

Health and Sport Committee Inquiry: Suicide Prevention in Scotland

Joint written submission from The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE), the Health and Social Care Academy and Samaritans Scotland

Key points

1. Compassionate and immediate tailored support for those affected by suicide and survivors must be part of any new Suicide Prevention Action Plan.
2. There should be ongoing involvement of people affected by suicide in setting and monitoring local and national actions.
3. We need to see a greater focus on research into the causes of suicide and action on the data (qualitative and quantitative) gathered by research.

Background

In late 2017 and early 2018, a series of events organised and led by the Health and Social Care Academy, Samaritans Scotland and NHS Health Scotland, with support from the Scottish Government, heard from people with direct experience of suicide on how the services, organisations and the public could work together to improve Scotland's approach to suicide prevention.

The partnership held six events from Inverurie to Dumfries, engaging with approximately 100 people. Full write ups from all the events are available on the ALLIANCE's website. The subsequent joint Suicide Prevention Strategy Report¹ made wide ranging recommendations including reference to research, support at the point of crisis and ongoing engagement with people who have been affected by suicide.

These events showed the true value of collating the views and expertise of people affected by suicide. Participants valued the opportunity to engage with government on the issue of suicide prevention, and highlighted the need for government and planning partners to engage with people with lived

¹ <https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Suicide-Prevention-Report-2018.pdf>

experience throughout the process of producing and reviewing strategies and action plans.

Following the publication of the Scottish Government's Draft Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2018², the Health and Social Care Academy, NHS Health Scotland and Samaritans Scotland held a joint event on 17 April 2018 to discuss the draft action plan directly with people affected by suicide. During the event, people affected by suicide expressed concern that the recommendations were not well reflected in the Scottish Government's proposals and the paper itself did not provide adequate scope to discuss the recommendations made.

The final Action Plan should be ambitious. All partners would like to see the twelve recommendations from the report reflected in the final action plan. These are set out below.

Suicide Prevention Strategy Report Recommendations:

1. More campaigns and community resource to improve public awareness.
2. Mandatory suicide prevention training for specific professional groups.
3. A focus on early intervention.
4. Compassionate and immediate support at the point of crisis.
5. Better support for people affected by suicide.
6. Addressing stigma in professional circles and communities.
7. Improved support and training for children and young people.
8. More research and better understanding of the role of wider contributory factors.
9. Joined up working and knowledge sharing between frontline organisations.
10. Increased funding.
11. Early and consistent engagement with people who have been affected by suicide.
12. Effective monitoring of actions and outcomes.

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² <https://consult.gov.scot/mental-health-unit/suicide-prevention/>