

Greater Manchester Suicide Prevention Strategy



2025-2030

Background

1.

In **2023** there were 6,069 deaths registered as suicide in **England and Wales**, an increase compared with 2022 and the highest rate seen since 1999.

- Men aged 45–49 years and women aged 50–54 years had the highest rates of suicide.
- Suicide rate for females in England and Wales increased to the highest rate since 1994.
- 5,579 suicides were registered in England alone, statistically higher by 6% from 2022, and the highest rate we have seen since 1999.
- Suicide has increased for men by 5% and women by 8% (half of those being in women 60 years plus). The increase is spread across most age groups except for females under 25 years. Rates in young people have recently stabilised after rising for several years.

- 115 people die by suicide in the UK every week – with 75% of those deaths involving males ([ONS](#))
- It has been estimated that between 6-135 people are affected by each death by suicide.
- 1 in 5 people have suicidal thoughts during their lifetime (NHS Digital)
- 1 in 14 people self-harm ([NHS Digital](#))
- 1 in 15 people attempt suicide (NHS Digital)
- 10% of young people self-harm ([Mental Health Foundation](#))
- [Self-harm rates have also been rising in children and young people](#)
- People living in the most deprived areas of England have a [higher risk of suicide](#) than those living in the least deprived areas
- The overall cost of suicide to society is at least [£9.58 billion per year](#) with each suicide believed to cost the economy £1.4 million pounds¹

Number of deaths registered as suicide (2023).

In 2023, 340 people were registered to have died by suicide across Greater Manchester. (The number refers to the date of registration and due to delays in inquests, not necessarily the year they actually died).

This is a tragic loss of life and the devastating effects of each of these deaths are felt long term, far and wide in families, workplaces, places of education and communities.

Greater Manchester (Met County)	340
Bolton	39
Bury	17
Manchester	75
Oldham	21
Rochdale	25
Salford	44
Stockport	26
Tameside	22
Trafford	17
Wigan	54

Our Vision

2.

Our vision is that Greater Manchester is a region where:

- People do not see suicide as an answer to their problems
- We strive towards zero deaths by suicide
- We work to stamp out stigma around mental health and suicide so more people feel confident to seek help or reach out to those they may be concerned for
- Those bereaved by suicide feel supported and not isolated in their grief
- Suicide prevention is seen as 'everyone's business'

What Have We Put in Place to Achieve This?

3.



In 2015, the 37 NHS organisations and Local Authorities in Greater Manchester signed a landmark devolution agreement with the Government to take charge of health and social care spending in our City region.

This offered a unique opportunity for us to tackle the challenges we face together through our collective efforts.

