



**11 September 2024**

<b>Subject:</b>	Interim evaluation of the Sandwell Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2025
<b>Presenting Officer and Organisation</b>	Dr Lina Martino, Consultant in Public Health <a href="mailto:lina_martino@sandwell.gov.uk">lina_martino@sandwell.gov.uk</a> Dr Daniel Lange <a href="mailto:daniel.langedasilva@nhs.net">daniel.langedasilva@nhs.net</a> Public Health Speciality Trainee
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	Information and decision

## **1. Recommendations**

- 1.1 To consider and comment upon the Interim evaluation of the Sandwell Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2025.

## **2. Links to Workstreams Set out in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy**

- 2.1 Public mental health and suicide prevention is a cross-cutting area that is integral across all of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy workstreams.

<b>Healthy Communities</b>	Sandwell's Suicide Prevention Strategy and Better Mental Health Strategy are both focused upon improving the health and wellbeing of our communities and reducing inequalities in health and wellbeing. Striving to raise awareness of Suicide Prevention and delivering a range of community provision helps to improve mental health and wellbeing within our communities and workplaces and reduce premature mortality.
<b>Primary Care</b>	A key recommendation from this interim evaluation is to strengthen links with primary care, building relationships with primary care representatives to integrate healthcare and community support more effectively. This will help to achieve one of the core recommendations of the Suicide

	Prevention strategy to encourage GP referrals to targeted services and establish an explicit pathway.
<b>Integrated Town Teams</b>	Mental health improvement is a key priority for our Town Teams. The Sandwell Suicide Prevention partnership is a cross-sector partnership that works collaboratively to raise awareness of suicide prevention, use local intelligence to identify and mitigate risk factors, and ensure that people are able to access the care and support they need, including through local voluntary and community sector organisations. Progress has been made against the strategy recommendation to pilot town-based, community-led forums, with two town-based pilots established in Tipton and West Bromwich.
<b>Intermediate Care</b>	Sandwell's Suicide Prevention Strategy and Better Mental Health Strategy both take a holistic approach to supporting mental health and wellbeing and preventing deaths by suicide – including establishing clear pathways for accessing care and support. This aligns to the aim of the Immediate Care workstream to establish more efficient care pathways.
<b>Care Navigation</b>	The strategy's focus on using local intelligence to identify need and improve timely access to services and support aligns with the objectives of the Care Navigation workstream, which aims to manage demand and prevent admissions through earlier intervention.

### **3. Context and Key Issues**

#### **3.1 Background**

Suicide remains a critical public health issue, ranking among the leading causes of death worldwide and significantly affecting individuals, families, and communities.

Suicide is the leading cause of death for men under 50, and even one death by suicide can have wide reaching impacts across families and communities.

Every suicide prevented can have a positive impact on many more people. The Strategy & Action Plan include a range of measures to prevent deaths by suicide, balancing universal action to improve wellbeing among our residents with more targeted action to ensure that they are supported in their communities to access the help they need.

In Sandwell, Black Country Coroner's data identifies that 116 people died by suicide from January 2019 to June 2024. Almost 80% of cases were men, and within the ages of 40-59 years old.

The principal priority of the Sandwell Suicide Prevention Strategy is that by 2030, no-one will die of suicide in Sandwell.

### 3.2 **Sandwell Suicide Prevention Strategy 2022-2025**

Sandwell's Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2025 aims to work with a wide range of partners and within communities to raise awareness of suicide prevention and to achieve the strategy objectives:

1. To work in partnership to fulfil the 'Zero Suicides' Ambition.
2. To ensure the highest quality of care and support guaranteed by professionals.
3. To encourage a better awareness of suicide within local organisations and our communities.
4. To reduce the chances of suicide in high-risk populations.
5. To create an open culture where we listen to those with lived experience.
6. To reduce access to the means of suicide.

### 3.3 **Key findings of the interim Evaluation**

While significant strides have been made in suicide prevention in Sandwell, more work is needed to achieve the strategy's objectives fully. This interim evaluation of Sandwell's Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2025 aimed to:

- Assess the progress of the current strategy.
- Identify barriers and facilitators to its implementation.
- Make recommendations for improving its impact and setting long-term goals beyond 2025.

### 3.4 **Key Findings of the Interim Evaluation Report**

The interim evaluation has identified the following key findings:

#### **Continued Relevance**

Suicide remains a significant issue in Sandwell, with middle-aged men being the most at-risk group. Social isolation and financial struggles are critical factors influencing mental health and suicide risk.

