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Lewis Macdonald MSP
Convenor
Health and Sport Committee
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
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3 October 2018

Dear Lewis,

Thank you for your letter of 19 September 2018 in which you welcomed the recent publication, in August, of our new Suicide Prevention Action Plan.

As you observe, the Action Plan incorporates a number of issues and suggestions which your Committee offered following your evidence session in June this year. Your Committee's comments and suggestions, along with those received from numerous stakeholders and members of the public, were very helpful in framing the final version of the Action Plan.

You ask about responsibility for monitoring and evaluation of the Action Plan - and about the frequency of reporting on the impact of the plan. We have established a National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group which I am tasking with setting actions and priorities in collaboration with Integration Authorities, public health professionals and other stakeholders, in order to help create a delivery plan to achieve the Action Plan's vision. This engagement will support the development of actions and priorities that will inform local strategic planning and partnership approaches to realise our vision; and will report to me and to COSLA regularly on progress, including through a publicly available annual report. This will be published annually from September 2019 and we will be able to use this as a qualitative way of assessing progress of the development and implementation of practical actions.

The Action Plan is designed to continue the long-term strong downward trend in the suicide rate which we have seen in the last decade and more. We have included in the Action Plan an ambitious target of reducing the suicide rate by 20% by 2022, from a 2017 baseline. Combined with the progress reports from the Leadership Group, the annual publication - by National Records of Scotland, the Scottish Public Health Observatory and the Scottish Suicide Information Database - of data on deaths by suicide, will provide us with key evidence by which we will be able to measure progress.

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We will continue to consider how we evaluate and assess impact as this work progresses.

The overall responsibility for this important area of work lies with me as Minister for Mental Health.

I will of course be delighted to keep your Committee informed of progress in this important area of work as it develops. As indicated above, the first annual report of the Leadership Group is to be published in September 2019.

Thank you again for your letter and for the broad welcome which you gave to the Suicide Prevention Action Plan.

Regards
Clare

Clare Haughey

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