

SAMH'S VIEW:

SUICIDE PREVENTION

DATE ISSUED

JANUARY 2021

POLICY LEAD

CRAIG
SMITH

FOR REVIEW BY:

JANUARY 2022

ABOUT THE SAMH'S VIEW SERIES

SAMH's View
statements set out
SAMH's position on a
particular policy topic.

In developing SAMH's
position, the issues of
equalities, diversity and
human rights are
investigated.

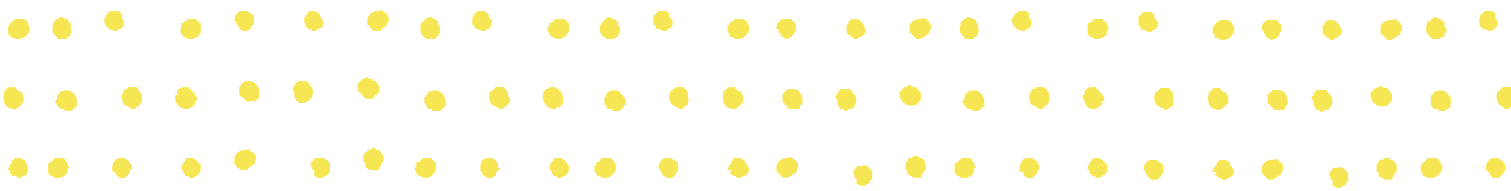
SAMH Views are
produced by the Public
Affairs team.

Context

In Scotland, on average, two people a day die by suicide.¹ The national framework for suicide prevention is the Scottish Government's Suicide Prevention Action Plan: Every Life Matters.² The National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group (NSPLG) supports the delivery and development of suicide prevention activities. It brings together services and stakeholders, including the third sector and people with direct experience of suicide.³ The NSPLG is jointly responsible to the Scottish Government and COSLA and supported by £3 million of funding between 2018-2021. The Scottish Government has a target to reduce the rate of suicide by 20% by 2022. The Scottish Government have committed to producing a long term suicide prevention strategy following the conclusion of the current national action plan.

Key points

- There were 833 deaths by suicide in Scotland in 2019.⁴ An increase of 6% from 2018. The largest increase overall was in the age group 20-24, which saw an increase of 19 deaths, or 33% from 2018 to 2019.⁵
- Scotland's suicide rate is the second highest in the UK, behind Northern Ireland.⁶
- In 2019 the suicide rate for men was three times than for women. Men and women aged 45-54 were at highest risk.⁷ Despite this, women are more likely to attempt suicide than men.⁸
- The suicide rate in Scotland is three times higher in the most deprived tenth of the population compared to the least deprived.⁹ Sixty seven per cent of people who died by suicide in Scotland between 2011-2017 were in employment, 30% were unemployed.¹⁰
- Sixty two per cent of those who died by suicide between 2001-17 had been prescribed a mental health medication in the year prior to their death. Eight per cent had a mental health outpatient appointment in the 30 days prior to their death.¹¹
- One in two people (44.2%) who died by suicide (2011-18) were in contact with at least one unscheduled care service (NHS 24, Scottish Ambulance Service and GP Out-of-Hours) in the 12 months before death.¹²
- Discharge from psychiatric hospital is a time of high risk for suicide, NICE has guidelines on supporting people transitioning from psychiatric



hospital to community care, including arranging follow up support within two weeks of discharge.¹³

- LGBT people, particularly trans people, have an increased risk of suicide.¹⁴ Stonewall found in 2018 that 46% of trans people and 31% of LGB people in the UK had thought about taking their life in the past year.¹⁵
- People presenting in distress to emergency services can receive a stigmatising response.¹⁶
- The suicide prevention training packages ASIST and safeTALK are licensed by the Scottish Government. An evaluation of safeTALK in Scotland found it effective,¹⁷ and the Scottish Government's evaluation of ASIST found it significantly improved outcomes for people receiving an intervention, including reducing suicidal ideation.¹⁸ Seventy-seven per cent of the SAMH workforce is trained in ASIST and/or SafeTALK
- The Scottish Government has committed to developing reviews into all suicides of all deaths by suicide to facilitate shared learning, in line with human rights law and best practice¹⁹.
- The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on suicide is unknown. This in part due to a lack of accessible real time suicide data in Scotland.²⁰



SAMH calls for:

