



**SHROPSHIRE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD**

**Report**

<b>Meeting Date</b>	19 <sup>th</sup> March 2026				
<b>Title of report</b>	Shropshire Suicide Prevention Update				
<b>This report is for:</b>	Discussion and agreement of recommendations	x	Approval of recommendations (With discussion by exception)		Information only (No recommendations)
<b>Reporting Officer &amp; email</b>	Gordon Kochane, Public Health Consultant, Shropshire Council <a href="mailto:Gordon.kochane@shropshire.gov.uk">Gordon.kochane@shropshire.gov.uk</a>				
<b>Which Joint Health &amp; Wellbeing Strategy priorities does this report address?</b>	Children & Young People		Joined up working		x
	Mental Health	x	Improving Population Health		
	Healthy Weight & Physical Activity		Working with and building strong and vibrant communities		
	Workforce		Reduce inequalities (see below)		x
<b>What inequalities does this report address?</b>	People at greater risk of suicide and those who have been impacted or bereaved by suicide				
<b>Report content</b>					
<b>1. Executive Summary</b>					
<p>The purpose of this paper is to update on progress with delivery of the objectives within the Shropshire Suicide Prevention Strategy and response to the recently published data indicating an increase in the local suicide rate.</p> <p>The suicide rate in Shropshire has increased in the latest reporting period from the Department of Health and Social Care Fingertips data<sup>1</sup> (three-year average 2022–2024).</p> <p>Shropshire has a suicide rate of 13.5 per 100,000, which is statistically higher than the England average (10.9 per 100,000) and currently the highest in the West Midlands.</p> <p>While this position is concerning, Shropshire remains mid-range compared with its statistical neighbours (ranked 7th of 16), suggesting that broader demographic and geographic factors may be influencing risk.</p> <p>Every death by suicide is a tragedy for families, friends, and communities. Reducing suicide is a shared responsibility across our whole system and communities. <b>No single, organisation can prevent suicide alone</b> – it requires every partner, employer,</p>					

<sup>1</sup> Available at: [Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care](#)

service and resident to play their part in creating hope, reducing stigma and ensuring that people in distress receive timely and compassionate support.

Activities in place to respond to this increase in the local suicide rate include;

- Launch of the Orange Button Community Scheme in September 2025: recruiting a network of trained volunteers who are comfortable to speak with people about suicide, can signpost to support and support reducing stigma speaking about suicide.
- Publication of the STW GP/Primary Care Preventing Suicides Toolkit: supporting clinicians and practice staff to identify and respond to suicide risk, co-produce safety plans and connect people to support
- Continued widespread recommendation by the Shropshire Suicide Prevention Action Group for all organisations and services that support vulnerable people to be aware and adopt the principles of the Staying Safe from Suicide Guidance (NHS England, 2025): with an emphasis on effective safety planning rather than traditional risk assessment. This includes encouragement to complete the associated free to access training available at: [MindEd Hub](#)
- Publication of a new training matrix for suicide, bereavement and self-harm: to help navigate what training could be most relevant for different roles across the integrated care system workforce and how to access.
- Delivery of a range of community events to raise awareness of suicide and broader mental health support: including talking seminars addressing stigma and promoting conversation and action in a number of market towns following World Suicide Prevention Day in 2025 and dedicated market stall stands with a range of resources and opportunity to speak with someone for further advice. Delivered with support from voluntary sector partners and the Public Health Outreach Wellbeing team.
- Establishment of suicide and drug/alcohol death learning review panels: launched in 2026 which provides opportunity for shared learning and recommendations to be made for the system to mitigate similar future deaths.
- Enhanced data intelligence: the continued growth of the real time surveillance system including the range of partner services contributing towards this process to help understand patterns of suicide across Shropshire, themes of risk and where individuals were known to services prior to death. Intention to support with an evidence-based approach for early intervention and targeted support along with supporting selection of cases to review in the new suicide death learning review panels.
- Review of online information and guidance on local webpages for support for concerns on suicide: being led by the Shropshire Suicide Prevention Action Group.
- A task & finish group is currently reviewing the suicide and self-harm care pathways for children and young people.
- Continued delivery of the Shropshire Suicide Prevention Strategy and action plan by the multi-agency Suicide Prevention Action Group.

## **2. Recommendations**

1. To be aware of the actions and activities within this update
2. For all partners to recognise and action the attached Call to Action to support suicide prevention in Shropshire including
  - a. Adoption by all organisations providing a care offer for vulnerable people in Shropshire of the Staying Safe from Suicide Guidance along

- with plan to ensure the workforce have suitable knowledge and skills to support delivery of a safety plan approach when appropriate
- b. Raise awareness with managers, team leaders and wider workforce of the new training matrix for suicide, bereavement and self-harm and encourage opportunities for staff to access. Subsidised access to some training may be available for certain staff with most reach into community or high-risk cohorts – please contact Gordon Kochane for further details.
  - c. Promote the Orange Button Community Scheme both to raise awareness of what it is and support recruitment of a network of volunteers that are representative of our communities.
  - d. Promote support available for concerns about suicide or those impacted by suicide as highlighted in the report below and attached document.
3. To agree recommendation of extending the existing Shropshire Suicide Prevention Strategy (2023-2026) for a further 2 years to align with the national Suicide Prevention Strategy, as our priorities remain the same.

