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Clare Haughey MSP  
Convener: Health, Social Care and Sport  
Committee

28<sup>th</sup> of June 2023

Dear Convener,

## Health, Social Care and Sport Committee: Updated Information on the Suicide Prevention Strategy

I am writing to provide the committee with an update on implementation of the Scottish Government's and COSLA's published our new Suicide Prevention Strategy, [Creating Hope Together](#), and the first three year [action plan](#). In particular, I would like to draw your attention to the [Outcomes Framework](#) - a key element of our approach to implementation of the action plan - which will be published on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

The outcomes framework was developed with technical expertise from Public Health Scotland and the Suicide Prevention Academic Advisory Group. It recognises - and gives visibility to - the range of changes (outcomes) that we understand are needed to prevent suicide and achieve our vision. This is expressed in the four [outcomes](#) set out in the strategy. The outcomes framework, sets out how our actions will build over the 10 years of this strategy to deliver these outcomes, and the overarching vision, which is:

To reduce the number of suicide deaths in Scotland, whilst tackling the inequalities which contribute to suicide.

To achieve this, all sectors must come together in partnership, and we must support our communities so they become safe, compassionate, inclusive, and free of stigma.

Our aim is for any child, young person or adult who has thoughts of taking their own life, or are affected by suicide, to get the help they need and feel a sense of hope.

The value of using the outcome-focused approach set out in the framework allows for priorities to be reviewed in a systematic and ongoing basis, drawing on clear evidence of impact and any significant changes to the context in which we are operating. The approach we have taken to developing a rolling suite of action plans also provides built-in opportunities to refocus activity over the 10 year period, to ensure our approach is driving change across the long term outcomes and vision. We will use the framework to prioritise our work, measure progress, and assess where we may need to adjust our plans. We will also use it to report progress against, and will publish the first annual report in July 2024.

I am also attaching an update on:

- our delivery priorities for the current year;
- membership of our new National Suicide Prevention Advisory Group;
- the organisations we have appointed to lead in the strategic delivery of the four long-term outcomes; and
- details of our key new post of Suicide Prevention National Delivery Lead, working jointly for Scottish Government and COSLA.

I hope this information is of interest, and I would be more than happy to provide further detail if required.

Yours sincerely



**MAREE TODD**

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## **Creating Hope Together - Scotland's Suicide Prevention Strategy (2022-2032 )**

The Scottish Government's vision is to reduce the number of suicide deaths in Scotland, whilst tackling the inequalities which contribute to suicide. This is reflected in our ambitious new 10 year suicide prevention [strategy](#) and action plan, which we published jointly with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) in September 2022.

In 2021, we committed to doubling the funding for suicide prevention from £1.4 to £2.8m, by 2026.

An outcomes based model is used in the strategy to set out the range of changes (outcomes) that we understand are needed to achieving this vision.

The [strategy](#) is supported by an initial three year [action plan](#) (from 2022-2025), and each year we set annual priorities, which are selected to progress delivery of our outcomes and vision. We are measuring our progress against an outcomes framework, which will be published today.

### **Creating Hope Together: our priorities for 2023 to 2024**

Our priorities for the first year of the action plan (2023 to 2024) have been informed by stakeholders, research, and importantly people with lived experience.

Our year one priorities are:

1. We will activate the whole of Government and society policy package - so that a wide range of Government policies and their delivery on the ground - are working to prevent suicide. We will make the strongest connections possible with policies which address the social determinants of suicide, such as poverty and homelessness. We will also make sure we use all the touchpoints that people have with services to proactively be alert to suicide risk, and offer compassionate support.
2. We will focus on improving safety at key locations of concern for suicide.
3. We will build on the Time Space Compassion approach, to keep improving the way people are supported and cared for when they are suicidal. We will focus our work in primary care, unscheduled care, and community settings.
4. We will support new peer support groups right across Scotland.
5. We will build more understanding of suicide risk and behaviour amongst children and young people, and use that to improve responses.
6. We will keep raising awareness and improving learning about suicide. We will target our work so we build this understanding in sectors that support groups with a higher risk of suicide. Our current work in West Highlands and Skye will help us build greater understanding of what encourages particular groups to seek help.

7. We will develop an online portal which hosts information and advice on suicide, to help people who may be suicidal and anyone worried for someone, as well as professionals.
8. We will roll-out suicide reviews and improve data to help redesign the way support is given to people who are suicidal - ensuring that support is both timely and effective.
9. We will work with partners in high risk settings for suicide, to build effective and compassionate suicide prevention action plans.
10. And last but not least, we will step up our United to Prevent Suicide social movement with a new focus on boosting employer engagement, and reaching groups most likely to be affected by suicide. We will continue to be creative, using different mediums, such as sport and social media, to tackle stigma and create ways for people to talk safely about suicide.