- All local authority areas to have funded suicide prevention plans. The NSPLG should support the evaluation of local activities and share good practice.
- National mental health and suicide prevention training to retain Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) with its focus on providing skills to intervene to support someone in crisis.
- The national provision of DBI should be retained following the Covid-19 pandemic. This should include universal access to face to face support, when this can be safely provided
- The national roll out of Community Triage. Community triage provides police officers direct access to mental health professionals to support decision making in relation to people presenting in distress.
- Integrated Joint Boards (IJBs) and the NHS to adhere to NICE guidelines on transition between inpatient mental health settings and community or care home settings (NICE guideline NG53)
- All Health and Social Care Partnerships to commission evidence-based, gender and age sensitive services, including peer support, to tackle health inequalities impacting men and suicide. These should be targeted in areas of deprivation.
- Findings from consultations, as part of the national action plan, with people with lived experience from a wide range of 'at risk' groups, including people from relevant equality groups such as the LGBTQ+ community, to inform the development of future suicide prevention interventions.
- The NSPLG and delivery group to work with See Me to incorporate action to address stigma as part of their work.
- The new suicide review process to be multi agency and fully include the families of people bereaved by suicide
- The proposed new long term suicide prevention national strategy to focus on: stigma; the links between suicide and deprivation, social security, employment, criminal justice/prisons and self-harm, as called for by the NSPLG in their COVID statement.²¹
- The Scottish Government, National Records for Scotland and Public Health Scotland should work together to urgently develop and make available enhanced and real time suicide and self-harm data.



Further detail:

STATISTICS

- [NRS Probable Suicides: Deaths which are the Result of Intentional Self-harm or Events of Undetermined Intent 2020](#)
- [Scottish Public Health Observatory Suicide: Key Points](#)
- [University of Manchester National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Safety in Mental Health \(October 2018\)](#)

FURTHER READING

- [SAMH Ask Once Get Help Fast 2016](#)
- [Scotland's Suicide Prevention Action Plan Every Life Matters \(2018\)](#)
- [Suicide prevention leadership group: annual report 2019](#)
- [A new strategy for preventing suicide SAMH](#)
- [United To Prevent Suicide website](#)
- [The Samaritans Men and Suicide \(2012\)](#)
- [Scottish Government online suicide prevention resources \(2019\)](#)
- [NSPLG COVI-19 Statement](#)

Notes

¹ ScotPHO [Suicide Key Points 2020](#)

² Scottish Government [Suicide prevention action plan: every life matters 2018](#)

³ Scottish Government [Suicide prevention action plan: every life matters 2018](#)

⁴ ScotPHO [Suicide Key Points 2020](#)

⁵ NRS [Probable Suicides: Deaths which are the Result of Intentional Self-harm or Events of Undetermined Intent 2020](#)

⁶ University of Manchester [National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Homicide by People with Mental Illness](#), October 2017

⁷ ScotPHO [Suicide Key Points 2020](#)

⁸ BBC [Why more men than women die by suicide](#) [accessed December 2019]

⁹ ScotPHO [Suicide Key Points 2020](#)

¹⁰ ISD Scotland [A profile of deaths by suicide in Scotland 2011-2017 \(ScotSID\) 2018](#)

¹¹ ISD Scotland [A profile of deaths by suicide in Scotland 2011-2017 2018](#)

¹² ISD Scotland [Scottish Suicide Information Database Contact with Unscheduled Care Services prior to death 2020](#)

¹³ NICE [Transition between inpatient mental health settings and community or care home settings 2016](#)

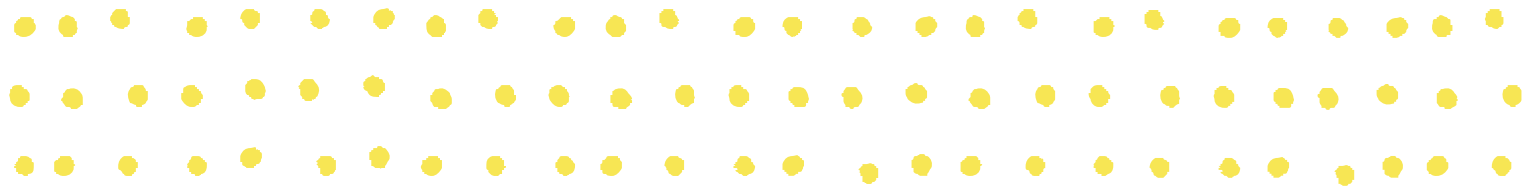
¹⁴ LGBT Youth Scotland [Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People 2017](#)

¹⁵ Stonewall [LGBT in Britain: Health Report 2018](#)

¹⁶ Alliance et al [Suicide Prevention Strategy Report 2018](#)

¹⁷ Scottish Development Centre for Mental Health [Evaluation of the Scottish SafeTALK pilot 2007](#)

¹⁸ Scottish Government [The Use and Impact of Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training \(ASIST\) in Scotland: An Evaluation 2008](#)



¹⁹ ECHR European Convention on Human Rights

²⁰ NSPLG [COVID-19 Statement](#) 2020

²¹ NSPLG [COVID-19 Statement](#) 2020

