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Inquiry into Suicide Prevention

Ymchwiliad i Atal Hunanladdiad

Ymateb gan Wasanaeth Tân ac Achub Gogledd Cymru

Response from North Wales Fire and Rescue Service

SUICIDE PREVENTION BRIEFING NOTE FOR WELSH GOVERNMENT

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18 May 2018



**Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Fire and Rescue Service**

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Aim

This briefing note provides information on two areas regarding suicide and suicide prevention. The provisions provided both internally for NWFRS employees and externally in terms of operational response and partnership working.

Internally, the briefing note provides an overview of how NWFRS responds to its own staff where a risk that an individual may attempt death by suicide is recognised.

Externally, the briefing note shows how the Service has responded to suicide related incidents and is involved with partner agencies, it will provide data amounting to the number of times NWFRS has initiated an operational response and how this response is mobilised to an attempt to death by suicide and a death by suicide.

Internal Provisions for Suicide Prevention and Awareness

There is a NWFRS Health and Wellbeing Guidance document available to employees which covers mental health and the supporting mechanisms available.



Health and Wellbeing
Guidance.pdf

SafeTALK

Suicide awareness training has been undertaken by Human Resources (HR) staff and Colleague Supporters including members of Control. The course involved alertness training to prepare to become 'suicide-alert helpers'. The training assists in recognising particular behaviours and to take appropriate action by connecting individuals with life-saving interventions, such as:

- Notice and respond to situations where suicide thoughts might be present
- Recognise that invitations for help are often overlooked
- Move beyond the common tendency to miss, dismiss, and avoid suicide
- Apply the TALK steps: Tell, Ask, Listen, and KeepSafe
- Know community resources and how to connect someone with thoughts of suicide to them for further help.

Previous training undertaken by Colleague Supporters and the HR team include the Mental Health First Aid course which also involved suicide awareness training.

Supporting Mental Health

NWFRS has a range of internal support mechanisms which complement SafeTALK to promote mental health at work and support staff who are experiencing difficulties.

Health and Wellbeing is embedded in the All Wales HR National Issues Committee objectives and in the All Wales People and Organisational Development Strategy 2018-2021. Mental health is listed in the key collaborative project plans for HR Departments in the Welsh Fire and Rescue Services for implementing a mental health strategy and also planned action in the NWFRS HR budget and business objectives (progress is reported to Principal Officers on a quarterly basis). The Equality Plan also refers to promoting mental health at work through initiatives to support employees as one of the key objectives.

NWFRS has signed up to the MIND Blue Light Programme in order to provide further mental health support for employees. The Service has a team of seventeen fully trained Blue Light Champions within the organisation who take action to raise awareness of mental health problems and challenge mental health stigma within the workplace. All Senior HR team members are being provided with mental health awareness training in 2018 to assist managers in supporting employees experiencing difficulties. This knowledge and awareness will be cascaded to all employees. A Health and Wellbeing day took place in April 2018 which included mental health as a key topic and included mindfulness courses. The Service is a chartered signatory with Mindful Employer which focuses on increasing awareness of mental health, the Service has also signed the Time to Change Wales pledge, this is the first national campaign to end the stigma and discrimination faced by people with mental health problems.

Standardisation meetings are held within the HR team to ensure that Senior HR Advisers provide the same level of support to Line Managers across the Service in a consistent manner. The Attendance Management policy and Line Manager Guide provides detailed information in respect of signposting staff for assistance and referral procedures. There are posters at all locations within the Service advertising the Employee Assistance Programme, Colleague Support and Critical Incident Debriefing schemes to staff. The Colleague Supporters are able to signpost and attend regular training events to update them on initiatives. The Service also has a Critical Incident Debrief team for employees who may have had a particular distressing experience or incident with an opportunity to discuss and review thoughts and feelings arising from the event. This service is open to any employee in NWFRS.

Monitoring of Health and Wellbeing

Any employee who cites a mental health concern to the Service is immediately referred to Occupational Health (OH) for an appointment with the OH Physician. Employees can also access a 24/7 Employee Assistance Programme with offers counselling such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy etc.

