

Cross Party Group on Suicide Prevention - sponsored by Jayne Bryant MS

Tuesday 19th October 2021

12.30pm – 1.25pm

via Zoom

Meeting notes

Attendees: Alun Fletcher (Mental Health Matters Wales), Meryl James (Samaritans), Glenn Page (Mind Cymru), Steve Siddall (RNLI), David Williams (Farming Community Network), Willow Holloway (Fair Treatment for the Women of Wales/Autistic UK), Dr Alys Cole-King (4 Mental Health), Rabiya Nasir (ONS), Madeline Phillips (Welsh NHS Confederation), David Crews (South Wales Fire and Rescue), Jayne Bell (Cardiff and Vale University Health Board), Amy Bainton (Barndaro's Cymru), Maggy Corkhill (Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB T4HM Partnership Board/ Co-alc Alliance), Ana Reis-Rogers (Living in Suicide's Shadow), Lisa Hammett (Living in Suicide's Shadow), Emyr John (ONS), Janette Bourne (Cruse Bereavement Care Cymru), Philippa Watkins (Welsh Parliament), Helen Bennett (South Wales Police), Kate Heneghan (Papyrus), Detective Superintendent Phil Sparrow (South Wales Police), David Patel (Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board), Claire Cotter (NHS Wales Health Collaborative), Ceri Fowler (Cardiff and Vale University Health Board), Dr Dave Williams (Aneurin Bevan University Health Board), Emma Kneebone (2 Wish Upon A Star), Peter Thomas (South Wales Police), Caryl Stock (Amber Project), Liz Williams (Royal College of Psychiatrists), Jackie Williams (Public Health Wales), Mark Smith (6699 Project), Gareth Davies (Tir Dewi), Lucy Smith (HMPPS), Professor Ann John (Swansea University), James Radcliffe (Platfform), Charlotte Knight (Welsh Parliament), Sarah Murphy MS (Welsh Parliament), Emma Gooding (Samaritans), Sarah Stone (Samaritans), Jayne Bryant MS (Welsh Parliament), Laura Frayne (Samaritans).

Apologies: Llyr Gruffyd MS, Rhun Ap Iorwerth MS, PCC Llwywelyn (Dyfed Powys Police), Ana Laing (Samaritans), Delyth Jewell MS, Altaf Hussain MS, Sian Bamford (Dyfed Powys Police).

12.30pm: Welcome and introductions

Jayne Bryant MS introduced herself and thanked everyone for attending. Jayne acknowledged that some of what may be discussed at the meeting may be upsetting for some and advised attendees to step away and have a break from the meeting if needed and to reach out for support following the meeting if they need to.

12:35pm: Operation of the group

As this was the first meeting of the group, an election process had to take place for Chair of the group and the Secretariat. Sarah Stone explained there had been one nomination for the Chair, which was Jayne Bryant MS and that Jayne had received Cross-Party support from Senedd Members and subject to final confirmation from those members the group should be fine to go ahead. Jayne Bryant MS was subsequently nominated as Chair of the Cross-Party Group, and this was agreed. Jayne Bryant MS nominated Samaritans Cymru to act as

the Group's Secretariat, and this was agreed. Jayne thanked Samaritans for taking on this role and their continued support.

12:45pm: Setting out the aims of the group

Jayne Bryant MS asked the group what they thought the aims of the group should be. Sarah Stone added that the purpose of a cross-party group is to inform debate and discussion and the group could focus on areas of concern, interest, stimulate debates in plenary, write reports etc. After this meeting Samaritans could also circulate information about what the group was doing before if needed and pick up on suggestions people have for future.

Jayne thought for each meeting the group need to try to have an action and this could be in the form of writing letters to ministers, asking for debate in the Senedd etc. Jayne added that everything discussed in these meetings should have a purpose so we can see if we are meeting aims of the group. At the end of the meeting, we can confirm the focus of the next meeting. It is also important that staff members of MSs receive invites to the group so they can attend on their behalf if needed. Jayne added that the group need to think about how we can influence Senedd members and ministers. We are lucky we have Lynne Neagle MS as previous Chair of this group, and she is now in a new role as Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing. Jayne explained Lynne is keen to come to next meeting in January and thought that Lynne could set out her aims and objectives at the meeting for the group to hear more about her role. The group agreed with this.

