# Preventing suicide in England

Easy Read version of: Fifth progress report of the cross-government outcomes strategy to save lives

# Introduction

The government is working to reduce **suicide** in England.

**Suicide** is when you kill yourself on purpose because you are finding life too difficult.
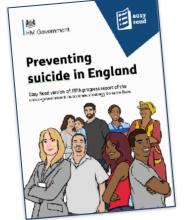
We wrote a plan for all parts of the government to work together and save lives.

This is the 5th report we have written about how the plan is going.

It will tell you:

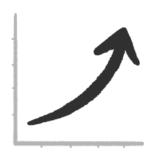- more about why we wrote a plan

- what we know so far

- what we are doing to reduce suicide in England

- what we are going to do next.

# Why we wrote a plan

Suicide affects many people – the families, friends and communities of those who die.

Since our last report, the number of suicides has increased.

We need to understand the reasons for suicide so we can do something about them.

If we can make people's lives easier, we should be able to reduce the number of suicides.

We need to get all parts of the government to work together to make this happen.

Our plan explains how we are going to do that.
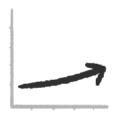
# What we know so far

Between 2007 and 2014, the number of suicides in England kept going up.

So, in 2016, we came up with a target to lower the number of suicides by 2020/21.

Between 2014 and 2017 the number of suicides started to go down.

But in 2018 and 2019 the number of suicides went back up again.

Over the last 10 years, the number of suicides has gone up most for people aged 10-24 years, and men aged 45-60 years.

We need to try and understand why the number of suicides is going up.

There are 4 groups we are most worried about in terms of suicide. They are:

# 1. Middle-aged men

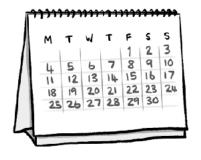Middle-aged men in their 40s and 50s have the highest number of suicides.

# 2. People who self-harm

**Self-harm** is when people hurt themselves as a way to cope with difficult feelings.

About half of people who die by suicide have self-harmed before.

There is a bigger risk of suicide in the first year after self-harm, and especially in the first month.

## 3. Children and young people

The number of suicides in people under the age of 25 is going up.

It has been found that children who died by suicide were affected by things like:

- bullying - this is when a person or group of people treats someone else in a bad way

- things they had seen on the internet
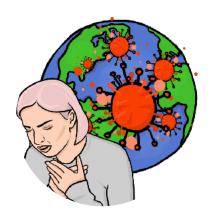
- the death of someone close to them.

## 4. People with a mental illness

**Mental illness** is when people are not feeling well in their mind and thoughts.

People with a mental illness are much more likely to die by suicide.

# COVID-19

**COVID-19** is also called Coronavirus. It is a new illness that has been spreading around the world. It affects your lungs and breathing.

We have all had to do things differently to stay safe from COVID-19.

People have had to stay at home and away from their friends and families.

Many businesses have had to close.

People have died from COVID-19.

These are all things that are difficult to cope with.

We are worried that more people may take their own life.

So far, it doesn't look like more people have died by suicide during COVID-19 in 2020. But we don't know the numbers for sure yet.

We know that more people have been having thoughts and feelings about suicide and self-harm.

We know that more people have been looking for help from support services like:
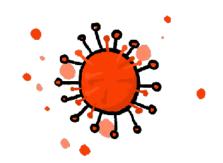
- Samaritans

- PAPYRUS (the national charity for the Prevention of Young Suicide).

We need to keep helping people to cope with things before they get too difficult.

# How COVID-19 is affecting the 4 groups we are most worried about

COVID-19 may be causing new mental health problems for the 4 groups we are most worried about in terms of suicide.

## Middle-aged men

We don't have much information about suicide or self-harm for middle-aged men during COVID-19.

In the past, middle-aged men have been more at risk of suicide when everyone is short of money.

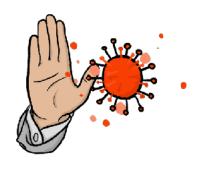This could also happen because of COVID-19.

During COVID-19 more men have been talking to the Samaritans about things like:

- loneliness

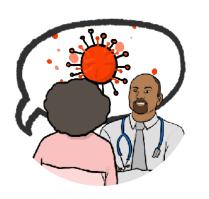- being worried about money

- problems with their relationships.

## People who self-harm

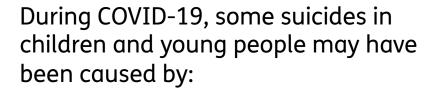The number of people going to hospital because of self-harm went down.

This may be because COVID-19 was stopping people from looking for help.

Nearly half of the self-harming patients in Oxford and Derby said that worrying about COVID-19 was part of the reason they did it.

# Children and young people

During COVID-19, some suicides in children and young people may have been caused by:

- not being able to go to school

- not being able to get care and support

- things being bad at home

- feeling alone.

For some people, finding a job after leaving school has become much harder during COVID-19.

This could affect young people's mental health.

# Mental illness

Nearly half of the people that have called the Samaritans have been worried about their mental health.

Some were worried about their mental illness getting worse, and some were worried about not being able to get care.

# What we are doing to reduce suicide in England

We are collecting more information about suicide, and doing this faster.

We are finding out about the ways people use to take their own life, and trying to stop people finding new ways.

We are giving more support to the families of people who die by suicide.

We are trying to stop lies and harmful things being posted on the internet.

We are helping people with their mental health so they can cope with worry caused by COVID-19.

We are giving people training in how to stop suicide.

We are giving more money to organisations which work to stop suicide.

We are talking to people with experience of suicide to help us better understand what we need to do.

## Cross-government actions

**Cross-government actions** means getting all parts of the government to work together.

We need to work together to stop the causes of suicide and self-harm.

