

## Preventing Suicide with a joined-up approach

**Health Innovation Network's Head of Mental Health, Aileen Jackson, reflects on a summer spent researching best practice in suicide prevention on behalf of the Zero Suicide Alliance.**

It hardly seems possible that it was just a year ago that the Health Innovation Network (HIN) Mental Health and Technology teams, working on behalf of the Zero Suicide Alliance (ZSA), became joined at the hip for a whole sunny summer, with the common goal of gathering views from multiagency stakeholders, to help inform a new 'Go To' Suicide Prevention Digital online resource (later called ZSA Resources). Over a three-month period, we engaged stakeholders from across England, including through hosting events in London, Manchester, Leeds and Bristol, completed a desktop review on existing suicide prevention resources and provided technical advice to the ZSA on how best to set up this new resource.

Many will be surprised to know that focus on suicide prevention is relatively new. In fact, the World Health Organisation (WHO) only published its first suicide prevention report in 2014. In 2018 WHO identified three countries as success stories for national suicide prevention strategies, of which England was one, alongside Sweden and Scotland. Some of the themes common to the success were leadership from Government, collaborative and partnership working and sharing of information across all sectors. These values of sharing and partnership working across boundaries are shared by the HIN and the ZSA, and the new 'Go To' resource was developed to encapsulate these values too.

## Hearing your views

Stakeholder engagement is an enjoyable but complex part of my role at HIN. Even more so when tackling discussions around a topic as personal and sensitive as suicide. I quickly learned that this subject was very important to you. Those of you who attended the workshops relished the chance to spend time in a multi-agency setting, pooling ideas on your most pressing needs to help you in your work - and lives - to prevent suicide. I heard many times that we have all been touched by suicide, as the research indicates, but speaking with you and listening to you, confirmed for me that suicide really is not just something that happens to people you don't know.

Our approach was as rigorous as we could be in this short time frame, but thanks to the generosity of everyone we engaged with, we received close to a 1000 responses on exactly what information would help

you to prevent suicide. And there is no doubt we would never have been able to complete this work without you.

You know who you are, but I want to put you in the limelight too. You came together both in person and virtually to guide and inform our work. Experts by experience; representatives from the NHS, Local Authorities, public health, emergency services, universities, schools, prisons; academics and our voluntary and independent sector colleagues from the Academic Health Science Network (AHSN). All experts in your own right, all working to prevent suicide. It was clear that your collective top priorities are evidence-based suicide prevention interventions and suicide prevention training, which we have shared with the ZSA to guide the development of this resource.

### **Beyond the UK**

Our desktop research took us far and wide. Not satisfied with only sourcing best practice examples from across the UK, we also scoured the rest of the world. Some of the examples we found were backed with evidence research, while others demonstrated their value and impact through other practical measurements, such as the volume of users who have downloaded an app or through inbuilt evaluation. As an AHSN Network, we endeavour to always incorporate the latest research findings, as well as effective technology and digital solutions in our advice, so it was important to us that we research a combination of more established 'science' examples, as well as look to newer innovations supported by other forms of inbuilt evaluation. Our external expert panel gave us rigorous feedback on the quality of our findings, and the final product has benefited from their challenges and guidance.

### **The resource**

The technical guidance we provided to ZSA (in terms that I can understand) was designed to reflect what you told us was important; ease of access and an ongoing ability to enable stakeholders to influence the content on the site. Our work was really just the beginning. I am delighted that the ZSA have launched ZSA Resources and are now sharing our reports with you, the people that can make a difference. Whilst the impact of suicide sadly remains an ongoing struggle for many of us, in this resource you will find many possible solutions to enable the work towards the Zero Suicide ambition of the ZSA. Take the time to explore it and be inspired by it. But also critique it and feedback to the ZSA. This resource is not intended to be an end product. With your expertise the site can continue to grow and respond to innovation. Most importantly, it could potentially [Save a Life](#) of the person we all live and work alongside.

Explore the Zero Suicide Alliance's Online Suicide Prevention resource [here](#).

### Acknowledgements and further information

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Find out more about the support, expert advice and connections the HIN can offer your project [here](#).

### References

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