Action: Jayne Bryant MS to invite Lynne Neagle MS to next meeting in January to speak about her role as Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing.

1pm: Cross-Party group work programme

Jayne asked the group whether there were any other topics they feel we should be taken forward.

Mark Smith commented how he had been really encouraged by Samaritans research on men's mental health. In recent months, Mark has been talking to six different men's mental health peer support groups across South Wales and trying to look at how they can bring those groups together to form some kind of network. Through their work the support groups have identified a need and feedback from the groups has been quite telling. They have also been referring men for counselling but to continue the work there needs to be more funding. The groups are spread across three health boards areas and Mark asked if there would be scope to explore this further in this group. Jayne Bryant advised the group could look at this and that perhaps the group could do a presentation at a future meeting.

Janette Bourne explained how the agenda around bereavement is quite active at the moment and Lynne Neagle MS has taken up this portfolio as part of her ministerial role and the launch of a new framework is imminent. This will help make sure we know what landscape looks like in terms of bereavement support in Wales. It is also hoped this framework will give people equal access to support wherever they live in Wales and a grant is also being made available to support this work. Janette added that there is lot of work being done on suicide prevention at the moment and highlighted the work of the National Advisory Group on Suicide and Self-harm and the role of the national and regional suicide and self-harm prevention co-ordinators. Janette suggested that being able to dovetail all that current work into our future discussions would be useful. Jayne Bryant agreed that bereavement work is very important, and this CPG could help add value to work Welsh Government is doing in this area.

Jayne Bryant confirmed that Sarah Murphy MS had joined the meeting.

Amy Bainton suggested a focus on needs and experiences of young people would be important. Amy explained that Barnardo's are concerned about the impact of the pandemic and the way Welsh Government support may need to adapt. She asked whether there could be an opportunity to reflect a bit on the kind of issues services are seeing and if we could then relay this to Welsh Government. Jayne Bryant explained that she is also Chair of the Children Young People and Education committee and will be able to feedback relevant issues to the committee that the CPG discuss. Jayne added she is keen that we communicate with all relevant committees.

Willow Holloway explained she would like the group to look at the high rate of suicide in the autistic community and the high rate in women. Another issue to explore would be the connections between suicide and chronic pain and also the link between suicide and benefits system. Jayne thanked Willow for the suggestions and commented that having specific focuses and people come to give the group evidence in these areas will help shine a light on these issues.

Lisa Hammett wanted to follow on from what Mark said about men's mental health support groups. Lisa explained she had been unaware of these groups and had started her own support group in Carmarthen and felt there needs to be connections available to show the groups that are available, so people are aware what is out there. Jayne Bryant agreed that bringing different groups together is key and there is a need to try and coordinate.

Glenn Page explained that he thinks a key focus for this group is to continue to look at what was achieved in the last Senedd term and the Health and Social Care Committee's recommendations to Welsh Government from their Everybody's Business report on suicide prevention. Glenn asked whether the committee will have capacity to return to the report in this term and that it would be good to ask questions on the outstanding actions in the report that Welsh Government committed to, especially on access to crisis care services. He added that it is important all that was achieved is continued and the group hold people to account to make sure the recommendations are implemented. Also, with Together for Mental Health coming to an end and the independent evaluation and review of Talk to Me Too that has been commissioned, would this group have chance to feed into that work and the direction of travel of what will come next? Jayne explained the Health and Social Care Committee want to build on the good work that was done by the Everybody's Business report and recognise the need to see further recommendations delivered. Jayne suggested that this could be raised this with Lynne Neagle MS at the January meeting of this group. Jayne explained that at the moment all committees are still looking at their priorities and enquiries they would like to do, so it may well be the committee will look at this in this Senedd but we need to work smartly and see what we can add value to.

Gareth Davies commented on information being discussed in the chat box about statistics around suicide and urged caution, as suicides figures are not always as simple as they seem and added that the recent statistics in farming show there has been no reduction in suicides. Sarah Stone agreed that we caution needs to be taken when discussing suicide statistics. Sarah added that Everybody's Business was great report and we need to build on it and understand the challenges people face and that we need to continue to have a stand-alone suicide prevention plan in Wales.

