide Surveillance (RTSS) system has recently been established in Worcestershire which allows for real time monitoring of all suspected suicides allowing for initiation of bereavement support for those affected, as well as detecting any patterns which could benefit from targeted prevention support.

6. An enhanced programme of wellbeing support and suicide prevention has been in place in Worcestershire since 2020. It has raised the profile of suicide prevention and encouraged help seeking behaviour across all ages in Worcestershire. This work has recently been shortlisted for a West Midlands Public Health award and includes the Orange Button Campaign, staff and community training, local media and campaigns targeting our communities most at risk.

Suicide Prevention in Worcestershire

7. The death of someone by suicide has a devastating effect on families, friends, workplaces, schools, and communities. Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy. Social, psychological, cultural and many other factors can interact to increase the risk of suicidal behaviour, but the stigma attached to suicide means that many people who are in need of help feel unable to seek it.

8. The latest Office for National Statistics (ONS) data release shows overall the suicide rate in Worcestershire is not statistically different than the England average. Suicide rates are higher among males than females in Worcestershire as it is in England

9. People from across all types of local communities die by suicide and most suicides are the result of a wide and complex set of interrelated factors. As a result, suicide prevention requires work across a range of settings targeting a wide variety of audiences such as: public health, primary care, mental health services and other public services such as housing and education. Loneliness and isolation can also have a significant impact on our mental health and wellbeing and in some cases can lead to suicidal thoughts and behaviour. Improving mental health and wellbeing across the population will all contribute towards preventing suicides.

10. The Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2022-2032) demonstrates the important role mental health and wellbeing plays in all aspects of our health. The strategy outlines how by working together we will take a whole population approach to improving mental health and wellbeing and preventing mental ill health across Worcestershire.

11. Alongside several mental health support services in Worcestershire, an enhanced Herefordshire and Worcestershire Suicide Prevention Programme has been implemented since November 2020 funded by NHS England. The programme's objectives are to contribute to a reduction of suicides across Herefordshire and Worcestershire particularly in middle aged (30-65 years) men. Work on this programme has focused on:

- a. Removing stigma
- b. Improving identification of those at risk
- c. Creating opportunities before crisis point
- d. Build resilience, capacity, and wellbeing (asset approach).

12. Establishing safe media practices around suicide is an important part of suicide prevention. Unsafe reporting can increase the risk of contagion, give unhelpful profile to locations and methods as well as being a source of immense distress to those bereaved by suicide. Samaritans Media Service is commissioned in Worcestershire to help with monitoring and managing local news, ensuring reporters adhere to national guidance and offering funded suicide communications training to relevant employees across the sector. The Samaritans media team is also available to work with local reporters in real time on key coverage, for example high-profile inquests, to support them in producing appropriate content.

13. Previous research has shown that suicides are more likely in challenging economic times. Therefore, suicide prevention should remain a key priority for all partners in the integrated care system.

Suicide Prevention Strategy

14. The [Cross-Government suicide prevention workplan](#) (January 2019) commits every area of Government to taking action on suicide. It outlines that a whole system approach is required, with local government, primary care, health and criminal justice services, voluntary organisations and local people affected by suicide having a role in developing and implementing a local suicide prevention plan. In 2020 the Government announced the NHS Mental Health Implementation Plan which outlined significant investment into suicide prevention, this investment supports local prevention plans and implementation of suicide bereavement support services.

15. The Worcestershire Suicide Prevention Partnership reports to the Health & Wellbeing Board and oversees the Worcestershire Suicide Prevention Strategy & Action Plan which was initially developed in 2018. A new Strategy and Action Plan is being prepared working with a range of partners for launch later in 2023.

16. To date several consultation exercises have taken place to create the new strategy and key stakeholders and partners across the County having been consulted as well as utilising the engagement findings from the public from across Worcestershire. As part of developing the prevention strategy an equality screening will be completed.

Real Time Suspected Suicide Surveillance (RTSS)

17. National suicide mortality data does not provide a 'real time' understanding of suicide in Worcestershire. It is based on death registrations following coroner inquests which can take up to a year to be completed. Due in part to these legal processes, a real time system allows for timely recording of suspected suicides. The long-term collation of this information and data allows the identification of trends and patterns which can be used to inform further suicide prevention strategies as well as implement community initiatives to prevent future suicides.

