

**Report to:** East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board

**Date of meeting:** 12 December 2023

**By:** Darrell Gale, Director of Public Health

**Title:** Sussex and East Sussex Suicide Prevention Strategies

**Purpose:** To update the Board on the development of suicide prevention strategies and action plans for Sussex and East Sussex

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:** The East Sussex Health & Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

1) To note the recent and ongoing work to develop and implement the two suicide prevention strategies and action plans for Sussex and East Sussex.

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## **1 Background**

1.1 The aim of this paper is to update the Health and Wellbeing Board on the actions being taken to reduce the risk of death by suicide across Sussex over the next three years, including the first year of our East Sussex 3-year action plan.

1.2 Every death by suicide has a devastating impact on families, friends and communities. The factors leading to someone taking their own life are complex and are often linked to circumstances and experiences over an extended period. Risk is often higher in those who are more disadvantaged or socially excluded.

1.3 The rate of suicide in East Sussex of 12.1 per 100,000 people (approximately 68 deaths per year). This exceeds the England average of 10.4 and is sat between the rates in other parts of Sussex with Brighton and Hove at 14.1 and West Sussex at 11.5. Of the 5 district and boroughs in East Sussex, rates are highest in Eastbourne (19.6), and the lowest is Rother (9.4).

1.4 The need to develop local plans that engage a wide network of stakeholders was established in the government's national strategy for England, 'Preventing suicide in England' released in 2012. Councils were given the responsibility for leading the development of local suicide action plans through their work with health and wellbeing boards. The new national strategy emphasises the role of the wider system, including the Integrated Care System (ICS) in co-ordinating action to prevent suicides.

1.5 Historically local plans have been shared with the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board. West Sussex and Brighton and Hove are also developing local plans to accompany the Sussex wide strategy, and each will be shared with respective Health and Wellbeing Boards during November and December 2023.

## **2 Supporting Information**

### **2.1 Sussex Collaboration and Strategy 2024-2027**

2.1.1 For many years, partner organisations across Sussex have been working together closely on suicide prevention. This collaboration has significant benefits including shared learning, innovation and efficiencies, for example in delivering Sussex level communication campaigns. Some key partners, such as Sussex Police and Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, operate across the whole footprint which enhances Sussex collaboration.

2.1.2 Between 2019 and 2023, Sussex benefited from an NHS England funded suicide prevention and self-harm prevention programme as part of the national Transformation funding programme. It was delivered across Brighton and Hove, East Sussex and West Sussex.

2.1.3 As this NHS England funded programme came to an end, the need to refresh the strategic approach across Sussex became apparent and a pan-Sussex suicide prevention strategy was developed by the Sussex Suicide Prevention Steering Group. Membership of this group includes NHS Sussex, Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Sussex Police, Voluntary and Community sector representatives and the three upper tier local authorities. The need for a Sussex-wide strategy was also raised in response to multi-agency actions following clusters of suspected deaths by suicide across divergent communities and geographies in 2021.

2.1.4 The Sussex strategy was signed off by the Sussex Mental Health Learning Disability and Autism Board in September 2023. Following publication of the national strategy<sup>1</sup> later that same month, the Sussex Strategy was given minor updates to reflect the latest national guidance (see Appendix 1).

### **2.2 East Sussex Action Plan 2024-27**

2.2.1 The East Sussex action plan attached to this report was developed with the help of the East Sussex Suicide Prevention Steering Group (see Appendix 2). This multi-agency group includes representatives from East Sussex County Council, NHS Sussex, Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, Sussex Police and wider partners. It's formal reporting line is to the Sussex Suicide Prevention Group, but it also provides updates to the East Sussex Mental Health Oversight Board and Children and Young People's Health Oversight Board.

2.2.2 There is also a Coastal Suicide Prevention Group and a suicide prevention partnership/ network that includes a wider membership of organisations that support suicide prevention. The latter is predominantly an information sharing and networking forum.

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<sup>1</sup> [Suicide prevention in England: 5-year cross-sector strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115111/suicide-prevention-in-england-5-year-cross-sector-strategy.pdf)

## **2.3 Key National and Local Funding Sources**

2.3.1 Historically, national NHS England funding was provided to Integrated Care Systems. Sussex Health and Care Partnership received £1,584,000 over 3 years from 2019/20 to 2021/22 with a further £120,000 for a suicide bereavement support service for 4 years from 2020/21 to 2023/24.

2.3.2 The new national strategy published in September 2023 states that NHS Long Term Plan funding to support suicide prevention activity, including to support specific groups, should continue to run from March 2024<sup>2</sup>.

2.3.3 The shortfall in funding for bereavement services beyond March 2024 is a pressing concern and has been raised with colleagues within the Mental Health Learning Disability and Autism Board. Currently the funding contributes to four bereavement services: Cruse in West Sussex, Rethink in Brighton and Hove and SSOS in East Sussex. Winstons Wish are commissioned to provide a service to children bereaved by suicide across Sussex.

2.3.4 The Government have launched a new £10 million Suicide Prevention Grant Fund for voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations coinciding with the national strategy, to assist in the delivery of the national suicide prevention strategy actions until March 2025. However, there has been a very high number of applications and therefore a relatively low level of funding may be allocated to local projects when counted as a whole. We are aware that some local VCSE partners have bid for this funding, including a pan-Sussex consortium bid submitted by Grassroots charity in Brighton.

## **3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations**

3.1 Suicide prevention planning across Sussex is well developed, and there is a high degree of collaboration between the three local authorities and other partners. The Sussex strategy focusses on actions where it is felt that a pan-Sussex collaborative approach will make best use of resources and yield the best results. Work to implement one year action plan within the Sussex strategy is underway, but progress with some elements will depend on the available resource to take them forward.

3.2 The East Sussex action plan summarises key local actions that help contribute to the national priority areas and meet local challenges. The East Sussex Suicide Prevention Steering Group will contribute towards the pan-Sussex work but also continue to oversee our local plan and identify further areas for improvement and development in our preventative approach.

3.3 The Board is asked to note the recent and ongoing work to develop and implement the two suicide prevention strategies and action plans across Sussex and East Sussex.

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<sup>2</sup> [Suicide prevention strategy: action plan - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118111/suicide-prevention-strategy-action-plan.pdf)

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All divisions are covered by this report.

Appendix 1 - Sussex Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan 2024-27

Appendix 2 - East Sussex Suicide Prevention Framework and Action Plan 2024-27