### 3. Report

The latest DHSC Fingertips data<sup>2</sup> (three-year average 2022–2024) shows that Shropshire’s suicide rate has risen to 13.5 per 100,000, which is statistically higher than the England average (10.9 per 100,000) and currently the highest in the West Midlands. While this position is concerning, Shropshire remains mid-range compared with its statistical neighbours (ranked 7th of 16), suggesting that broader demographic and geographic factors may be influencing risk.

Every death by suicide is a tragedy for families, friends, and communities. Reducing suicide is a shared responsibility across our whole system and communities. No single, organisation can prevent suicide alone – it requires every partner, employer, service and resident to play their part in creating hope, reducing stigma and ensuring that people in distress receive timely and compassionate support.

#### 1. Summary of Current Position

The table below compares the Shropshire 2022 – 2024 rolling average suicide prevention rate with the England and West Midlands averages, as well as statistical neighbours.

This equates to 119 deaths by suicide in Shropshire over the reporting period. While local rates fluctuate annually due to small numbers, this increase highlights the need for renewed focus, vigilance, and continued multi-agency commitment.

Comparator	Rate per 100,000	Comment
Shropshire	13.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statistically higher than England average</li> <li>• Highest in West Midlands</li> </ul>
England average	10.9	
West Midlands average	10.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Range: 8.2 (Walsall) to 13.5 (Shropshire)</li> </ul>
Statistical neighbours	Range: 7.8 (West Berkshire) to 19.4 (Cumberland)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shropshire ranks 7<sup>th</sup> out of 16 LA neighbours</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> Available at: [Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care](#)

## **2. Recent and Ongoing Local Activity (2024–25)**

### **Community and Public Engagement**

- **Orange Button Community Scheme** launched on World Suicide Prevention Day 2025 to create a visible network of trained community volunteers able to talk about suicide, reduce stigma, and signpost to support.
  - The scheme provides a range of training opportunities to equip community members with the skills needed to support people experiencing suicidal ideation, including the newly developed Suicide Prevention in our Communities | Shropshire Council aimed at building community-wide awareness and confidence in responding to suicide risk.
  - At launch, professionals across Shropshire who had previously completed eligible suicide prevention training were contacted, and 72 Orange Buttons were issued to the initial cohort of previously accredited professionals.
  - Since then, the scheme has grown significantly, with 171 Orange Button Holders currently active across Shropshire communities representing a wide variety of organisations. A further 160 individuals are registered to complete training over the next four months, meaning the network is expected to expand to well over 300 button holders by mid2026.
  - As the scheme continues to develop, recruitment and promotional efforts will increasingly target communities and cohorts at higher risk of suicide, ensuring equitable access to support.
  - Orange Button Holders are also able to access support from Shropshire Mental Health Support (Shropshire MHS) if they experience anything distressing while undertaking their duties. More information is available here: Orange Button Community Scheme | Shropshire Council
- **Samaritans ‘Ending Stigma Together’ seminars** were delivered across the county alongside Mental Health and Wellbeing market stall events led by the Public Health Outreach Team from Sept – Nov 2025.
  - A combined seminar and outreach approach provided accessible opportunities for residents to learn about suicide, explore stigma, and connect with local support while increasing seminar attendance and awareness.
  - Delivered in Oswestry, Whitchurch, Market Drayton, Bridgnorth, Ludlow, Ellesmere and Shrewsbury
  - Feedback indicated that several attendees had been bereaved by suicide, resulting in referrals into the Suicide Bereavement Service. The seminars also helped increase awareness of available support within communities.
  - Further opportunities to continue similar events in 2026/27 are currently being explored. The Suicide Prevention Action Group is keen to connect with local communities to understand what may be beneficial and to further develop outreach offers. For further discussion please contact Alexis Cook (Public Health Development Officer, Shropshire Council) at [Alexis.Cook@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:Alexis.Cook@shropshire.gov.uk)

### **Primary Care and Clinical Support**

- **New Shropshire Telford & Wrekin GP and Primary Care Suicide Prevention Toolkit** launched in April 2025, supporting clinicians and practice staff to identify and respond to suicide risk, co-produce safety plans, and connect people to support.
  - Toolkit resources have been shared with all GP practices across STW.