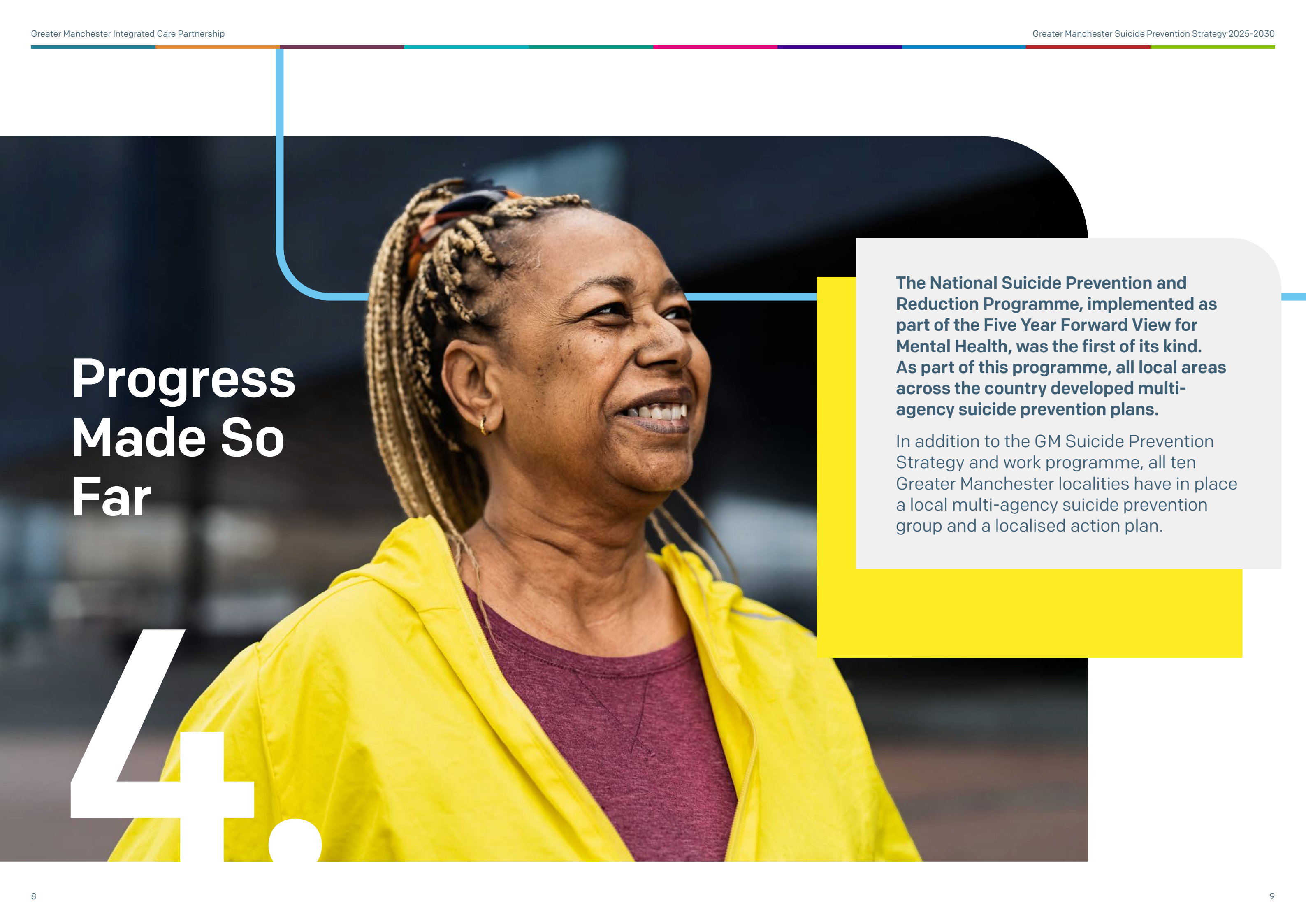
The creation of NHS Greater Manchester, and our new statutory [Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership \(Greater Manchester ICP\)](#), on 1st July 2022 gave health and care partners the opportunity to accelerate the journey to improve our population's health and wellbeing.

In 2019, Greater Manchester (GM) published a Suicide Prevention Strategy and a GM Suicide Prevention Steering Group, and a GM Suicide Prevention Programme Committee were established to inform the progress of the strategy.

Section 4 below highlights work completed since the strategy was launched.

This suicide prevention strategy forms part of an overarching Greater Manchester Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024-2029 (gmintegratedcare.org.uk) which sets out our vision to improve child and adult mental health and wellbeing, narrow the gap in life expectancy and ensure parity of esteem with physical health. Our vision also commits to shifting the focus of care towards prevention, early intervention, resilience and delivering a sustainable mental health system. Simplified and strengthened leadership and accountability is at its core, as is the enablement of resilient communities, the engagement of inclusive employers and close partnership working with the third sector.

This Suicide Prevention Strategy is also all-age and stays true to these principles.



Progress Made So Far

4.

The National Suicide Prevention and Reduction Programme, implemented as part of the Five Year Forward View for Mental Health, was the first of its kind. As part of this programme, all local areas across the country developed multi-agency suicide prevention plans.

In addition to the GM Suicide Prevention Strategy and work programme, all ten Greater Manchester localities have in place a local multi-agency suicide prevention group and a localised action plan.