Non-operational employees are asked to complete a medical questionnaire every year from the Service's Occupational Health service provider to establish if there have been any changes in their health. Appointments to see a Physician will be arranged as appropriate based on the responses in the completed questionnaire.

Periodic medicals for operational employees are undertaken on a three yearly basis to ensure fitness for duty (both physical and mental). Those employees who undertake a Critical Incident Debriefing, Colleague Support or Family Liaison Officer role are required to complete an annual questionnaire to ensure they are not experiencing any mental health related issues associated with undertaking the welfare role.

Recognised Incidents

During a 13 year period there has been one employee death due to suicide, and three other incidents whereby suicidal thoughts have been cited by employees but not acted upon.

External response to Suicide Prevention and Awareness

Statistics and Data

Data provided by the NWFRS Corporate Planning Department shows that over the last five years up to 2016/17, NWFRS have received requests for assistance to eighty two suicide related incidents. Fifty five of these incidents were attended by NWFRS. The data-search was carried out from narrative included in the NWFRS Control call takers' documented information where there was a reference to suicide or the police believed an act was deliberate, which could be deemed suicide or attempted suicide, and includes special service calls.

40 of these calls were special service calls, 10 calls related to deliberate fire incidents, 2 were related to accidental fires and 3 were false alarms.

The specific incident type is broken down in the table below:

Total of Suicide related incidents	82
Suicide related incidents – attended	55
Suicide related incidents – not attended	27

Total Number of Special Service Calls (SSCs)	40
SSCs -Assist other agencies	3
SSCs – Making Safe -Remove/retrieval of a body (not RTC)	7
SSC - Release of person RTC	1
SSCs - other	5
Attempt/threat of suicide	24

The requests for assistance at suicide related incidents which resulted in an operational response is evenly spread across the six local Authority areas, as shown in the table below:

Ynys Mon	8
Conwy	6
Denbighshire	10
Flintshire	8
Gwynedd	7
Wrexham	16

Multi Agency Involvement

The Deputy Head of Community Safety attends and liaises with the North Wales Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Steering Group. This multi- agency work stream has produced the North Wales Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

Missing From Home (MFH)

All stations in NWFRS have now been trained in search techniques to support Missing From Home (MFH) to support North Wales Police (NWP) to conduct systematic searches for vulnerable people who have been reported missing. NWP request the availability of resources via Control and then coordinate the search through the Police Search Advisor (PoISa). NWFRS crews search agreed areas whilst remaining on call for fire incidents. This training was been rolled out initially to all whole time duty stations and more recently to all remaining retained Duty Stations.

Since its implementation in April 2017, there has been forty-three recorded MFH incidents recorded on NWFRS CADView including when NWFRS crews have been deployed.

NWFRS crews who were mobilised on two separate occasions have successfully found the individuals who were deemed at high risk and vulnerable, one in Wrexham and one in Prestatyn.

Stations which have been utilised to date are Wrexham, Rhyl, Deeside, Colwyn Bay, St Asaph, Ruthin, Conwy, Prestatyn, Holywell and most recently Llangefni.

Training

Information provided by the Training Department highlights that training and awareness that has been provided to NWFRS employees regarding suicide prevention:-

- Speaking up/Speaking Out – delivered by MIND
- Safe Talk Suicide Awareness
- Mental health First Aid
- Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse
- Critical Incident Debriefing – awareness on the impact of traumatic events

- Colleague Support
- Mindfulness
- ICE – to Control Room Staff and Hazardous Material and Environmental Protection Officer (HMEPOs)
- Make every Contact Count (MECC)

Referrals

Where it is considered that any individual is at risk, an Incident Commander can make an immediate referral to the Welsh Ambulance Trust and North Wales Police. Referrals are made through the Services vulnerable person referral system via the Control system.

Future Work

All NWFRS who deliver Safe and Well Checks have had training in Making Every Contact Count (MECC). The ethos of MECC is to take the opportunity to provide pathways to the occupier for them to take to improve their wellbeing.

It is proposed that in the event that someone sharing that they were suffering from depression or were down, that a card with a contact for the Samaritans would be left.