#### **Achievements**

The strategy has made notable progress, particularly in raising awareness and providing suicide prevention training in workplace

settings, and successful community-led projects, such as the Tipton pilot project.

### **Challenges include:**

- **Data Limitations:** There is a lack of timely, reliable data on suicide and its risk factors, which hampers rapid intervention and understanding of local trends.
- **Appropriateness of support provided:** stigma surrounding mental health and suicide act as barriers to people accessing support. This is particularly problematic in certain cultural and religious groups. Concerns were raised as to whether the current support offer addresses this.
- **Healthcare and Community Support Disconnect:** Limited integration between healthcare services and community support systems restricts comprehensive support for individuals at risk.
- **Partnership Functioning:** The Sandwell Suicide Prevention Partnership is functioning more as a network than a collaborative group, with insufficient ownership and accountability among partners and limited senior engagement.

### **3.5 Interim Evaluation Recommendations**

The interim evaluation report has identified seven recommendations for consideration:

1. **Restructure the Partnership:** Establish operational and overview groups within the partnership, assign specific tasks to individuals, and enhance senior representation to ensure effective collaboration and strategic progress.
2. **Refresh the Action Plan:** Streamline the action plan to focus on key objectives, ensuring alignment with strategic goals and phased implementation to maintain clarity and momentum.
3. **Strengthen primary care links:** Build relationships with primary care representatives to integrate healthcare and community support more effectively, leveraging senior partnership members' influence.
4. **Improve data quality:** Pursue a near real-time suspected suicide surveillance system to provide a deeper understanding of suicide in Sandwell and enable rapid response. Consider suicide case

reviews to learn from each case and improve future prevention efforts.

5. **Advocate for men’s mental health:** Prioritise middle-aged men in suicide prevention initiatives and ensure their needs are addressed within the broader mental health agenda.
6. **Cultural appropriateness:** Investigate and enhance culturally appropriate engagement and support mechanisms to address the diverse needs of Sandwell’s population.
7. **Future strategy development:** Co-produce future versions of the strategy with experts by experience and partners, incorporating feedback and addressing identified gaps such as domestic abuse, safety plans, support pathways, and the needs of older adults and young people.

### 3.6 Zero Suicides in Sandwell by 2030

By addressing the identified challenges and implementing the proposed recommendations, Sandwell can strengthen its suicide prevention efforts, ultimately saving lives and improving the mental health and well-being of its residents with the aim to achieve our ambition of Zero Suicides in Sandwell by 2030.

## 4. Engagement

- 4.1 The interim evaluation of the Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan 2022-25 has focussed upon engagement with key stakeholders and members of the Sandwell Suicide Prevention Partnership. This strategic partnership monitors delivery of the strategy and action plan. A survey was created to gain a better understanding of the Sandwell Suicide Prevention Partnership’s views on the current suicide prevention strategy, the partnership itself, its strengths, limitations, and opportunities for improvement.

## 5. Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	No resource implications directly arising as a result of this report.
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	No legal and governance implications directly arising as a result of this report.
<b>Risk:</b>	No risk implications directly arising as a result of this report.

<b>Equality:</b>	<p>An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken on Sandwell's Suicide Prevention Strategy 2022-25 and Action Plan to ensure that all aspects and characteristics are considered. With specific actions relating to groups who may be at a higher risk of mental ill health.</p> <p>The report identifies middle-aged men as a risk group for suicide and advocates for a focus on men's mental health. It also recognises the need to ensure support available is culturally acceptable to the various cultural and faith communities in Sandwell. While these groups are given particular focus, the report recognises that suicide prevention and support should be made available for everyone.</p>
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	This report advocates for promotion and safeguarding of the community's mental health and wellbeing as a means by which to prevent suicide.
<b>Social Value:</b>	The report assesses the impact of and advocates for the continued investment in workplace suicide prevention training and community-led projects for the prevention of suicide.
<b>Climate Change:</b>	No identified implications for climate change outcomes and any impact on the environment
<b>Corporate Parenting:</b>	Sandwell Suicide Prevention Strategy is aligned to Corporate Parenting responsibilities through the Childrens Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Agenda underneath the remit of the Sandwell Children and Families Strategic Partnership.

## 6. Appendices

Appendix One – Interim evaluation of the Sandwell Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2025

Appendix Two – Sandwell Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2025)

Appendix Three – Presentation

## 7. Background Papers

None.