

Westmorland and Furness Council

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| Report Title: | Suicide Prevention Strategy |
| Meeting: | Health & Wellbeing Board |
| Meeting Date: | Monday 22 nd April 2024 |
| Report Author: | Vicky Snape – Public Health Registrar ST3 |
| Lead Cabinet Member(s): | Patricia Bell, Cabinet Member for Adults, Health & Care |
| Wards Affected? | Covers all of Westmorland & Furness |
| PUBLIC, PART EXEMPT OR FULLY EXEMPT | Public |
| List of Appendices (if any) | |

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Suicide prevention forms part of the Health and Wellbeing Board workplan for 23/24 and the Integrated Care Partnerships strategies.

1.2 We know that in Cumbria between January 2020 and October 2023, 287 people have died by suspected suicide. Every one of those deaths is a tragedy. They are also a shocking reminder that we must continue to improve suicide prevention action and not only improve the support for those who have lost a loved one to suicide but also make support more available and accessible to those who have had suicidal thoughts.

Cumbria has a suicide rate of 15.5 per 100,000 which is higher than the England rate of 10.4. After Blackpool, Cumbria has the highest rate of suicides among local authorities in the North West and it is in the quartile of local authorities with the highest rates of suicide in England.

1.3 The Public Health team has a key leadership role on behalf of the council in the coordination of suicide prevention. Central to this is a multi-agency Suicide Prevention action plan. The previous Cumbria Suicide plan, 2019 – 2022 has not yet been updated due to -

- the local government changes in April 2023 and
- the release of the new National Suicide Prevention in England: 5-year cross sector strategy which was published in September 2023.

2. Recommendation

For the reasons set out in this report, it is recommended that –

1) The Board notes the previous work that has been undertaken on suicide prevention.

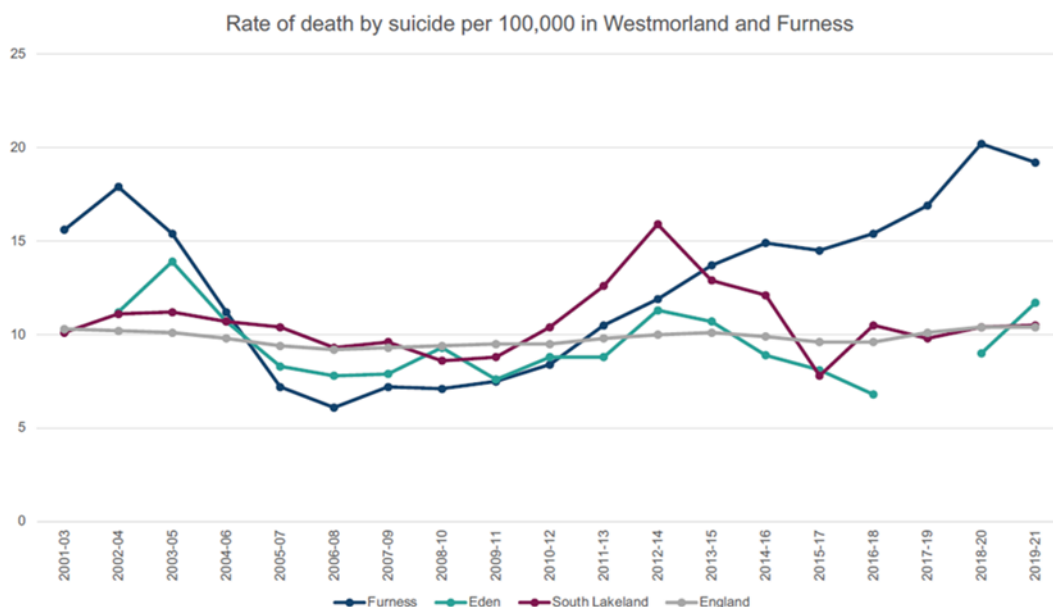
- 2) The Board endorses the continued working on suicide prevention and the development of a Cumbria Suicide Prevention Action Plan (2024 – 2029).
- 3) The Board is requested to advise on whether it wishes to see the draft plan for comment in July, prior to receiving the final plan for endorsement in September.

3. Information: the Rationale and Evidence

3.1 Suicide data nationally is taken from the Coroners reports. Since 2012 considerable progress has been made in implementing the priorities and actions that were set out in the Suicide Prevention Strategy for England and in the last 10 years, one of the lowest ever rates of registered suicides was recorded in 2017, 9.2 registered suicides per 100,000 people.

3.2 In 2018, there was an increase in the suicide rate following several years of steady decline. Although this was partly due to a change in the ‘standard of proof’ required for coroners to record a death as suicide, we know that other factors have played a part too. In 2022, 2 years on from the COVID-19 pandemic, [provisional data suggested there were 5,275 deaths by suicide registered](#), a rate of 10.6 per 100,000 people. And while, overall, the current suicide rate is not significantly higher than in 2012, the rate is not falling.

3.3 In Westmorland and Furness between 2019 – 2021, the ONS data shows the death rate per 100,000 people was 19.2 for Barrow, 11.2 for Eden 11.7 and 10.5 for South Lakeland. Barrow was the highest rate across Cumbria. Barrow in Furness has the highest number of suicides across the whole of Westmorland & Furness.



3.4 Previously there has been substantial work undertaken across Cumbria in suicide prevention, with the Public Health team working very closely with a

range of partners including the Police, the Voluntary sector and the NHS. Every Life Matters works across Cumbria in different parts of both Westmorland & Furness and Cumberland delivering training to different organisations and local people and will shortly be delivering bereavement support.

- 3.5 We are proposing that a new Suicide Prevention Action Plan for Cumbria is developed for 2024-2029, which will draw on the learning of past plans and best practice and reflect regional and national priorities. We are anticipating that a draft action plan could be prepared by May 2024. The action plan will be developed on a Cumbria footprint given that many partners who will work on this plan work across the geographic footprint including Police and Every Life Matters. This will help ensure joined up working and minimises duplication. Furthermore as the ICB's aren't co-terminus with Local Authority boundaries a single plan will help ensure a joined up approach across Westmorland and Furness. Within the plan there will be specific actions relevant to Westmorland & Furness only where this is relevant to meet the needs of our population.
- 3.6 This plan will need the buy in and commitment of both the council and key partners, as successful implementation is reliant on officer time, council, and partner resources alongside continued and enhanced frontline investment. The Health and Wellbeing Board will be presented with this draft plan with an opportunity to comment before the final version is published late summer.
- 3.7 A workshop will be held on 26th March across the Cumbria footprint with a wide range of partners including lived experience and the Community, Voluntary and Faith Sector to discuss the previous strategy, the new National strategy, current data and intelligence and identify the key priorities for Cumbria.

4. Link to Health and Wellbeing Strategy

The Health and Well being strategy is under development. In line with the data highlighted, it is likely that there will be an ambition to reduce suicide prevention.

- 5. Consultation Outcomes**
- 6. Alternative Options Considered**
- 7. Financial Implications and risk**
- 8. Legal & Governance Implications**
- 9. Equality & Diversity Implications** (including the public sector equality duty, Armed Forces Families, Care Leavers and Health inequalities implications)
 - 9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out as part of the suicide prevention plan.
- 10. Background Information & Sources (used in preparation of this Report)**
 - 10.1 National Suicide Prevention Strategy 2023, Cumbria Suicide Prevention Strategy 2019-2022