In taking forward these actions we will continue to put lived experience at the heart of our work. Our lived experience panel, youth advisory group, and local groups too, will continue to shape every step we take.

### **Delivering our strategy**

Whilst the Scottish Government and COSLA have joint responsibility for delivering the strategy, we greatly value the expertise and value of partnership working. Also, given the complexity of suicide and the fact it is rarely caused by one single factor, it is critical that all sectors, communities and the workforce, work together to achieve change.

We have created **Suicide Prevention Scotland** to deliver the action plan, ensure national, local and sectoral actions are well co-ordinated and mutually supportive, and create a community open to anyone across Scotland working on suicide prevention to share, learn and connect.

**Suicide Prevention Scotland** includes people at a national and local level, as well as within key sectors and particular settings. We greatly values lived experience and academic research which we will continue to benefit from as we prioritise, deliver and communicate our work.

**Suicide**   
**Prevention**  
**Scotland.**

**Working to deliver Creating Hope Together**

## Key roles

The delivery of the action plan is led by our Suicide Prevention National Delivery Lead, Haylis Smith, who also heads up **Suicide Prevention Scotland**.

To build a partnership approach, we have selected a range of partners to lead the strategic delivery of each of the strategy's four outcomes. They will also build further partnerships as they deliver the priority actions.

The Strategic Outcome Lead partners are:

- Creating a safer environment that protects against suicide - Samaritans Scotland
- Improving understanding of suicide and tackling stigma - SAMH
- Providing compassionate support for anyone affected by suicide – Penumbra & Change  
Mental Health
- Working in a connected way, that always draws on evidence and lived experience – Public Health Scotland.

## Our outcomes approach to suicide prevention

In developing our strategy we drew on a range of evidence and insights to understand the range of changes that need to occur across society to prevent suicide. This is expressed in the four [outcomes](#) set out in the strategy.

We have published (on 28 June 2023) an outcomes framework, which sets out how our actions will build over the 10 years of this strategy to deliver these outcomes, and the overarching vision.

We will use this framework to prioritise our work, measure progress, and assess where we may need to adjust our plans. We will also use it to report progress against, and the first annual report will publish in July 2024.

## The National Suicide Prevention Advisory Group

The National Suicide Prevention Advisory Group (NSPAG) has been established to champion and drive suicide prevention in Scotland, by:

- providing independent assurance and advice to Government and COSLA on the strategy's progress, and whether any redirection may be needed (using the evidence of progress reported through the outcomes framework)
- providing strategic advice on delivery to the National Delivery Lead, to support progress.

Members of the Group have been selected to help us understand suicide better - the complexity, intersectionality and inequality of suicide. As such the Group's membership represents many of the sectors who are leading work on the social determinants of suicide, such as poverty, as well as partners who are working in key sectors affected by suicide – such as the criminal justice sector.

The Group's membership is:

Rose Fitzpatrick CBE QPM, Chair

Cath Denholm, Equality and Human Rights Commission

Dr Linda Findlay, Royal College of Psychiatrists Scotland

Louise Hunter, Who Cares? Scotland

Dr Douglas Hutchison, Association of Directors of Education Scotland

Peter Kelly, Poverty Alliance

Sheriff David Mackie, Scottish Association Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders (SACRO)

Catherine McWilliam, Institute of Directors Scotland

Brendan Rooney, Healthy n Happy Community Development Trust

Dr Andrea Williamson, Professor of General Practice and Inclusion Health, University of Glasgow

## **How did we get here?**

Over the last 20 years, suicide prevention has been a strategic priority for the Scottish Government. The Choose Life strategy (2002) laid the groundwork for suicide prevention in Scotland. Since then, there have been a number of strategies and action plans building on this foundation, including [Every Life Matters](#), which we published in 2018.

Every Life Matters established strong foundations on how we delivery suicide prevention in Scotland, including, the extensive contribution and insight from people with lived experience of suicide, through the Suicide Prevention Lived Experience Panel, and the Youth Advisory Group; the grounding in research and evaluation, supported by the Suicide Prevention Academic Advisory Group; and our community of national and local practitioners who are driving change across communities. These elements will continue to be crucial to our success going forward.

## **Thank you**

Thank you to everyone who has been part of the journey so far, and who will continue to work with us as we strive to deliver on our shared vision.