Kate Heneghan commented that it was great this important group is back. Kate explained how social determinants of health crosses over many government departments and felt a focus on children and young people should be a key area of focus for the group as well as

data collection and trying to capture self-harm statistics. Kate asked whether Professor Ann John could provide information on statistics at a future meeting. Kate explained she was also interested to look at pathways for young people discussed in the thematic review and that we need to look at missed opportunities and learn from good work that has been carried out. Jayne Bryant suggested the group could write to the Children, Young People and Education Committee and the Health and Social Care Committee to highlight these key themes identified by the group. We could also put something together for Lynne Neagle MS in advance of the January meeting and ask for updates on certain issues.

Maggy Corkhill explained she wanted an opportunity to present on her work as part of the Co-Alc Alliance and to explore the possible inclusion of this work coming into the Talk to Me Too strategy. Maggy talked about recent Imperial College research in this area looking at the link between cocaine, and alcohol use and suicide. Maggy discussed the report further and explained how the research wanted more evidence in this area and that there is a need for increased education in this area. Professor Ann John made a comment in the chat box about this research and explained that work is being done in this area in Wales looking at data in SAIL to extend the Imperial College research. The ethical approvals have just come through so we will have Wales specific data on cocaine, alcohol and suicide. Jayne Bryant suggested that this could be a theme for future meeting and something to raise with committees.

David Crews wanted to highlight observations from his role in South Wales Fire and Rescue. He felt this group could be a good opportunity to highlight good practice and the need for real time data. He suggested the group could also focus on the good work done in communities. David also wanted to draw attention to the impact of dealing with suicides and self-harm has on first responders. He also agreed we need to be cautious when talking about suicide statistics and remember that statistics are people. He explained that a recent survey found that 27% of first responders interviewed said they had considered taking their own life. Jayne commented on points made by Mark Smith in the chat box where Mark asked about a possible focus on construction, farming and haulage workers. Jayne commented that there have been many good suggestions which shows the breadth and depth of the work that needs undertaking in this area and what a cross cutting issue suicide is which needs to be across Welsh Government departments.

Emma Gooding explained that in Wales a key area of work is inequality, the poverty agenda and mitigation and the links to suicide. Local authorities with high levels of deprivation have higher rates of suicide than other areas. Emma added that another key focus is the adverse childhood experiences work and trying to prevent suicides by engaging with children and young people and thought that would be a good focus for this group. Jayne commented that how committees work together is going to be key and she is keen we have an outcome to every meeting and that we get out to as many Senedd members as possible.

Action: Jayne Bryant to write to the Children Young People and Education and Health and Social Care Committees setting out the issues discussed.

Willow highlighted the code of practice on the delivery of autism services that has been launched and must be adhered to and that we may need to make a connection with the National Advisory Group on that work. Caryl Stock explained that the Amber Project work with young people who are trans, non-binary or exploring their identity and wanted to highlight concerns about levels of suicide of those groups. Jayne advised that these will be added to a list of issues to pick up on.

Dr Alys Cole-King wanted to clarify she is here in capacity representing 4 Mental Health. Alys explained that in Australia suicide prevention has been looked at very broadly and what

they did was to think strategically at how they could influence at highest level. What we need to do is to try and influence policy and look at potential workstreams and engage people working on those portfolios. Jayne advised that suicide prevention comes under Lynne Neagle MS portfolio, but suicide is a cross cutting issue and all Senedd members are invited to group. However, if we have something we want specific members to be part of, we can invite them and are happy for anyone to attend. Jayne added it is important we ask people in their ministerial capacity when relevant and the more people we can get information to, and we are able to challenge the better. There is a real need to shine a light on what is going on.

Jayne commented on a point from Helen Bennett in the chat where Helen mentioned support for veterans. Emma Gooding had commented how Samaritans were due to launch an app for veterans shortly. Liz Williams had also commented on support needed for the health and social care workforce and how they have been impacted during the pandemic. Jayne thanked everyone for their contributions and encouraged the group to contact her or Sarah Stone with any further suggestions.

1.20pm: Topic for next meeting and close

Jayne confirmed that she would invite Lynne Neagle MS to the next meeting in January (the date is to be confirmed). Jayne will also send letters to the Health and Social Care and Children, Young People and Education Committees and will follow up on the responses. Jayne thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.