

SAMH'S VIEW:

SUICIDE PREVENTION

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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.

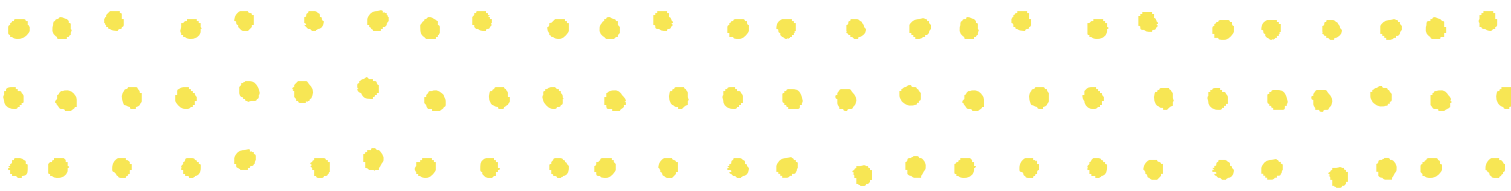
SAMH Views are produced by the Public Affairs team.

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.

Key points

- There were 784 deaths by suicide in Scotland in 2018.⁴
- Scotland's suicide rate is the second highest in the UK, behind Northern Ireland.⁵
- In 2018 the suicide rate for men was three times than for women. Men aged 35-44 and women aged 45-54 were at highest risk.⁶ Despite this, women are more likely to attempt suicide than men.⁷
- The suicide rate in Scotland is three times higher in the most deprived tenth of the population compared to the least deprived.⁸ Sixty seven per cent of people who died by suicide in Scotland between 2011-2017 were in employment, 30% were unemployed.⁹
- 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.¹⁰
- 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.¹¹
- LGBT people, particularly trans people, have an increased risk of suicide.¹² 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.¹³

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- People presenting in distress to emergency services can receive a stigmatising response.¹⁴
 - The suicide prevention training packages ASIST and safeTALK are licensed by the Scottish Government. An evaluation of safeTALK in Scotland found it effective,¹⁵ and the Scottish Government's evaluation of ASIST found it significantly improved outcomes for people receiving an intervention, including reducing suicidal ideation.¹⁶ 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 practice¹⁷.

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 roll out of the Distress Brief Intervention Programme (DBI). DBI is a 14 day therapeutic service for people in distress currently being piloted by the Scottish government.
- 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.
- The NSPLG to consult 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.



Further detail:

STATISTICS

- [ISD Scotland Scottish Suicide Information Database \(December 2018\)](#)
- [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](#)
- [Choose Life website](#)
- [The Samaritans Men and Suicide \(2012\)](#)
- [Scottish Government online suicide prevention resources \(2019\)](#)

Notes

¹ ScotPHO [Suicide Key Points](#) 2019

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](#) 2019

⁵ University of Manchester [National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Homicide by People with Mental Illness](#), October 2017

⁶ ISD Scotland [Suicide Statistics for Scotland: Update of trends for the year 2018](#) 2019

⁷ BBC [Why more men than women die by suicide](#) [accessed December 2019]

⁸ ISD Scotland [Suicide Statistics for Scotland: Update of trends for the year 2018](#) 2019

⁹ ISD Scotland [A profile of deaths by suicide in Scotland 2011-2017 \(ScotSID\)](#) 2018

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

¹¹ NICE [Transition between inpatient mental health settings and community or care home settings](#) 2016

¹² LGBT Youth Scotland [Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People](#) 2017

¹³ Stonewall [LGBT in Britain: Health Report](#) 2018

¹⁴ Alliance et al [Suicide Prevention Strategy Report](#) 2018

¹⁵ Scottish Development Centre for Mental Health [Evaluation of the Scottish SafeTALK pilot](#) 2007

¹⁶ Scottish Government [The Use and Impact of Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training \(ASIST\) in Scotland: An Evaluation](#) 2008

¹⁷ ECHR European Convention on Human Rights