

Ddulliau gweithredu lleol ar gyfer lleihau tlodi: Deddf Llesiant Cenedlaethau'r Dyfodol a byrddau gwasanaethau cyhoeddus

Local Approaches to poverty reduction: The Well-Being of Future Generations Act and public service boards

Ymateb gan: Samariaid Cymru

Response from: Samaritans Cymru:

About Samaritans Cymru: Samaritans is a registered charity aimed at providing emotional support to anyone in emotional distress. In Wales, Samaritans work locally and nationally to raise awareness of their service and reach out into local communities to support people who are struggling to cope. They seek to use their expertise and experience to improve policy and practice and are active contributors to the development and implementation of Wales Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Action Plan 'Talk to Me 2'.

Introduction

Samaritans Cymru welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation and are encouraged to see an in-depth Assembly focus on poverty in Wales.

We have welcomed this legislation in Wales and have worked with the Commissioner to provide guidance to public service boards (PSBs) on local suicide prevention. Members of PSBs are often 'priority people' identified in Talk to Me 2, who should form the core of stakeholders and partners who develop and implement local suicide prevention. We have been pleased to see collaborative working between local suicide prevention forums and public service boards over the past year; for example, Bridgend Suicide Prevention Operational Working Group have acted as a Task and Finish Group for Bridgend PSB. The group will continue to report on progress to the Bridgend PSB, particularly on the collection and analysis of local suicide data. Whilst this kind of collaboration is crucial and aligned with the remit of a PSB, it is important to identify that in terms of suicide prevention, local strategies are created with the guidance of the overarching strategy, Talk to Me 2.

Suicide and Poverty in Wales

In 2016, there were 322 suicides in Wales - 265 (82%) of these suicides were men and 57 (18%) were women. This is compared with 274 (78%) men and 76 (22%) women in 2015. From a UK perspective, suicide is now the biggest killer of men under 50, women aged 20-34 and the leading cause of death for young people under 35.

Alongside this, almost one in four people in Wales lives in poverty which means they get less than 60% of the average wage. Wales has the third highest poverty rate in the UK and the risk of living in poverty is higher for certain groups.¹

Whilst there is no single reason why people take their own lives, socioeconomic disadvantage or living in an area of socioeconomic deprivation is a key risk factor for suicidal behaviour. Areas of higher socioeconomic deprivation tend to have higher rates of suicide and the greater the level of deprivation experienced by an individual, the higher their risk of suicidal behaviour. In 2016, Samaritans commissioned eight leading social scientists to review and extend the existing body of knowledge on this topic, addressing the connection between socioeconomic disadvantage and suicidal behaviour and finding ways to address the link. Some of the key findings identified in 'Dying from Inequality' include -

- Suicide risk increases during periods of economic recession, particularly when recessions are associated with a steep rise in unemployment, and this risk remains high when crises end, especially for individuals whose economic circumstances do not improve.
- There is a strong association between area-level deprivation and suicidal behaviour: as area-level deprivation increases, so does suicidal behaviour. Suicide rates are two to three times higher in the most deprived neighbourhoods compared to the most affluent.
- Admissions to hospital following self-harm are two times higher in the most deprived neighbourhoods compared to the most affluent.
- The risk of suicidal behaviour is increased among those experiencing job insecurity and downsizing or those engaged in non-traditional work situations, such as part-time, irregular and short-term contracts with various employers.²

A central approach

We believe that both poverty and suicide should be led by a central strategy, Both suicide and poverty are major public health issues and must remain high on the agenda. Every local area in Wales has a unique geography, economy, and population. It follows that a profile of deprivation and associated suicide risk will also vary between local populations.

PSBs are integral bodies for both local suicide prevention and poverty reduction. Whilst many wellbeing assessments have highlighted poverty as a major cause for concern, it is often listed alongside many other inequalities which pervade local areas across Wales. Reducing poverty must be

¹ *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion for Wales 2015* (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2015)

² *Dying from Inequality: Socioeconomic disadvantage and suicidal behaviour* (Samaritans, 2016)

monitored and reported on systematically. The breadth of complex factors involved in suicide risk and poverty reduction highlights the need for multi-agency, cross-governmental and unified action, led by a central strategy. Reducing poverty is a local and national imperative and one that should be seen as a major and urgent priority in the national public health agenda in Wales.