18. A police-lead RTSSS system was established in 2022 has been collecting data since September 2022. Learning was taken from existing systems around England to best implement the system locally and uses information sharing agreements with its members to maintain confidentiality. The aim of the RTSSS is to seek to reduce deaths by suicide in Worcestershire and collaborate to identify patterns and opportunities to intervene.

Having Real Time Surveillance allows for:

- sharing information in a timely manner

- implementing an early alert system
- responding to a potential suicide or contagion
- enabling those affected and bereaved by suspected suicide to receive support in a timely manner

19. A Suicide Audit Group (SAG) has been set up to monitor and oversee the RTSSS system. This group meets bi-monthly to review and where possible, make recommendations in collaboration with a range of partners aimed at reducing the number of deaths due to suicides in Worcestershire. This group reports and shares applicable findings to the Mental Health Collaborative, ICB Mortality Group and Suicide Prevention Partnership for further action or discussion.

20. The SAG and Suicide Prevention Partnership include representatives from:

- Worcestershire County Council - Public Health
- West Mercia Police
- The British Transport Police
- Worcestershire Acute Trust
- Herefordshire & Worcestershire Health & Care Trust
- Herefordshire & Worcestershire ICB
- Worcestershire Coroner
- Worcestershire's Suicide Bereavement Support
- District Councils
- Voluntary and Community sector
- Samaritans
- People affected by suicide

Other partners or services may be asked to contribute/attend when required.

21. A Bereaved by Suicide Service for Worcestershire has been running since 2021. It acts as a crucial part of the RTSSS process, with real time notifications of deaths making a timely offer of support to all residents bereaved by suicide possible for the first time (as per the NHS Long Term Plan). The liaison worker provides basic emotional and practical support to anyone affected by suicide. Practical support has involved advocacy, help returning to work, support and guidance around inquests and connecting people into community groups.

Improving Mental Health and Wellbeing

22. While all mental wellbeing work ultimately contributes to the county's suicide prevention agenda, the Worcestershire Suicide Prevention Plan and current action plan also conducts specific suicide prevention workstreams in line with national guidance. These are delivered in conjunction with Worcestershire's Suicide Prevention Partnership group. A range of these activities are outlined below.

23. The [Acting Together to Prevent Suicide campaign](#) sits under the Health & Care Trust's 'Now We're Talking' campaign umbrella. This builds on the agenda to streamline mental health messaging across both counties and promotes local services such as 'Qwell' and the 24hr urgent NHS helpline. The campaign launch was fronted by GB boxer Delicious Orie in September 2021 with an initial focus on reaching into middle-aged men, challenging stigma, and raising awareness of available support. Activity to date

includes public events, radio & television campaigning, community posters, signposting flyers and awareness raising videos shared across the counties.

24. A separate strand of the campaign exists for the farming community, with posters funded in all farming markets across Herefordshire and Worcestershire and tailored signposting. In 2022 a [video and engagement report](#) was conducted with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in partnership with Travellers Times. The aim was to raise awareness of community-specific support available, address the substantial inequalities in suicide rates for these populations and make the wider system aware of the challenges and barriers that remain for them in accessing local mental health services.

25. The [Orange Button Community Scheme](#) is a voluntary scheme launched in September 2022 across Herefordshire and Worcestershire. It allows people with relevant suicide prevention training to make their skills more visible to others by wearing an orange pin badge. Wearers also receive literature about suicide to display in their settings. The scheme has over 200 wearers and its profile is being grown through an accompanying funded training offer and developing a peer support network. A key success of the scheme so far is its breadth. Wearers include different local NHS and VCSE colleagues, workers in higher risk private industries (such as construction), representatives from a local rugby club, local community members and funeral directors.

26. Two types of funded training have recently been delivered across Worcestershire two, two-day intervention skills courses and 12 half-day suicide prevention courses. Participants showed improved confidence in their skills and knowledge around suicide, including having a better awareness of local and national signposting resources. They were more likely to ask someone about suicide following the training. Priority spaces were allocated to well-placed VCSE colleagues and 180 people attended.

27. A workplace programme of activity has been running since March 2022, with work to target higher-risk industries for suicide. This constitutes regular online webinars run in partnership with local stakeholders, [an online suicide prevention resource hub](#) and commissioned face to face suicide prevention awareness sessions for employees. The programme aims to increase employers' knowledge of available tools, resources, and training to support better mental wellbeing and suicide prevention amongst their staff. The commissioned awareness sessions are designed to empower employees to use them.