The NHS Long Term Plan, built on the work achieved in the Five Year Forward View for Mental Health, stated that reducing suicides would remain an NHS priority over the next decade. It went on to state that *‘with the support of partners in addressing this complex, system-wide challenge, we will provide full coverage across the country of the existing suicide reduction programme.’*

In Greater Manchester we recognise the importance of all to see suicide prevention as ‘everyone’s business’. This requires an integrated approach.

The impact of the Covid pandemic and the economic uncertainty and cost of living crisis that followed, emphasised the importance of everyone being suicide aware and knowing where appropriate and timely support could be accessed.

The Greater Manchester Suicide Prevention Programme ensures a dedicated focus on reducing suicide across the city region and improving the support for those bereaved by suicide.

The public facing and award winning² Greater Manchester ‘Shining a Light on Suicide’ campaign has passed its 5-year milestone and is as relevant today as it was when first launched, with engagement from across the city region. Lived experience has been a key part of the campaign. From the focus groups held to initially plan the campaign to the Stories of Hope films captured of residents who have experienced suicidal thoughts but who share hope in getting through those difficult times, an important message that focus group members wanted prioritised.

Each year, a Month of Hope is run between World Suicide Prevention Day 10th September and World Mental Health Day 10th October. Suicide vigils take place, learning events are held and communities come together to raise awareness by taking part in events such as Walks of Hope. People with lived experience are an integral part of these suicide prevention activities.

**ENCOURAGE
SOMEONE TO TALK
BEFORE SUICIDE
SEEMS THEIR ONLY
OPTION**

SHINING A LIGHT ON
SUICIDE

A digital platform sits alongside the Shining a Light on Suicide campaign to provide information for those experiencing suicidal thoughts, concerned for another or who are bereaved by [suicide](#).

The digital platform includes an opportunity for anyone to access free online Zero Suicide Alliance suicide prevention training that takes just 30 minutes to complete.

In our 2019 GM Suicide Prevention Strategy, we set ourselves a target of 8,000 people completing this training which has been significantly exceeded with the current total being over 35,000 people having completed it.



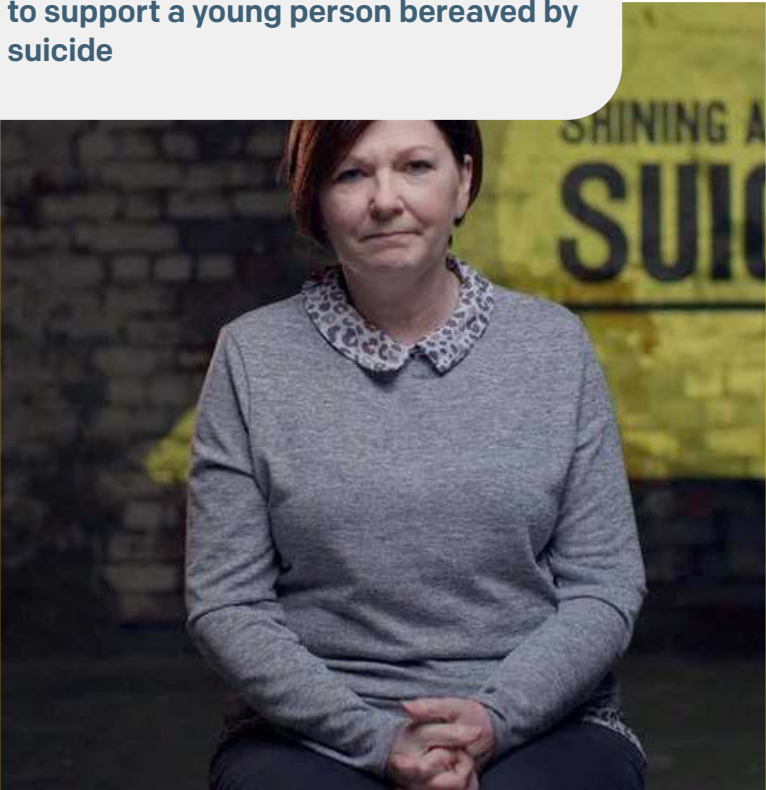
In addition, we have commissioned training to specific work sectors identified as working with higher risk groups. For example, we have reached over 2,000 staff and volunteers in the Advice Sector while also providing training to:

- **Social Prescribing Link Workers/Community Connectors**
- **Domestic Abuse Services**
- **Care Leaver Supporters**
- **Barbers/hair professionals**
- **Tattoo Artists**
- **Professionals involved in the removal of children into the care system**
- **Education, multi-agency professionals, and parents/carers supporting young people who may self-harm**
- **Bereavement Counsellors/Talking Therapy staff in suicide bereavement**
- **Education staff who may be required to support a young person bereaved by suicide**

In response to autism being recognised as a priority by the GM Suicide Prevention Steering Group in 2021, we commissioned and worked with Zero Suicide Alliance to develop co-produced on-line Autism and Suicide Awareness training for anyone to access that launched in Autism Acceptance Week in April 2024 and which over 13,000 people completed in the initial 3 months. Autistic people have since been recognised as a priority group for suicide prevention in the national strategy.

We launched the award winning Don't Brush it Under the Carpet campaign³, in March 2022 with the GM Older People Network, aimed at reaching older people who may be self-harming and at risk of suicide.

We have supported the Greater Manchester Gambling Harms Programme and promoted the Against the Odds campaign by sharing information and raising awareness. Gambling harm is now included as a priority in the national strategy.



In 2019, we ran a Real Time Suspected Suicide pilot in one coronial area.

Our GM Real Time Suspected Suicide Process (RTSS) is now in place in three of the four coronial areas in our city region, meaning we are notified within a few days of a death suspected to be by suicide. Early notification means we can consider proactive community responses, when appropriate, to reduce further potential harm whilst also ensuring those bereaved can access early bereavement support. The RTSS process enables themes to be identified from deaths sooner to inform our suicide prevention activity prior to inquest outcomes or annual suicide reports by the Office of National Statistics.

After considering the learning gained from the Greater Manchester Suicide Bereavement Information Service pilot, we widened our bereavement support offer to bereavement by any cause, no matter how long ago for anyone living or working in Greater Manchester. Bereavement can increase suicide risk without protective support measures in place. The service is now called the Greater Manchester Bereavement Service and suicide bereavement support remains an integral part of the support offered.

The Greater Manchester Bereavement Service continues to see an increase in the number of people seeking support after a loss. The support offer also includes a [digital platform](#).

The Greater Manchester Suicide Prevention Programme also raises awareness of suicide bereavement peer support options in communities and after launching the first Speak Their Name Suicide Memorial Quilt⁴ nationally, in 2020, the Greater Manchester Sing Their Name Choir was formed for those bereaved by suicide across our city region in 2023 and has now become a Community Interest Company run by the members themselves.



“My daughter took her own life in 2020. She was just 17. I truly did not know where to turn. Feeling totally alone I was put in contact with the Greater Manchester Bereavement Service by my GP and assigned a Suicide Bereavement Practitioner. The advice and care I got was second to none. They certainly played their part in keeping me alive as my own suicide was very much on my mind.”

Mike Palmer (Three Dads Walking)



