



Cross Party Group on Suicide Prevention - sponsored by Jayne Bryant MS
Tuesday 30th January 2024
Hybrid meeting

Attendees:

In person: Jayne Bryant MS, Neil Ingham (Samaritans), Emma Gooding (Samaritans), Amelia Cahill (Samaritans) Claire Cotter (NHS Wales Executive), Lynne Neagle MS, Professor Ann John (Swansea University), David Heald (Papyrus)

Online: Deborah Job (Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board), Sian Bamford (Dyfed Powys Police), Jess Read (4 Mental Health), Willow Holloway (Disability Wales/Autistic UK/FTWW), Laura Tranter (Hywel Dda University Health Board), Ceri Lovell (Cardiff and Vale University Health Board), George Watkins (Mind Cymru), Debbie Shaffer (FTWW), Bethan Hodges (Samaritans), Emma Kneebone (2Wish), Jenny Prow (SOBS), Dafydd Curry (North Wales Police), Jayne Bell (Cardiff and Vale University Health Board), Jackie Williams (Aneurin Bevan University Health Board), Ceri Fowler (Cardiff and Vale University Health Board), Hannah Wenden (NHS Wales Executive), Dr David Williams (Aneurin Bevan University Health Board), Clare Sturman (The Sammy-sized GAP), Paul Allchurch (Diverse Cymru), Maggy Corkhill (Co-Alc Alliance), Kay Helyar (DPJ Foundation), Jemma Rees (NHS Wales Executive), Roger Bassett-Jones (Advocacy Support Cymru), Briony Hunt (Samaritans), Gareth Davies (Tir Dewi), Christina Gwyther (Samaritans), Becky Twose (Dyfed Powys Police and Crime Commissioner), Oliver Townsend (Platform), Matthew Belcher (EYST), Kate Miles (DPJ Foundation), Karen Wescombe (Cardiff and Vale University Health Board), Charlotte Knight (Senedd), Jillian Purvis (Senedd).

Apologies: Steve Siddall (RNLI), Alys Cole-King (4 Mental Health), Llyr Gruffydd MS, Derek Walker (Future Generations Commissioner for Wales), Phil Sparrow (South Wales Police) Rachael Robins (4 Mental Health).

12.15pm: Welcome, introductions and minutes from previous meeting

Jayne Bryant MS opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending and explained 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.

12:20pm AGM – nomination and voting of office holders

Jayne explained the Annual General Meeting would take place and handed over to Neil Ingham from Samaritans to explain the process. Neil explained the election of the chair needed to take place. There had been no other nominations for the role apart from Jayne. Jayne was elected as chair. Jayne explained voting for the secretariat also needed to take place. There were no other nominations for the role and it was confirmed that Samaritans will continue as the secretariat.

12:25pm: Emma Gooding (Policy & Communications Manager, Samaritans Cymru) - The latest ONS suicide statistics for Wales – what do they tell us?

Emma talked through her presentation slides on the ONS suicide statistics for Wales. For 2020 – 2022 Merthyr Tydfil had the highest suicide rate, followed by Monmouthshire, Powys and Blaenau Gwent. Emma explained that the rates amongst those who were unemployed were 12 times higher than other employment status groups. 74% of deaths were people previously known to the police. Discussion took place about some risk factors for suicide – inequality, being a man and being in contact with the criminal justice system.

Emma added how we need to think about what action needs to be taken in response to these statistics. She talked about how the development of the new suicide and self-harm strategy for Wales offers a real opportunity to get things right and create real change. Emma talked about lived experience and the strength of community groups and local services and what they provide to people in their local areas. We need to develop services around at-risk groups and listen to what people are telling us they need.

There was discussion about the impact of the Tata steel job losses and Lynne Neagle MS commented how she was pleased Samaritans are doing work to reach out to the local community. Samaritans emphasised the need for urgent signposting and availability of support. Those impacted are probably also going to their GP's and interacting with other services where there could be further opportunities to access support. Professor Ann John talked about how suicide rates tend to rise before employment rates decline so this is something we need to be aware of. She added how people want clear signposting and to be clear what they can claim for and what support is on offer to them. Emma explained how it is unclear how this community engagement is funded and who holds the information people need. Samaritans are keen to ensure that people have access to the support they need.

