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| **A New Suicide Prevention Strategy for Scotland** |  |
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Introduction

In June 2021, the Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care announced that a new suicide prevention strategy and action plan would be published jointly by the Scottish Government and COSLA in September 2022.

We are now reaching out to people across Scotland, to hear about what is working well and about what could work better to help reduce suicide. This will help shape the new Suicide Prevention Strategy.

How we understand suicide in Scotland:

There are currently two ways which help our understanding about probable suicide deaths in Scotland:

* [National Records of Scotland Annual Statistics](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/deaths/suicides)
* [Scottish Suicide Information Database (ScotSID)](https://www.ndc.scot.nhs.uk/National-Datasets/data.asp?SubID=101)

Looking at these together gives us a useful picture about how we could better respond to people who are experiencing suicidal distress and/or who have been bereaved by suicide. However, this doesn’t provide the full picture which is why it is important that we hear from people across Scotland to help shape the new strategy.

What we know about suicide in Scotland:

* In 2020 there were **805** probable suicides (deaths from intentional self-harm and events of undetermined intent) registered in Scotland in 2020, which is a decrease from **833** in 2019.
* Just under three-quarters (71.4%) of people who died by suicide in 2020 were male (575 males, 230 females).
* The number and rates of suicide deaths fluctuates from year to year and it is sometimes more useful to look at trends over longer periods.
* There is a known link between deprivation and suicide. The probable suicide rate in the period 2016 - 2020 was three and a half times higher in the most deprived areas compared to the least deprived areas.
* Those who have been bereaved by suicide are more likely to have thoughts of suicide or die by suicide compared with those in the general population. It is therefore important that we provide support for those directly or indirectly affected by suicide.

What is already happening in Scotland to prevent suicide:

In August 2018 the Scottish Government and COSLA jointly launched [***Every Life Matters***](https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-suicide-prevention-action-plan-life-matters/)which is the current suicide prevention action plan and outlines the continued commitment to action on preventing suicide in Scotland.

It builds on past and current activities at a national, regional and local level with a focus on ensuring the voices of those with lived experience are at the centre.

In addition to this specific strategy, there are a number of other policies that cover work on suicide prevention – for example the Mental Health Transition and Recovery Plan which builds on the 2017-22 Mental Health Strategy and connects suicide prevention activity into wider work taken forward under the Children and Young People’s Mental Health Delivery Board, the Distress Brief Interventions Programme and complex interventions programme and workplace mental health support.

Who oversees suicide prevention work in Scotland:

The [***National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group (NSPLG)***](https://www.gov.scot/groups/national-suicide-prevention-leadership-group/) was established to help guide the implementation of the ‘*Every Life Matters* strategy*’.* By drawing on the experiences of key stakeholders, the NSPLG oversees how the actions contained within the strategy are taken forward and identifies where any further action is needed.

The NSPLG have made a number of recommendations including some in response to issues arising from COVID-19, and direct responses to the needs of children and young people.

What happens next:

We want to ensure that the new strategy reflects the voices of people across Scotland, including those who have lived experience of suicide. These voices will help shape what is included in the new strategy so that it can best meet the needs of people across the country and help guide the actions being taken to reduce suicide.

We will continue to engage with people across Scotland as we develop this strategy and we are beginning the first stage of this engagement on Monday 27 September 2021 via an online questionnaire and a series of online events which will run until Sunday 21 November 2021.

[***Samaritans***](https://www.samaritans.org/scotland/samaritans-in-scotland/)services will be available to provide support for anyone attending or participating in any engagement activity relating to development of the new strategy.