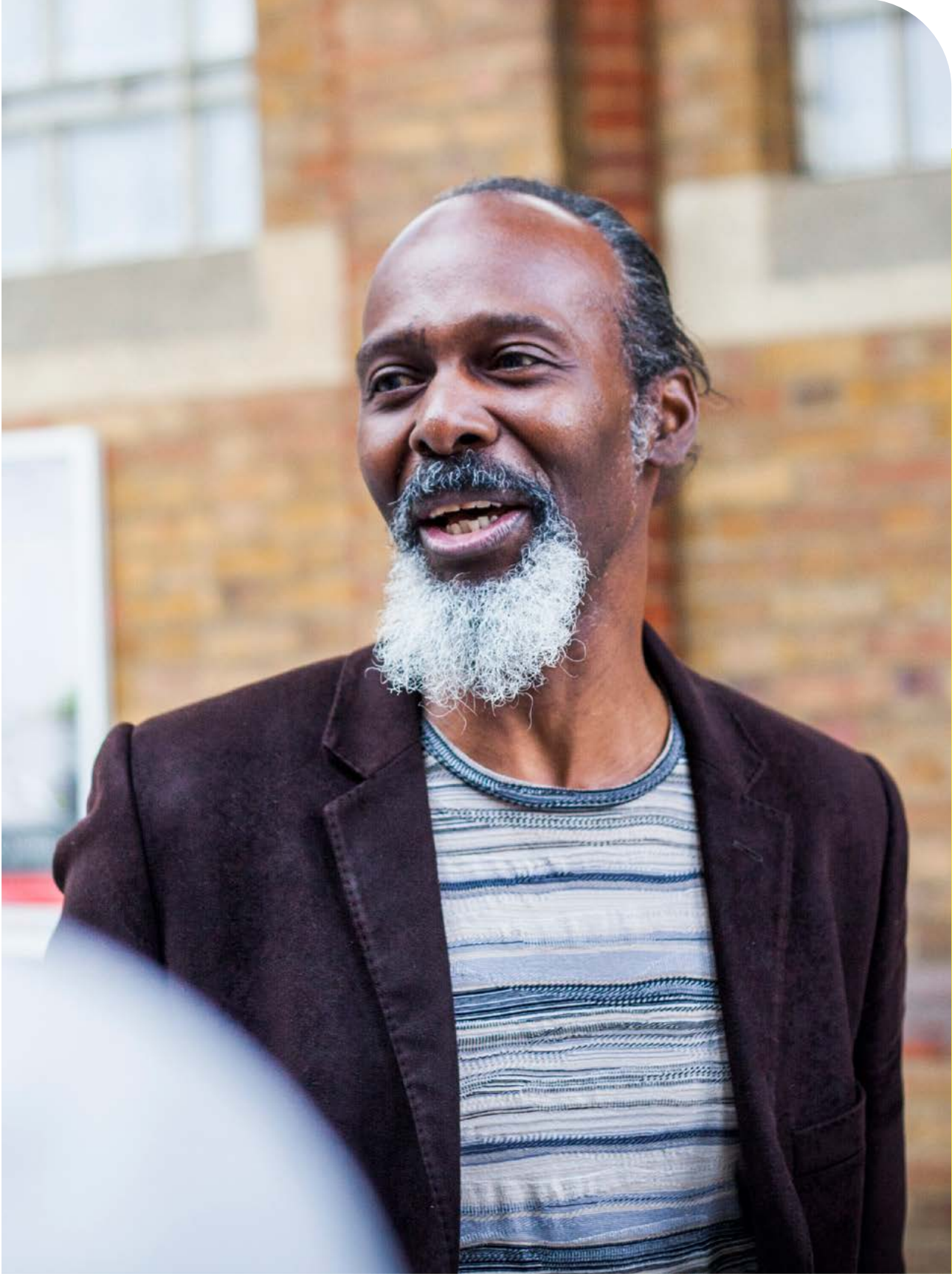
“In the most heart-breaking of circumstances, we have joined together to sing from our hearts, for those we have lost. We get it, we hug, we laugh, we cry. We have all become friends in a caring safe space. If you are thinking about joining, but maybe feel a bit nervous about it, don't be. It's the best decision I ever made, and I look forward to it every week.’

(Sing Their Name Choir member)

Greater Manchester NHS Mental Health Trusts have incorporated the principles of the Zero Suicide Ambition within their respective strategies and continually review their work in line with the NCISH 10 key elements for patient safety to eliminate suicide in inpatient and community mental health care settings. [display.aspx \(manchester.ac.uk\)](https://display.aspx (manchester.ac.uk))

(Collective efforts to improve patient safety led to a 35% reduction in suicides in mental health inpatient settings in England between 2010 and 2012).

This list is not exhaustive of suicide prevention activity undertaken but demonstrates our determination to save lives by embedding suicide prevention across our city region.