28. Webinars have been attended by 93 business representatives and recipients of face-to-face awareness sessions include fork-lift truck and manufacturing companies. The suicide prevention policy template for businesses on the online hub has had 74 unique downloads between June 2022 and March 2023.

29. Public health has strengthened relations with the Samaritans, ensuring that relevant preventative action in and around communities taking place and signage sits in line with the latest guidance and information.

30. In March 2023 Public Health launched a community micro-grants scheme offering pots of £250 to support resident-led activities across Worcestershire with outcomes that connect communities and improve mental wellbeing. It aims to benefit residents who are not currently involved with groups or the wider community by appealing to small neighbourhood groups and grass-roots initiatives. The scheme is open for applications until the end of July 2023, to date, 8 projects have been approved under the scheme, including enhancing the reach of a Bulgarian Folklore Dance group and supporting a

crafts group providing a free hot meal and drink to lonely and isolated residents to increase connections.

Children and Young People

31. In 2021 suicide prevention training was offered to middle, secondary, and special schools, and further education colleges. 127 staff attended including staff from other relevant organisations such as youth services, social care and school nursing. Additional training around child bereavement and trauma informed care has been rolled out to first, primary, middle, and secondary schools.

32. A free confidential 24/7 text service, WOO 85258 is available for all those experiencing stress, anxieties, low mood, struggling to cope or need to talk. Marketing has focused on young people, including out of home marketing in December 2022 and January 2023. In addition, KOOTH, offers a safe and confidential digital platform with free online counselling for young people.

33. Various services are available to support from Herefordshire & Worcestershire Health & Care NHS Trust. Including ChatHealth text messaging to contact the school nurse service as well as the Reach4Wellbeing group programmes.

34. A wide programme of work on mental health support for children and young people is ongoing. This includes a mental and emotional health toolkit for schools including a directory of services. Countywide the establishment of wellbeing and emotional support teams (WEST) in schools and colleges offers individual support to children and young people plus support for schools to develop their whole school approach to mental health. Social prescribing for is available for young people in some areas via GP practices or schools.

Loneliness and Isolation

35. Worcestershire's Suicide Prevention Partnership works closely with Worcestershire's Loneliness Partnership, a group which brings representatives from over 30 organisations (e.g., local government, public sector and VCSE) across the county together to share best practice and look at local opportunities to tackle loneliness and isolation.

36. The Loneliness Partnership has launched The Stay Connected pledge, which aims end to loneliness by encouraging organisations to take simple steps to help people feel more connected, less isolated, and ultimately healthier. By signing the pledge, organisations can demonstrate their commitment to tackling loneliness and its associated stigma by developing an organisational culture which supports staff and the public to stay connected.

Impact on health disparities

37. There is no one type of person who dies by suicide. Men are 3 times more likely to take their own lives in England and this is the same in Worcestershire. Nationally males aged 45-64 years have had the highest suicide rate over the past 10 years; local data follows a similar trend for Worcestershire. People living in the most deprived areas of England have a higher risk of suicide than those living in the least deprived areas.

38. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are a known local population experiencing significant inequalities and addition outreach was conducted on the basis of the national estimate that their suicide rate is 6 times that of the general population. This led to the development of the previously referenced video developed with the community.

39. The occupational group with the highest overall number of suicides is skilled trades (which includes agriculture). Residents in these trades account for nearly a quarter of all the suicide/undetermined deaths in our working age group, despite only making up 11% of the workforce. Of these, the greatest number of deaths are in electrical trades and the construction/building trades.

40. To help prevent future deaths, work to date has been tailored to help address these disparities; workplace initiatives have been well marketed in skilled-trades groups and have involved input from industry-specific charities such as The Lighthouse Club (construction) and the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institute.

41. The first phase of the awareness campaign was designed with local lived experience input and engagement. Training places have been particularly marketed to VCSE organisations working with deprived communities and those coming into regular contact with vulnerable men.

Legal, financial and HR implications

42. No legal, financial or HR implications have been identified in this report.

Contact point and partnership working

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Relevant background reading

46. 'Were in your corner' video: [Delicious Orié - We're In Your Corner - Suicide Prevention - YouTube](#)

47. 'Hold out a hand' video developed in conjunction with Rural Media: [Hold out a Hand - YouTube](#)