

THE DEPRIVATION PROJECT

Developing local strategies to address suicide risk in Scotland

Introduction

Discussions about suicide risk factors have tended to focus heavily on individual mental health issues. While mental health is a significant factor in many suicides a broader understanding of suicide risk factors is important for the development of appropriate and accessible suicide prevention strategies.

Recent Samaritans research called for an extension of suicide prevention 'beyond its focus on individual mental health problems, to understand the social and cultural context which contributes to people feeling they wish to die'.¹ The Deprivation Project takes up this call.

Throughout 2013 and early 2014 we will be working in selected areas of Scotland to achieve the project's three core objectives, discussed in turn below.

1. Increase awareness of the link between suicide and deprivation

The link between socio-economic deprivation and increased risk of suicide is well established. Previous academic studies have shown us, for example, that men from the lowest social class living in the most deprived areas are at approximately ten times greater

risk of suicide than those in the most affluent group living in the most affluent areas.²

The Deprivation Project will bring this message to key stakeholders through workshops, presentations, the development of bespoke materials, and other partnership activities.

2. Support development of local approaches to suicide reduction

Every local area has a unique profile: a unique geography, economy, and population. It follows that a profile of deprivation and associated suicide risk will also vary between local populations.

The Deprivation Project aims to support the development of local approaches to reducing the risk of suicide among people experiencing deprivation. We hope to achieve this by understanding which groups are at risk because they experience deprivation, developing partnerships with organisations in contact with these high risk groups, and building upon the skills and experiences of these local organisations.

3. Increase awareness of suicide reduction services

People at high risk of suicide may not actively seek support for their emotional concerns.

¹ Wyllie, C., Platt, S., Brownlie, J., Chandler, A., Connolly, S., Evans, R., Kennelly, B., Kirtley, O., Moore, G., O'Connor, R., Scourfield, J. (2012) *Men, Suicide and Society: Why disadvantaged men in mid-life die by suicide*. Surrey: Samaritans, p.1

² Platt (2011) Inequalities and suicidal behaviour. In O'Conner, R., Platt, S., and Gordon, J. (eds.) *International Handbook of Suicide Prevention: Research, Policy and Practice*. West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons Ltd.

However, they may be accessing support for other aspects of their life for example physical health, housing, finances or employment.

The Deprivation Project will seek to raise awareness of suicide reduction services among organisations in contact with people experiencing deprivation, increasing the confidence of staff in these organisations to address suicide risk in their work. By turns, we hope more people at high risk of suicide will become aware of and be supported to access appropriate suicide reduction services.

Beyond the project

The Deprivation Project is due to end in mid 2014. However, it is important that the local relationships and strategies developed over the course of the project are supported to continue for as long as there is a need. We will work with our partners and with local Samaritans branches to ensure this sustainability is achievable.

We also hope that the lessons learned during the life of this project, our objectives and the activities implemented to achieve these may be applied to further areas around Scotland and the UK.

For more information about this project, please contact:

Andrew Sim, Executive Director for Scotland

a.sim@samaritans.org

The Samaritans logo consists of the word "SAMARITANS" in a bold, green, sans-serif font. The text is enclosed within a white rectangular box with a black border. The box is slightly tilted and has a subtle drop shadow, giving it a three-dimensional appearance as if it's a sticker or a sign.

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