What is the purpose of this strategy?

5.

We want to see:

- Suicide rates in Greater Manchester fall from the current 200+ deaths a year to move closer to zero numbers each year.
- People struggling with suicidal thoughts find support that provides hope and positive outcomes for issues they may be struggling with.
- A reduction in the numbers of people bereaved by suicide and the long-term distress this can cause.
- An increase in bereaved people accessing our Greater Manchester Bereavement Service.
- A social movement for change across the city region in the way we think and act in relation to suicide, and a reduction in stigma attached to talking about suicide and mental health more openly while building more connected communities.

This strategy reflects a call to action to all in Greater Manchester for communities to come together and join forces to tackle a significant threat to the health and wellbeing of our residents.

It will be supported by a Greater Manchester Suicide Prevention Action Plan which all localities will pledge their support to, and we will build into plans the potential for economies of scale when commissioning interventions for the whole of Greater Manchester.

It will also allow us to promote the prevention of suicide as everyone's business, with key stakeholders, including the media, joining forces with communities and the professionals working within them, to break the stigma surrounding suicide and to act to reduce suicide.

Key National Areas for Focus

6



The National Suicide Prevention Strategy was launched in September 2023 and builds on the work of the previous strategy.

It acknowledges that while, overall, the current suicide rate is not significantly higher than in 2012, the rate is not falling.

Suicide remains the biggest killer of people under 35 and one of the leading causes of death in men under 50. Rates across all age groups under 25 have been increasing until recently and self-harm rates have also been rising in children and young people.

The national cross-government strategy makes a firm commitment to bring everybody together around common priorities and set out actions that can be taken to:

- Reduce the suicide rate over the next 5 years – with initial reductions observed within half this time or sooner.
- Improve support for people who have self-harmed.
- Improve support for people bereaved by suicide.

The following priority areas for action have been identified to achieve these aims. **These are to:**

- Improve data and evidence to ensure that effective, evidence-informed, and timely interventions continue to be adapted.
- Provide tailored, targeted support to priority groups, including those at higher risk. This includes:
 - children and young people
 - middle-aged men
 - people who have self-harmed
 - people in contact with mental health services
 - people in contact with the justice system
 - autistic people
 - pregnant women and new mothers

- Address common risk factors linked to suicide at a population level by providing early intervention and tailored support.

These are:

- physical illness
- financial difficulty and economic adversity
- gambling
- alcohol and drug misuse
- social isolation and loneliness
- domestic abuse

- Promote online safety and responsible media content to reduce harms, improve support and signposting, and provide helpful messages about suicide and self-harm.
- Provide effective crisis support across sectors for those who reach crisis point.
- Reduce access to means and methods of suicide where this is appropriate and necessary as an intervention to prevent suicides.
- Provide effective bereavement support to those affected by suicide.
- Make suicide everybody’s business so that we can maximise our collective impact and support to prevent suicides.

The national strategy sets out over 100 actions led by government departments, the NHS, the voluntary sector, and other national partners to make progress against these areas, particularly over the next two years.

What are our Suicide Prevention Priorities in Greater Manchester?

7



The Greater Manchester Suicide Prevention Programme will play its part in progressing the national actions (outlined in section 6) to reduce the suicide rate, improve support for people who have self-harmed and improve support for people bereaved by suicide.

We will build on the work undertaken over the last 6 years in Greater Manchester which has been outlined in section 4.

National priorities will be added to the GM Action Plan that will accompany this strategy, clearly detailing intended prevention activity, action leads and agreed timeframes. It will include timely interventions targeted at priority groups such as:

- Providing young people and their families with self-harm awareness and support information.
- Improved suicide awareness and training for those supporting autistic people.
- Increased awareness of gambling addiction and support available.
- A campaign targeted at men, and increased awareness of support for pregnant women and new mothers.
- Additional priority groups identified by the GM Suicide Prevention Steering Group, such as, suicide attempt survivors, older people and people with long term conditions (LTCs).

