

## Health and Sport Committee

### Call for views: Scottish Government's draft Suicide Prevention Action Plan

#### Written submission from Brothers in Arms

- 1) To what extent should the Scottish Government's Suicide Prevention Plan address the issue of inequality?

From our point of view the fact that the suicide rate among men is statistically higher in the UK and is not recognised as such in Scotland means that there is already inequality in the system and the plan has to recognise and address that as a priority

- 2) To what extent should the Scottish Government's Suicide Prevention Plan need a whole system approach?

Only if it responds and acknowledges the fact that men have to be recognised as a separate issue when it comes to the suicide statistics, 'a one size fits all' approach does not work and whether that is because of funding or that it is easier to implement the support already provided, gender has to be recognised and included in the plan.

- 3) What actions should be prioritised in the forthcoming strategy?

There should absolutely be both a digital strategy responding to and using the tools and platforms that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century male use's in everyday life, such as digital tools in the form of Apps that support stress/ anxiety and suicide prevention, that can be downloaded privately and in confidence, that are focused and marketed towards men, so that they feel they 'own' them and are for them because 'an App won't judge me' and most importantly are free to download and use as there should be no barriers to men seeking support for their mental health, this use of technology is especially suited to Scotland when it comes to the more remote parts and rural areas, because as long as there is Wi-Fi then they can be accessed anywhere and at a significant lower cost and a wider reach than help lines and as a support to waiting times for the NHS and GP's.

And also education in Schools to young boy's becoming men to help and support them in the vast changing landscape that is before them, with peer pressure, social media the advance of A.I, Robotics and digital tech impacting on both their career prospects and aspirations, we have to start supporting them in training in emotional resilience and mental health wellbeing, so that they can be better prepared to overcome the changes ahead, also provide positive male role models out with their own peer's, family and community,

that are both achievable as opposed to the unattainable one's that are often toxic provided in the media, that give examples of everyday men overcoming their own personal challenges and to show that there are always choices from positive actions.

Both of the above should be done as a priority if we are to make any kind of impact in reducing male suicide in Scotland.

- 4) Should there be a focus on specific at risk groups and if so what groups would be appropriate?

As 75% of suicide is male and is the single biggest killer of men under the age of 45 in the UK, it would make sense to both raise awareness and provide support (as they already do in England i.e. <https://www.thecalmzone.net/> started 10 years ago by Jane Powell) so that the aim is to work on prevention for men, especially those of us hiding in plain sight, rather than the cure, because if you are a man under the age of 45 in the UK, the thing most likely to kill you...is you