

Minutes of **Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Suicide Bereavement and Prevention**

Meeting date **Thursday, 26 September 2024**

Members present: Councillor Samantha Martin (Chair), Councillor Arjun Singh (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Michelle Beach, Christine Heydon, Irene Amahwe and Jenny Whiffen

Officers: Liz Jones, Head of Communities and Housing; Chelsea Fisher, Social Prescribing Team Leader; and Clare Gornall, Democratic and Member Services Officer

Apologies: Councillors Dedrah Moss, Kim Snape, Russ Green and Katie Wilkie

23 Declarations of Interest

There were no such declarations.

24 Minutes of last meeting held on Tuesday, 20 August 2024

Resolved (unanimously): that the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 20 August 2024 be approved as a correct record.

25 Interview with Executive Member (Early Intervention) and Councillor Margaret France Executive Member (Health, Wellbeing and Partnerships)

Councillor Beverley Murray, Executive Member (Early Intervention), attended the meeting to discuss some of the issues highlighted in the review which related to her Cabinet portfolio.

She praised the work of the Scrutiny Task Group which had highlighted important issues. However, she indicated that it was likely much of work should be undertaken by partners and agencies outside the Council.

Members of the Task Group stressed the importance of joint working and letting agencies know where improvements can be made. Councillor Murray suggested that liaison between the police and MPs office for example, could be beneficial. Further to this, Chelsea Fisher, Social Prescribing Team Leader indicated that she had met with the mental health lead for the Primary Care Network who was keen to create that sort of dialogue.

The Chair referred to previous discussions and evidence gathering of the Task Group which had identified some concerns in relation to one of the main referral

organisations, AMPARO, which was used by several agencies including the police, (for example having to complete a lengthy online form on the website).

Chelsea Fisher also related feedback from speaking to community support groups, i.e. that AMPARO had not always been receiving referrals made and this was a concern. In addition, Liz Jones, Head of Communities and Housing, also gave feedback on an online session she had recently attended with AMPARO. Some of that information was at variance with what the Council had been told. It was agreed that clarification was needed.

The Chair also highlighted the risk posed by distressing content on social media which may be presented to a bereaved person if they use search terms such as suicide. Liz Jones indicated in the UK, the Samaritans are always at the top of an internet search.

Councillor Margaret France, Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Partnerships, attended the meeting. She envisioned GPs playing key role in supporting people considering suicide or who are bereaved by suicide – as they would often be seen on a one basis. She suggested that key public sector partners who come into direct contact with people affected would be:

- NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Foundation Trust - Mental health services (especially GPs)
- Police – call outs – can take someone at risk to a place of safety / give news of suicide to relatives
- Council (especially social prescribing).

The Task Group also stressed the importance of prevention, e.g. by identifying people at risk, e.g. arising from social isolation.

Resolved: That Councillors Beverley Murray and Margaret France be thanked for their attendance.

26 Consideration of findings so far

Members considered a draft report outlining the scrutiny review so far.

Resolved- That the draft report be noted.

27 Next Steps

It was agreed that representatives from the following organisations be invited for interview:

- AMPARO
- Lancashire Constabulary

28 Date of next meeting

Resolved- That the next meeting of the Task Group be held on Wednesday, 30 October 2024.

Chair

Date