We also intend to:

- Work with education partners to improve on suicide awareness and training.
- Create a support resource specifically for primary care and pharmacies for men interacting with their service.
- Develop a suicide prevention campaign focused on the Hospitality workforce.
- Increase self-harm and suicide awareness across GM with a focus on older people.
- Further provide suicide prevention training opportunities for those working in the Advice Sector.
- Raise awareness with GM private hire and taxi drivers of the suicide prevention training offer.
- Increase use of the Greater Manchester Bereavement Service website.
- Further priorities will be chosen annually based on considered need and documented in the Greater Manchester Suicide Prevention Action Plan.

What are the Goals of this Strategy?

8.



We have a simple goal for this strategy which is to reduce suicide, meeting the expectation in the National Suicide Prevention Strategy to reduce suicide in 5 years with most progress in the initial 2 years at the very least.

We accept that this is a challenging goal to accomplish, and it will rely on wider acceptance that suicide prevention is 'everyone's business' so proactive action will be required of all.

A photograph of a smiling Black man wearing a green and white plaid shirt, a dark cap, and glasses. He is hanging a bright blue towel on a yellow clothesline. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with wooden structures.

Governance

9

The multi-agency GM Suicide Prevention Steering Group consists of approximately 90 members from a diverse range of GM services including Voluntary, Community, Faith & Social Enterprise (VCFSE) and participants with lived experience.

It meets quarterly, and holds themed meetings around a specific issue of concern for suicide risk i.e. autism, domestic abuse etc. National guest speakers are frequently invited to further our understanding of specific issues and share good practice which we consider as part of our implementation plans.

The GM Suicide Prevention Programme Committee includes representatives from GM mental health trusts, Acute trusts, a GM Public Health Lead representative, the NHS GM Integrated Care Strategic Lead Clinical Commissioner – Mental Health & Disabilities, and Samaritans.

The Programme Committee reports to the GM Community Mental Health Transformation Group and contributes to the GM Adult MH Crisis Group.

Each of the ten Greater Manchester localities has a Suicide Prevention Group focused on their locality action plans, also involving those with lived experience of suicide. The GM Suicide Prevention and Bereavement programme assists locality suicide prevention efforts by providing them with access to training, resources and toolkits while localities contribute to the goal of the GM Programme of making suicide prevention ‘everyone’s business’ across the city region. Regular meetings are held with locality Suicide Prevention Leads and they attend the GM Suicide Prevention Steering Group meetings.



We believe in a focused approach by targeting those deaths which are most preventable by identifying specific at-risk groups, communities, or settings for action across Greater Manchester.