Not having a job and not having enough money are 2 reasons why some people take their own lives, especially for middle-aged men.
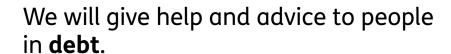
Because of COVID-19, we are giving extra money to help:

- people keep their jobs

- people who have lost their jobs

- self-employed people – these are people that work for themselves, not a company.

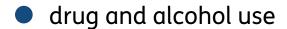We will give help and advice to people in **debt**.

**Debt** is money that you borrow and have to pay back.

We will make new rules about gambling and help people who have a problem with it.

We are giving more money and services to people who are having problems with:

- breaking the law

- drug and alcohol use

- homelessness - this is when someone has nowhere to live

- domestic abuse - this is when you are harmed by a family member or someone you live with

- poor mental health.

# Things we have already done

We have:

- made sure every local area has a plan in place to help stop suicide

- made sure our guidance for helping to stop suicide is up-to-date

- given money to support campaigns that are working to change the way people think about mental health and suicide

- supported the Samaritans to work with talkSPORT to get famous sportspeople to talk about mental health on the radio

- made sure all areas have a mental health telephone helpline available 24 hours a day, which anyone can use including children and young people

- done some research about mental health training for doctors (GPs) and other community care

- worked with MindEd to produce online training about stopping suicide and self-harm in children and young people



- held discussions about reducing the number of suicides on public transport



- worked with the Samaritans on the 'Real People, Real Stories' campaign to reduce suicides on the railway



- written reports from the Office of National Statistics about suicide and its causes.

# What we are going to do next

This year, we will give the NHS around an extra £500 million towards mental health services.

This extra money will help the NHS to:

- reduce waiting times, so that mental health services are available to people when they need them
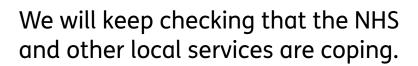
- support more people with their mental health

- train staff and bring in new staff to work in mental health care.

We will keep checking that the NHS and other local services are coping.

We will make sure mental health and suicide **bereavement services** are available to everyone, whatever their age or background.

**Bereavement services** give support to people when someone has died.

We will continue to work together to stop suicide and support people most at risk.

We will also make sure we:

- make letters about debt easy to understand and don't make people feel more worried

- give people with mental health problems extra time to pay, and advice about debts

- provide more information about the help you can get with debts

- find out more about how gambling affects people's mental health

- focus on reducing the number of suicides by people being treated for mental health problems

- provide more care and support for people who self-harm

- do more to support families where the parents fight and disagree, which affects the whole family

- give more help to people who are sleeping on the street

- give training about mental health to housing officers

- look into using nature as a way of helping people with mental health problems

- help people who are feeling lonely

- do more to make sure more people in society can use technology and get information online

- give teachers training in how to spot mental health problems in children

- provide mental health support to children and young people in schools

- provide new Relationship, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) training for schools to give to pupils

- provide a new scheme to support students to have good mental health called the 'University Mental Health Charter Award Scheme'

- give money to provide mental health support for students

- set up groups between universities and the NHS to support student mental health and help prevent suicides

- make sure university student suicides are dealt with properly and learned from

- give guidance to online services about how they should deal with information that is harmful or against the law

- collect more information about suicide by **LGBT** people
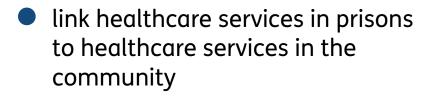
  **LGBT** stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans.

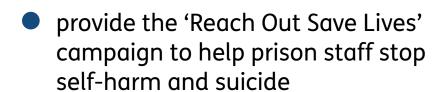- collect more information about suicide by nurses

- give training about suicide and self-harm to police, ambulance workers and firefighters

- support the mental health of NHS staff and social care staff

- link healthcare services in prisons to healthcare services in the community
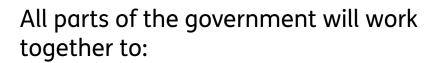
- provide training to prison staff, on how to prevent suicides

- work to stop suicide and self-harm in homes for people who used to be in prison

- use Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) to stop suicide and self-harm in prisons

- use the Prisoner Listeners Scheme to train prisoners to give support to each other

- provide the 'Reach Out Save Lives' campaign to help prison staff stop self-harm and suicide

- provide the RECONNECT service, which helps people who used to be in prison get health services

- provide more training to prison staff to stop suicide and self-harm

- give support to staff and prisoners when there has been a suicide in prison.

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All parts of the government will work together to:

- provide more clinics to look after people with gambling problems

- write a report on how to stop harm caused by gambling

- continue to provide mental health support, especially for people in or just leaving care in a mental health hospital

- provide mental health care and treatment to people in their homes so they don't need to go to hospital
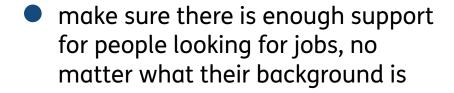
- make sure that people who go to A&E with mental health problems get the right care

- provide help and support for **veterans**

  **Veterans** are people who have been in the army, navy or air force.

- collect information about suicides in veterans

- make sure there is enough support for people looking for jobs, no matter what their background is

- collect information about suicide in different **ethnicities**

  **Ethnicity** is your race or background. For example black, white or Asian.

- reduce suicides in Gypsy, Traveller and Roma (GTR) communities

- improve mental health care for people from Black, Asian and minority ethic (BAME) groups

- reduce the number of suicides on the railway

- stop people finding new ways to take their own life

- quickly collect information about suicides, especially in children



- stop harmful information being available online



- reduce the number of people who self-harm.

# For more information

If you need more information please go to:

**www.gov.uk/dhsc**