
Berkshire Suicide Prevention Strategy 2021 – 2026: An Update

Report being considered by:	Health and Wellbeing Board
On:	2 May 2024
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Item for:	Decision



1. Purpose of the Report

This report provides the West Berkshire Health and Wellbeing Board with an update on the Berkshire Suicide Prevention Strategy 2021 – 2026 and proposal for local implementation in 2024/25. A revised pan-Berkshire 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. Recommendation(s)

2.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board are asked to:

- (1) Approve the Pan-Berkshire Suicide Prevention revised action plan 2024/25.
- (2) Request a progress report on the development and delivery of the 2024/25 West Berkshire action plan and proposal for a 2025/26 refresh in March 2025.
- (3) Request assurance from Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB) that the spending plan for all age mental health transformation and service provision (now that the NHS England suicide prevention funding has ceased) is aligned to the Pan-Berkshire Suicide Prevention priorities, particularly bereavement support.
- (4) Health and Wellbeing Board members are asked to also offer support for involvement of their organisations in the emerging West Berkshire multi-agency Suicide Prevention Group (currently the Suicide Prevention Action Group) to develop and implement the local action plan.

3. Executive Summary

3.1 Suicide Prevention remains a priority both nationally and locally.

- 3.2 The National Suicide Prevention Strategy was refreshed and published in September 2023. The clear narrative throughout the strategy highlighted the importance of suicide prevention being everyone’s business, the strategy aims 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.
- 3.3 After reviewing the 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.
- 3.4 Work to establish suicide prevention leadership and pan-Berkshire governance has now been completed. High-level Berkshire system priorities and actions have been identified:
- 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
- 3.5 A Local Authority action plan (Appendix A) and audit tool (Appendix B) have been developed and once endorsed, need undertaking and implementing with the support of a local multiagency suicide prevention steering and implementation group.

4. Supporting Information

Policy Context

- 4.1 Suicide prevention has been a national political priority since 2016 and remains a high priority for public health teams across Berkshire. 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.
- 4.2 The Berkshire Suicide Prevention Strategy (2021 – 2026) 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) was not universally adopted by all six local authorities. Consequently, the coordination, production, and oversight of the strategy refresh was delayed.
- 4.3 On 11th September 2023 the Government published a new national 5 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.

4.4 After reviewing the 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.

Implementation of Berkshire Strategy and Local Action Plans

4.5 To date, the following actions have taken place to support the implementation of the Berkshire Suicide Prevention Strategy (2021 – 2026). These include:

- The appointment of a Lead Director of Public Health (Berkshire West / East).
- The appointment of a Lead Consultant (interim) in Public Health / Assistant Director of Public Health.
- A review of the current Berkshire position with a set of immediate priority actions recommended to Director/s of Public Health.
- An audit of the strategy recommendations, mapped at a system level with potential lead organisations identified.
- Establishment of Berkshire Suicide Prevention Public Health Leads meetings to review current local activity and establish a network to support good practice and delivery.
- High level Berkshire actions identified and operational action plan along with the with the development of an audit tool.
- A Thames Valley Real Time Surveillance System workshop undertaken in January 2024 to share good practice and scope what a local system might look like.
- Local Public Health teams reviewing their local action plans against the operational action plan audit tool.

4.6 The Berkshire Suicide Prevention Group, chaired by one of the Berkshire Directors of Public Health, has consistently convened quarterly meetings with the objective of driving the suicide prevention agenda forward. The group advocates for a collaborative approach, actively working towards effecting tangible change in the prevention of suicides across Berkshire through coordinated actions taken by member organisations.

4.7 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

4.8 There will be different approaches to implementing the Berkshire Strategy at the local level. In support of Local Authorities, the action plan audit tool (Appendix B) 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.

4.9 Suicide is a complex issue, and prevention should be integrated into other local strategies and programs, including the commissioning of other preventative and mental health and well-being services across the life course.

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

5. Options Considered

5.1 To focus on refreshing local suicide prevention action plans at an operational level to ensure activity is aligned to the national strategy refresh, and for the work to be steered and implemented through a local multiagency group making suicide prevention everyone's business in West Berkshire.

5.2 No other options were considered.

6. Proposal(s)

Once the action plan is endorsed, the proposed actions will then be mapped against existing workstreams already underway in West Berkshire and gaps and new workstreams stood up. It is proposed that the terms of reference and membership of the existing VCSE Suicide Prevention Action Group will be reviewed to determine if it can effectively take ownership to oversee and coordinate delivery against the action plan.

7. Conclusion(s)

Suicide prevention is a national and local priority and is everyone's business. Local suicide prevention activity should be steered and implemented through a local multi-agency suicide prevention group that reports to the Health and Wellbeing Board, being accountable to local 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.

8. Consultation and Engagement

A systemwide 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.

9. Appendices

Appendix A – Pan-Berkshire Implementation Action Plan

Appendix B – Action Plan audit tool

Background Papers:

Pan Berkshire Suicide Prevention Strategy

Health and Wellbeing Priorities Supported:

The proposals will support the following Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities:

- Reduce the differences in health between different groups of people
- Support individuals at high risk of bad health outcomes to live healthy lives
- Help families and young children in early years
- Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all children and young people
- Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all adults

The proposals contained in this report will support the above Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities by targeting suicide prevention activity to where need and risk is greatest and thus reducing the differences in morbidity and mortality between different groups of people. In addition, suicide prevention activity aims to prevent both self-harm and mental health crisis (and the risk of suicide contagion) which contributes to the promotion of good mental health and wellbeing across all age groups.