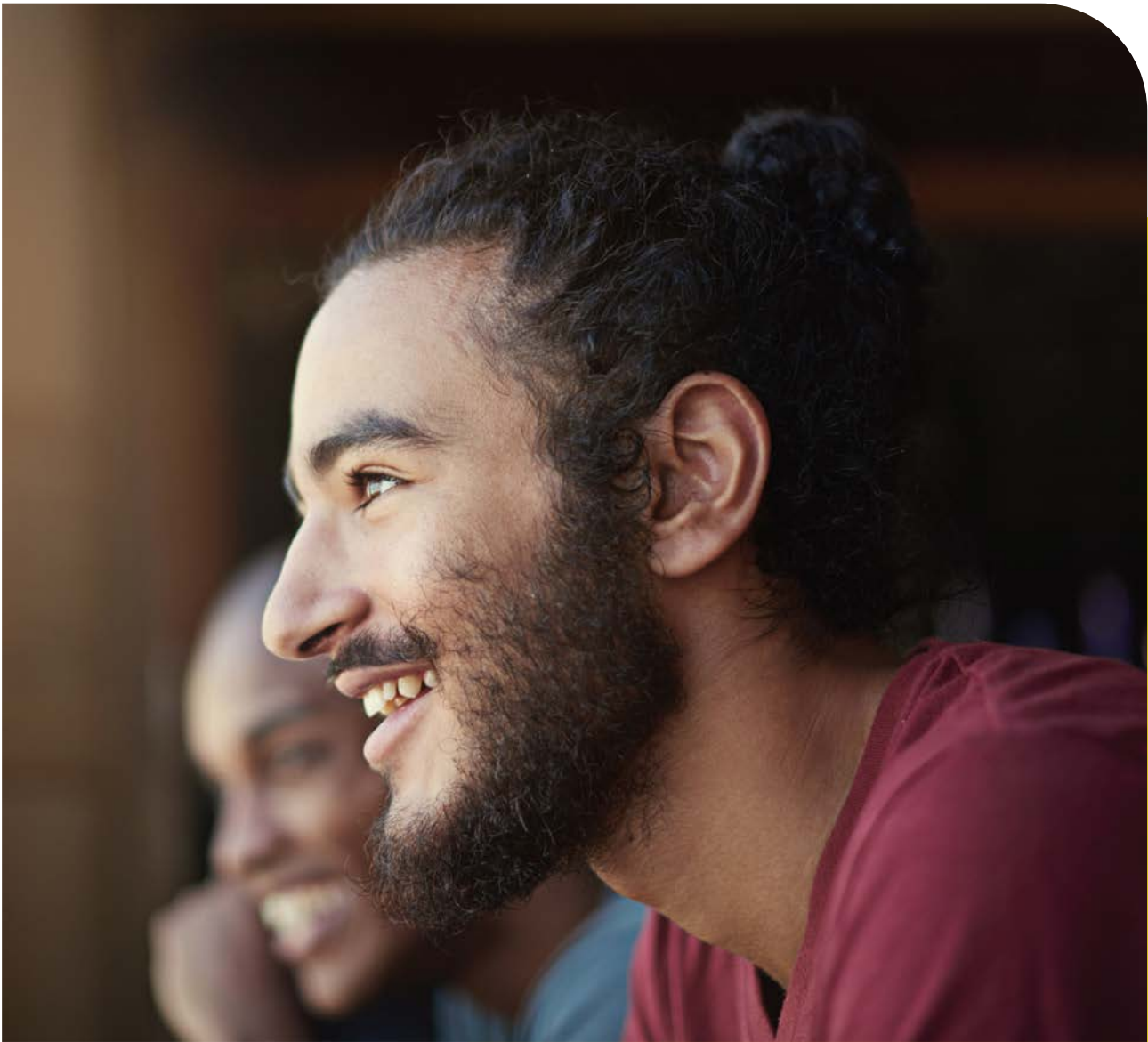
This approach is founded on the principle that the ‘sum of marginal gains’ is likely to be the most effective means of meeting our vision in Greater Manchester and will foster a highly targeted and effective approach.

We have taken an all-age approach, recognising that risk varies across the life-course and that prevention requires a range of interventions, some of which are tailored to need and some demographic groups.

We acknowledge the emphasis on children and young people, middle-aged men, people who have self-harmed, people in contact with mental health services, people in contact with the justice system, autistic people and pregnant women and new mothers in line with the new strategy.

We have not attempted to present all actions for each priority area here as these are the focus of the Action Plan, we have looked instead at broader priorities and objectives that can be effectively supported by a Greater Manchester approach.

With the data and information available to us we have created an annual Greater Manchester Suicide Prevention Action Plan to support this strategy and enable consistent progress on meeting the objectives set. We will continue to learn and adapt to further information provided that assists us to have a greater understanding of the complex array of issues that lead to suicide and how we can best support those bereaved by suicide.



References

1. <https://www.samaritans.org/about-samaritans/research-policy/the-economic-cost-of-suicide/#:~:text=Each%20death%20by%20suicide%20cost%20an>
2. The campaign has won several awards, including the Gold Award for Healthcare Campaign of the Year at the CIPR North West PRide Awards in 2021.
3. Don’t Brush It Under the Carpet campaign won Outstanding Public and Community Engagement Initiative at the University of Manchester Making a Difference Awards (2023).
4. Positive Practice in Mental Health Awards- Highly Commended for Speak Their Name Quilt initiative (2021).

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