

Public Health Data - Suicide in Buckinghamshire

Overview

Every suicide is a tragedy with wide reaching impacts into family, friends and communities. Suicide prevention is a key public mental health priority in Buckinghamshire.

The most recent suicide audit (2018) confirmed that the profile of suicides in Buckinghamshire is similar to the national profile and therefore local action to prevent suicide continues to focus on the priorities within the national suicide prevention strategy. Local partners are requested to continue to support the development and implementation of the local suicide prevention plan.

The Buckinghamshire Suicide Audit highlighted that men in Buckinghamshire were more than twice as likely to end their own life than women. The audit also highlighted that the highest risk was for men aged 40-49 years. This data is further supported by Thames Valley Police Real Time Suicide Surveillance data.

Context

National research from the Samaritans shows that middle aged men from deprived communities are more at risk of declining mental health than many other population groups, and national ONS data as well as our local suicide audit records more middle-aged men take their own lives than any other group.

Recent research is also indicating that these men are struggling more than other general population groups with the lockdown and economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Evidence about the last economic recession 2008 – 2010 and increases in suicides in England with the financial crisis concluded English regions with the largest rises in unemployment have had the largest increases in suicides, particularly among men¹. A similar economic hit due to Covid is anticipated. If funding criteria were linked with supporting socially isolated men, this would also support the social isolation agenda.

The Buckinghamshire Council's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-21 also sets out its plan to create the best conditions in Buckinghamshire for people to live healthy, happy and fulfilling lives and achieve their full potential. This vision is to improve outcomes for the whole population as well as having a greater impact on improving the health and wellbeing of those people in Buckinghamshire who have poorer health and wellbeing.

The Bucks suicide audit highlighted the following:

- Men were twice more likely to take their own life than women.
- Men in employment within the skills trade (building finishing trade) were also more likely to take their own life.

The audit has identified that the patterns of suicide in Buckinghamshire were similar to the national picture therefore suicide prevention in Buckinghamshire will continue to address the range of known risk factors for suicide by implementing key suicide prevention actions aimed at: destigmatising poor mental health, promoting good mental health, and ensuring staff and managers know how to identify and respond to suicide warning signs. With men being the priority group nationally as well as in Buckinghamshire, this will also be reflected in the Buckinghamshire local suicide prevention work.

¹ <https://www.bmj.com/content/345/bmj.e5142>