Emma also talked about partnership working Samaritans are doing with Tir Dewi and we are soon to launch a funded project focusing on young farmers. Ann talked about how 90% of people have been in contact with health services before they die and how there are lots of touch points for people to get support. We need to ensure support is there for people and its local, as some do not just want to hear about national helplines available. The group talked about the availability of helpline services, but how people need a diverse range of support on offer in various ways. Those most at-risk of suicide may not be the ones who would reach out and call helplines. There needs to be a no wrong door approach for people to get help. Ann added how the recent RTSSS report shows us the high-risk groups and that we should focus on those areas.

Kate Miles commented in the chat how she was pleased the farming community has been mentioned and that the ADAS report into the economic affects of the Sustainable Farming Scheme proposals project that 5,500 jobs will be lost on Welsh farms if the proposals proceed. This does not include job losses in support industries (2,900 in Tata Steel & 10,000 in contractors).

On discussion of Tata Steel job losses, Jackie Williams asked in the chat if there is going to be any coordinated action, could the Public Health team in Gwent (herself as a contact) be involved due to the Llanwern being located in their locality. They would rather there be a coordinated approach rather than individual agencies all approaching Tata steel at the same time.

The group talked about how not all people in distress feel that they need a mental health helpline. Maggy Corkhill suggested in the online chat looking at other options like a cocaine information line to offer people support. On discussion of the 111 press 2 service, Clare Sturman mentioned how she had heard a number of reports of the 111 option 2 system not working in their area with service users being placed in a "loop" between GP's and 111 option 2. Kate Miles agreed it would be good to have more information about how the 111 press 2 service is working.

Kate also added that at the DPJ Foundation they have seen a link between chronic physical health conditions/pain and death by suicide and all Suicide and Self Harm prevention forums seem to have challenges in engaging GPs. She added how there seems to be an opportunity here to influence and potentially make positive change but need to consider how. DPJ Foundation have done some work

with trainee GPs and with GP-based social prescribers/mental health practitioners but reaching those GPs in practice when they are already stretched to capacity seems challenging.

12:45pm Claire Cotter (National Programme Lead for Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention, NHS Executive) - Update on programme and plans in response to ONS statistics

Claire shared her slides and talked through some of the latest suicide statistics for Wales. She talked about strategic objectives, particularly around data and research. Claire commented on the need to be careful in what we choose to analyse in terms of data. Ann John commented that Wales appearing as a high-rate region in terms of suicide rates, was partly due to the way regions are grouped in terms of deprivation. Ann talked about data on those who died by suicide over 10 years and the subsequent impact on the children and young people around them.

Neil Ingham commented that despite 'Skilled Construction and Trades' being the employment group classification recording the highest number of suicides for Wales in recent years, around double as many deaths are recorded by ONS under 'unclassified' occupation within the same dataset. He added that there was also a need to correlate numbers of deaths by occupation with ratio of working age population within those occupation groups, so as to gain a fuller understanding of risk.

Kate Miles asked whether there is information available on how many delayed inquests there are (i.e. for 2021, 2022 and 2023). Paul Allchurch also asked in the chat about statistics available on suicide statistics and the BAME community. Briony Hunt confirmed in the chat that in the RTSSS report, it says data on ethnic group, sexual orientation and occupation were incomplete so were not included in the recently released report.

Clare Sturman asked about use of alcohol and drugs accounts for 22% and whether there will be specific guidance for that alongside the domestic abuse guidance. Kate Miles commented it would be helpful to understand what "known to police" includes: is it solely someone who has been investigated/arrested/prosecuted or does it also include victims of crime, gun licence holders, people who are known through community engagement etc. Deborah Job confirmed in the chat that she believed it includes known to police for Welfare reasons (not community engagement). Jayne Bell asked about the statistic regarding 47% with mental illness and how the presence of mental illness is determined.

1.05pm: Next steps & topic for next meeting

There was discussion about a possible topic for a future meeting focussed on risk and menopause. There was also a suggestion of inviting Children's Commissioner to attend future meeting to talk about Child poverty.

1.15pm: Close