

Response from the Royal College of Nursing Wales to the Health, Social Care & Sport Committee's consultation on suicide prevention

The Royal College of Nursing Wales is grateful for the opportunity to respond to the consultation on suicide prevention in Wales. We would like to raise a number of points in relation to the terms of reference:

Overview

- I. The quality, availability and accessibility of mental health services plays a key role in suicide prevention. It is vital therefore that anyone who may be at risk of considering or attempting suicide is able to access the right type of service, delivered by appropriately skilled professionals, in the right place, and at the right time.
- II. Mental health care is a specialist and skilled area of nursing and mental health nurses are specifically trained to work in mental health care settings and to treat and care for people with a wide range of illnesses and complex needs. The Royal College of Nursing calls for a clear workforce development and education strategy for mental health nursing in Wales that will help to meet the current and future mental health needs of the population, including those who are in crisis.
- III. Unscheduled care services (such as drop-in centres, or A&E departments) should all be designed to have the facilities and expertise to engage with people in a mental health crisis. All Health Boards should have well developed multi agency crisis plans and protocols to enable people to access services 24/7. Assertive outreach and crisis resolution teams should be developed, adequately resourced and be accessible across Wales.

Extent of the problem and evidence for its causes

- IV. As stated in the Welsh Government's 'Talk to Me' strategy, suicide rates are higher in more deprived communities, and this highlights that suicide prevention should address inequalities that exist in society. It is also known that some groups in society are more 'at risk' than others including veterans, members of the trans community, prisoners and those suffering from chronic illnesses. It is important therefore that suicide prevention strategies are able to reach all groups in society, including those who are hard to reach.

Effectiveness of Welsh Government's approach

- V. It is understood from our members, that whilst suicide prevention strategies such as 'Talk to me 2' are, in principle, meant to be embedded within health boards and community services, this is not consistently the case across Wales. Mental health services have a key part to play in implementing and delivering these strategies and yet teams and resources already experience a level of demand which outstrips capacity. The Committee may therefore want to consider whether additional resource and investment is required in order for strategies such as 'Talk to me 2' to be truly embedded within and across services.

Contribution of public services/local communities to suicide prevention

- VI. RCN Wales believes that health and social services (alongside all other public services) need to promote good mental health and wellbeing. As part of this promotion RCN Wales believes the pre-16 education curriculum should include the teaching of strategies to develop emotional resilience and promote emotional well-being. This can help equip children and young people with skills which can help later on in life.
- VII. The RCN has partnered with MindEd which is a free educational resource aimed at upskilling the workforce, as well as parents, carers and other professionals. The resources offer free online learning and information to help educate the workforce, plus advice and information for families and carers, and an example of how technology can be utilised to communicate vital information. There are two resources:
- MindEd for Families – online advice and information to help families understand and identify early issues and how best to support children. Specific pathways have been developed to signpost school nurses and others to key modules to complete.
 - MindEd for Professionals and Volunteers – provides adults who care or work with young people the knowledge to support their wellbeing, the understanding to identify a child at risk of a mental health condition, and the confidence to act on their concern and, if needed, signpost to services that can help.

Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat

- VIII. The Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat, of which the Royal College of Nursing Wales is a joint signatory along with Welsh Government and other

partners, outlines a number of Core Principles. The Committee may want to consider the extent to which these principles are embedded into practice:

- Access to support before crisis point
Early intervention is universally recognised as the best form of prevention. People with mental health problems or their families, friends or partners are often aware that a crisis is fast approaching and may know how it might be averted.
- Urgent and emergency access to crisis care
People in mental distress should be kept safe and find the support they need from whatever source. As a key requirement, local services need to be available out of hours – 24/7. Responses to people in crisis are best undertaken wherever possible locally and close to home. Local plans should aim to ensure that no one is turned away and a least restrictive treatment option, most appropriate to the individuals needs should be applied
- Quality of treatment and therapeutic care when in crisis
Local mental health services should meet the needs of people in crisis, appropriately at all times. Responses should have parity with emergency physical health need, and these services will be inspected and regulated.
- Recovery and staying well
Care planning is a key element of prevention and should focus on recovery. An emphasis should be placed on care and treatment planning, accessing services within agreed time-frames and the duties placed on those services to deliver appropriate care.

About the Royal College of Nursing

The RCN is the world's largest professional union of nurses, representing over 430,000 nurses, midwives, health visitors and nursing students, including over 25,000 members in Wales. The majority of RCN members work in the NHS with around a quarter working in the independent sector. The RCN works locally, nationally and internationally to promote standards of care and the interests of patients and nurses, and of nursing as a profession. The RCN is a UK-wide organisation, with its own National Boards for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The RCN is a major contributor to nursing practice, standards of care, and public policy as it affects health and nursing. The RCN represents nurses and nursing, promotes excellence in practice and shapes health policies.