



**CABINET - 22<sup>nd</sup> OCTOBER 2019**

**LEICESTERSHIRE SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAMME - 'START A CONVERSATION' AND THE SUICIDE BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT SERVICE**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

**PART A**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet of developments in suicide prevention in Leicestershire over the past 12 months.
2. There have been two significant developments: the consolidation of the 'Start a Conversation' programme and website, and the launch of the Leicester and Leicestershire Suicide Bereavement Support Service on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019.

**Recommendations**

3. It is recommended that the Cabinet:
  - (a) Supports progress with and local work plans to tackle the issue of suicide through the 'Start a Conversation' website and programme;
  - (b) Notes the recent launch of the local Suicide Bereavement Support Service.

**Reasons for Recommendation**

4. To note progress with the work taking place in Leicestershire to help prevent suicide and support those who have been bereaved.

**Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)**

5. The Start a Conversation, Suicide is Preventable' website was launched on World Suicide Prevention day on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2018.
6. The Leicestershire and Leicester Suicide Bereavement Support Service went live on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019.

### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

7. The Cabinet approved development of the 'Start a Conversation, Suicide is Preventable' website and pledge in January 2018. This included a commitment to provide additional support for people who have been bereaved by suicide.
8. The Council's work on suicide prevention has been informed by *Preventing suicide in England A cross-government outcomes strategy to save lives*.
9. Suicide prevention has become a local authority/public health led initiative working closely with the police, clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), NHS England, the Coroner's Service and the voluntary sectors.
10. The NHS England Long Term Plan published on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2019 outlined a significant commitment to suicide bereavement support for families and staff who are bereaved by suicide.

### **Resource Implications**

11. The Start a Conversation, Suicide is Preventable' website and programme and the Leicestershire Suicide Bereavement Support service in total cost approximately £50,000 per year from the Public Health Grant.
12. The work is additionally supported and resourced from within partner organisations' budgets.

### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

13. None

### **Officers to Contact**

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## **PART B**

### **Background**

#### **Suicide Prevention**

14. Suicide is a devastating event for the victims, their families, friends and colleagues and its impact ripples and penetrates deeply and profoundly into our communities. Combining 2015, 2016 and 2017 data there have been 143 suicides in Leicestershire. This equates to roughly 48 per year.
15. Suicides are often the end point of a complex history of risk factors and distressing events, but they are not inevitable. The prevention of suicide must address this complexity through concerted action and collaboration amongst services, communities, individuals and across society.
16. Suicide prevention has become a local authority/public health-led initiative working closely with the police, clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), NHS England, coroners and the voluntary sectors.
17. Oversight and co-ordination of suicide prevention in Leicestershire sits under the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Suicide Audit and Prevention Group which is jointly led by Public Health departments in the County Council and Leicester City Council. The group feeds into both the Health and Wellbeing Boards and the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees in each local authority.
18. In September 2018, the Council led on development of the website 'Start a Conversation, Suicide is Preventable' -  
<https://www.startaconversation.co.uk/about-us/>  
 The website brings together into one place local resources, support and advice that help keep residents safe and supports them to reach out for help in times of crisis and distress.
19. The main areas of content for the website and focus of the campaign include:
  - Maintaining mental health and wellbeing
  - In crisis support and response
  - Training and resources
  - Bereavement support
  - A suicide prevention pledge for individuals and organisations.
20. Since its launch there have been over 32,000 hits on the website, with the most popular page after the home page being the 'Advice and Support' page. The website has also attracted 200 pledges of support from individuals and organisations. It continues to be refined and updated with support from partner agencies.

21. To mark the one-year anniversary of the launch of the website, a suicide prevention conference was held on 10<sup>th</sup> September (World Suicide Prevention Day) at Leicester City Football Club. Over 150 people attended the conference representing a wide range of local partners and communities. Speakers came from key suicide prevention partners locally and included individuals with lived experience who had lost close family members to suicide. The event garnered significant media interest including write ups in the Leicester Mercury and features on local BBC TV news, BBC Radio Leicester and GEM FM.
22. In the coming year the campaign and website will continue to evolve and develop. A further major focus will be that of supporting people who have been bereaved by suicide through the launch of a local suicide bereavement support service on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019.

### **Support after Bereavement by Suicide**

23. Suicide has a devastating impact. Close family members e.g. parents and spouses or partners, are the most vulnerable groups but there are also risks for wider family, friends and colleagues. Whereas a single suicide is estimated to cost the economy in England around £1.67 million, 60% of the cost of each suicide is attributed to the impact on the lives of those bereaved by suicide.
24. Compared with people bereaved through other causes, those bereaved by suicide are:
  - at increased risk of suicide, psychiatric admission and depression
  - more likely to describe poor social functioning, stigma, shame, responsibility and guilt
  - 80% more likely to drop out of education or work than their peers
  - 8% of young adults bereaved by suicide drop out of an educational course or a job after the death.
25. *'When someone dies by suicide, the shock is profound and widely felt - by families, of course, but also by friends, colleagues and professionals. They describe profound distress, guilt, searching for explanations and stigma. They may struggle with work or relationships. They may develop their own mental health problems. They may themselves feel suicidal'* (from 'Support after a suicide: A guide to providing local services', PHE, National Suicide Prevention Alliance 2016, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-after-a-suicide-a-guide-to-providing-local-services>)

### **'Postvention'**

26. The term postvention describes activities developed by, with, or for people who have been bereaved by suicide, to support their recovery and to prevent adverse outcomes, including suicide and suicidal ideation. Evidence suggests that what people need is some level of support, whether it is having someone to talk to, taking a break from work, or simply needing a way to mentally process what has happened with support to do so.

27. Recent evidence from those bereaved by suicide suggests that they do not always receive the support and help they need.
28. On 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019, the Leicestershire and Leicester Suicide Bereavement Support service was launched. The initiative was led by the County Council and is jointly funded with Leicester City Council and the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner. The service is now addressing a significant gap previously identified in provision i.e. by providing essential practical and emotional support for those bereaved by suicide-family, friends and communities.
29. The service is provided by Harmless, a national community interest company, devoted to suicide prevention and to support of those who have been bereaved by suicide. The service is jointly funded by Public Health departments in Leicestershire and Leicester City and the Office of Police and Crime Commission, initially as a 3-year contract. The service will work closely with local police and wider partners to provide:
  - A point of contact for those bereaved by suicide to leave a request for support, available 24/7.
  - Access to information about services and resources and timely and appropriate support.
  - Accessible, local face-to-face counselling where appropriate.
  - Evidence-based approaches to enhance the ability of public sector staff, including NHS staff and police, to better understand and support the needs of those who have been bereaved by suicide.

### **Next Steps**

30. The 'Start a Conversation' website remains the focal point of efforts to tackle suicide in Leicestershire and will continue to be refined and updated on an ongoing basis with support from many partner agencies.
31. The County Council will continue to engage with a wide range of individuals and community partners in the coming year to reduce stigma associated with suicide and to raise awareness of the important steps that can be taken to lessen the impact of suicide in communities
32. The County Council will work to raise the profile of the recently launched Suicide Bereavement Support service in the coming weeks and months, particularly amongst professionals and across communities.

### **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

33. Suicide disproportionately impacts on socially excluded groups and overall approaches to suicide prevention must ensure that this health inequality is targeted and addressed.

**Partnership Working and Associated Issues**

34. Tackling suicide requires concerted action and collaboration amongst services, communities, individuals and across society as a whole

**Background Papers**

Report to the Cabinet on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2018: "Suicide Prevention - Strategy Work and Stop Suicide Campaign and Pledge"

<http://cexmodgov1/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=5176>