

Bracknell Forest Health and Wellbeing Board
14 March 2024

Pan Berkshire Suicide Prevention (2021-2026) Update
Director of Place, Planning and Regeneration

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides the Bracknell Forest Health and Wellbeing Board with an update on the Berkshire Suicide Prevention Strategy 2021 - 2026. A revised action plan has been developed, outlining specific, targeted actions aligned with the original goals of the Berkshire Suicide Prevention Strategy 2021–2026 and the latest National Strategy of 2023. The priority actions outlined in the action plan will support the refresh of existing suicide prevention action plans in the six Berkshire local authorities.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 **To approve the Pan Berkshire Suicide Prevention revised action plan 23/24.**
- 2.2 **To request a progress report on the action plan in December 2024**
- 2.3 **To request a refreshed action plan for 24/25 in March 2025.**
- 2.4 **To request the Frimley ICB (Integrated Care Boards) spending plan for the ring-fenced suicide prevention funding received for 24/25 for assurance that it is aligned to the Pan Berkshire Suicide Prevention priorities.**

3 Reasons for Recommendation(S)

- 3.1 The Berkshire Suicide Prevention approach was developed in 2020 and endorsed by the Health and Wellbeing Board in October 2021. In July 2022, it was recommended to the Health and Wellbeing Board to refresh the strategy due to changes in the policy landscape. This period coincided with significant changes to local public health and healthcare system. Due to these challenging circumstances, the Berkshire Suicide Prevention Strategy (2021 – 2026) and an implementation action plan were delayed.
- 3.2 After reviewing Berkshire Strategy for 2021-2026 to ensure that approaches were aligned to the new national strategy, the Berkshire local authority suicide prevention leads agreed to focus on refreshing their suicide prevention action plan at a local operational level. This will facilitate local implementation across the six Berkshire Local Authorities and result in local preventative activity.
- 3.3 The complexity of the Public Health System in Berkshire with six different local authorities encompassing diverse populations, presents significant challenges to a strategic approach to suicide prevention. By requesting progress on the action plan the Health and Wellbeing Board can be assured that the Pan Berkshire Suicide Prevention Board remains effective.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 No alternative options were considered as the Pan Berkshire Suicide Prevention was re-established with an interim director of public health for West Berks and Reading as Chair and an interim consultant in public health lead in post. This has facilitated regular meetings between suicide prevention leads from the six Berkshire local authorities to progress the suicide prevention agenda.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 Suicide prevention has been a national political priority since 2016 and remains a high priority for public health teams across Berkshire.
- 5.2 On 11th September 2023 the Government published a new national five-year cross-sector suicide prevention strategy for England with a national action plan. The aim of the national strategy is to bring everybody together around common priorities and set out actions that can be taken to:
- reduce the suicide rate over the next 5 years – with initial reductions observed within half this time or sooner
 - improve support for people who have self-harmed
 - improve support for people bereaved by suicide.
- 5.3. To progress local implementation of the Berkshire Suicide Prevention Strategy an operational action plan has been collaboratively developed with the six Berkshire suicide prevention leads and co-leads. This plan encompasses high-level system actions across the Thames Valley, BOB Integrated Care Board, and Berkshire. These actions are:
- Continued investment in commissioned Bereavement Support Services
 - Review of the Real Time Surveillance (RTS) System
 - Review of the Berkshire Suicide Prevention Group
 - A suicide audit for Berkshire
- 5.4. There will be different approaches to implementing the Berkshire Strategy at the local level. In support of Local Authorities, the audit tool has been developed for leads and suicide prevention groups. This tool serves as a comprehensive mechanism for evaluating strengths, identifying areas for improvement, and establishing connections with pre-existing local strategies, ensuring the efficient delivery of actions. The insights gained from the audit tool will play a pivotal role in developing the local implementation plan, prioritising key areas, and outlining specific actions, including considerations related to resources and capacity
- 5.5. Suicide is a complex issue, and prevention should be integrated into other local strategies and programs, including the commissioning of other public health and well-being services across the life course.
- 5.6. It is important to note that each local authority should maintain or establish a local multi-agency suicide prevention group that reports to their respective Health and Wellbeing Board, being accountable to residents. Recognising the complex mix of factors contributing to suicidal tendencies, no single agency can prevent suicide in isolation. Both the Berkshire Suicide Prevention Group and the local multi-agency suicide prevention action planning groups can facilitate and promote collaborative efforts at both strategic and operational levels to prevent self-harm and suicides among Berkshire residents.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

6.1 Not required as this is implementation of a national policy across Berkshire.

6.2 Financial advice

Currently, suicide prevention is unfunded but recognised as a public health priority. The ICB receive suicide prevention funding which is used to contract bereavement services.

Other Consultation Responses

6.3 A Suicide Prevention Summit took place on 15th December 2022, preceded by a survey. The recommendations from the summit were incorporated into the high-level action plan for Berkshire, which will be further developed by the six Berkshire Public Health leads. This process will involve identifying appropriate lead organisations across Thames Valley, BOB ICB, and Berkshire.

Equalities Impact Assessment

6.4 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was conducted in conjunction with the development of the Berkshire Suicide Prevention Strategy (2021-2026).

Strategic Risk Management Issues

6.5 Funding for a local near Real Time Suicide Prevention Surveillance is being explored by the DsPH (directors of public health) with ICB. RTSS (Real Time Surveillance System) practitioner and Bereavement Support coordinator at Thames Valley Police was extended for 24/25 but requires secure longer-term funding.

Climate Change and Ecological Impacts

6.6 Not applicable

Background Papers

Pan Berkshire Suicide Prevention Strategy and Pan Berkshire Action plan attached.

Contact for further information

Heema Shukla, Deputy Director Public Health, Place Planning and Regeneration
Heema.shukla@bracknell-forest.gov.uk