



Together for Children and Young People (T4CYP) was launched in February 2015 following Welsh Government designating children and young people's emotional and mental health a priority. With cross cabinet commitment, this multiagency service improvement programme aims to work at pace to consider ways to reshape, remodel and refocus the emotional and mental health services provided for children and young people in Wales.

T4CYP welcomes the opportunity to comment on the review into the *Talk to Me 2* (T2M2) suicide and self harm prevention strategy and work programme. Answers to the enquiry questions are outlined below:

1 Suicide and self harm response:

- ***The extent of the problem of suicide in Wales and evidence for its causes - including numbers of people dying by suicide, trends and patterns in the incidence of suicide; vulnerability of particular groups; risk factors influencing suicidal behaviour.***

Suicide continues to present a major public health challenge, with no significant improvement in absolute numbers over the past year. For groups such as young people it is one of the major causes of death in the age group whilst older adults remain the highest risk group in absolute terms. There is a large body of evidence that identifies risk factors. Socio economic influences such as poverty (of opportunity as well as financial) and fragmented social cohesion, play important roles. All areas of government have a role to play. Two particular issues of note are access to means, and rising rates of self-harm as a way of managing distress, particularly in young adults.

Whilst significant progress has been made on road and bridge design and availability of medication, much more is required to impact on the role of alcohol and psychoactive substances in suicide and self-harm. The rising concerns regarding the mental health and well being of children with some using self harm as a consequence is being addressed by T4CYP. Whilst crisis response and access times have improved, addressing the psychosocial risk factors that create the issue requires a wider approach from across society. Raising our children in a society that promotes and facilitates positive early attachments, prevents and mitigates the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) early trauma is essential to prevention in the long term. An education system that builds skills confidence and resilience is another key building block. More specifically addressing the key issue of bullying, particularly cyber bullying and the access to web sites that support and promotes suicidal behaviour is key to long term success in tackling the issue.

2 The social and economic impact of suicide:

- ***The ripple effect of a suicide or cluster of suicides in an area on its social and economic cohesion cannot be underestimated. More specific costs on public service acute response, legal process, and support services for remaining families, colleagues and schools are more evident along with the cost to business when a major transport route is closed.***
- ***The effectiveness of the Welsh Government's approach to suicide prevention - including the suicide prevention strategy Talk to me 2 and its impact at the local, regional and national levels; the effectiveness of multi-agency approaches to suicide prevention; public awareness campaigns; reducing access to the means of suicide.***

T4CYP has worked closely with T2M2. The products it has produced regarding the evidence base, and means to prevent self harm and suicide are excellent. The work on bridge design and its ongoing battle to help the press report responsibly is of particular note. The difficulty it faces, as with many cross cutting issues, is its impact as action can be left to someone else and competing, department specific targets and pressures take precedence. The team itself is small and progress across the country has been dependant on the enthusiasm and the seniority of those leading in the local areas. The stigma associated with the issue and mental health in general means the public awareness campaigns can be limited in their impact, due to lack of obvious local ownership and can too easily be seen as something that effects "someone else"

- ***The contribution of the range of public services to suicide prevention, and mental health services in particular.***

See response above. In children services across society the majority of practitioners feel unskilled and unsupported to the point the mental health services are seen as solely responsible, when the evidence suggests major impacts from wider areas of life. Improved undergraduate and postgraduate training on this issue and wider well being issues are an essential. Crisis responses from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) have improved, but when the specific precipitating factors lie in other areas of a young person's life, it is very difficult to find willing collaboration. There are some examples of excellent care however. Newport Health Service and the joint working between Betsi Cadwaladr UHB and their Schools are exemplars.

- ***The contribution of local communities and civil society to suicide prevention.***

See *above*. The position is variable often depending on the immediate relevance of the issue to the particular community. Unfortunately the contribution is not systematic across Wales or consistent.

- ***Other relevant Welsh Government strategies and initiatives, for example; Together for Mental Health, data collection, policies relating to community resilience and safety.***

We have commented on some of the impacts of T4CYP but this can only be effective in the context of a system that fosters positive mental health and resilience in our country. The key steps to developing resilience need to be clarified and then infused across society. An understanding that resilience is often developed by being supported to successfully overcome small adversity needs to be understood, rather than believing adversity should never occur, is an important first step. Early year's attachment and exploration of risk through play are important building blocks. The importance of the proposed education reforms and promotion of community prosperity across age ranges supported by the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and the Social Care and Well Being Act have potential positive impact too.

- ***Innovative approaches to suicide prevention.***

See *above* in addition to those identified by the T2M2 plan.