- **Implementation of NHS Staying Safe from Suicide guidance (2025)** – promoting safety planning approaches across wider health and care partners and recommended for non NHS partners to also adopt.
  - Free training on how to implement this guidance is available at: [MindEd Hub](#) and we encourage all partners to promote within their teams and organisations

### Training and Workforce Development

- **Continued subsidised suicide prevention training** delivered through the Shropshire Suicide Prevention Action Group has helped strengthen workforce skills, confidence and capability across Shropshire.
  - Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) – an intensive, evidence based two-day course that equips participants with practical skills to recognise suicide risk, engage safely, and develop collaborative safety plans – has been delivered five times since 2025, with strong uptake from RESET frontline workers who support people experiencing homelessness and are therefore more exposed to suicide risk. A further two ASIST sessions are scheduled for delivery in 2026.
  - Other subsidised training offers delivered by Shropshire Joint Training, including Suicide First Aid, have been accessed by a wide range of staff across Shropshire Council, care providers and the voluntary sector.
  - The locally developed 3.5hour *Suicide Prevention in Our Communities* course has also been in high demand since launching in 2025 and has already trained more than 60 participants, including bespoke sessions for organisations working with higher risk groups, helping to build a more confident and prevention focused workforce.
  - The Local Authority have a license to deliver STORM training to the Council workforce and commissioned services, providing suicide prevention and self-harm prevention skills to those working with and supporting children and young people. Although not directly co-ordinated by the Action Group work, this offer plays an important role in achieving the ambition of a suicide aware Shropshire. From May 2025 to February 2026, 45 people have completed STORM training with the next session being delivered in March 2026.
- **Launch of a training matrix** mapping suicide prevention, bereavement, and self-harm training opportunities across the system to support workforce competence and Orange Button accreditation (available online on the Shropshire Safeguarding Community Partnership page at: [shropshiresafeguardingcommunitypartnership.co.uk/media/hqtp5ye/training-matrix-version-2-jan-2026.pdf](https://shropshiresafeguardingcommunitypartnership.co.uk/media/hqtp5ye/training-matrix-version-2-jan-2026.pdf)).
- **Continued promotion of Zero Suicide Alliance** free online training (20 minutes) for all partner staff and volunteers available at: [ZSA FREE online training](#)

### Learning and System Improvement

- **A Coroner inquest audit (2020–2023)** confirmed that local risk themes mirror national patterns, including relationship breakdown, bereavement, financial stress, and co-occurring mental or physical health conditions.
- **Suicide Death Learning Review Panels** are now booked for 2026 along with drug alcohol death review panels (data sharing agreements between partners

now in place). These will enable a consistent process to identify learning and prevention opportunities.

- **The Shropshire Suicide Prevention Action Plan** was refreshed in July 2025 with new priorities and indicators. Recommendation to extend the Shropshire Suicide Prevention Strategy (2023-2026) for a further 2 years to 2028, to be in line with both the national Suicide Prevention Strategy and the Telford Suicide Prevention Strategy. A 3-year Strategy was initially decided due to uncertainty about future funding and investment into suicide prevention which many of the actions rely on. Local area provision of grant funding for suicide has been via NHS England but has changed in nature over the past 2 years and is no longer ringfenced but is included as part of a broader mental health crisis fund. Agreement for continued funds to deliver the suicide prevention programme is in place for 2026/27. Our ambitions and priorities within the current Strategy remain the same.

### Additional Actions and Activities

- **Update of the Suicide and Self-Harm Safeguarding Care Pathway documents** - A task & finish group (overseen by the Suicide Prevention Action Group and inviting wider stakeholders) has recently been established and currently reviewing content. Purpose is to ensure the updated resource reflects current national policy, current local services/pathways, and provides clear, practical guidance for professionals working with children and young people to identify and confidently respond to risk.
- **Review of the local information, guidance and advice for suicide prevention** – a task & finish group has been established to look at products such as the Pick up the Phone You Are Not Alone are reviewed and refreshed with up to date first point of contacts. This includes digital information on local webpages have the appropriate accessibility and detail of meaningful information for different audiences (e.g. an individual in crisis, concerned about someone else or a professional supporting others)
- **Continued expansion of data and intelligence** – working with wider services including the Mental health liaison team at RSH to understand patterns of presenting suicide risk in addition to deaths by suicide to support an evidence-based approach to targeted prevention planning.
- **Continued delivery of the Suicide Bereavement Service** – providing practical, advocacy and bereavement support for anyone impacted by a suicide or unexpected death. This offer is also available at no cost to witnesses and is accessible to family, friends, colleagues, and witnesses, recognising the wide-reaching emotional and practical impacts of suicide across communities.
  - Over the 2024–2025 reporting period, the service received 117 referrals, of which 89 individuals engaged in ongoing support.
  - The Bereavement Support Officer maintains an average caseload of 29 active cases per quarter, reflecting sustained and complex support needs following a bereavement by suicide.
  - Referrals are received from a wide range of professionals and community sources, with primary referral routes including Shropshire & Telford Coroner’s office (30%) and self-referrals (27%).
  - Feedback from those accessing service highlights its flexible and person centred approach being particularly helpful in enabling people to navigate the often lengthy and emotionally challenging inquest process.

### 3. Next Steps

The Shropshire Suicide Prevention Action Group will:

- Continue to build a plan for community engagement in 2026/27, utilising the data from real time surveillance to support locations and/or cohorts to target. Approach will be guided by Action Group partners, but wider system feedback and support welcomed.
- Review comms plan to ensure the right messages are communicated to our communities of hope and support where there are concerns of suicide.
- Continue to expand the real time surveillance system with system partners, supported by our Real Time Surveillance Co-ordinator to gather greater insights into local themes and patterns of risk. New fields being collected recently include if the individual was neurodivergent (or expected) and physical health/chronic conditions.
- Continue to explore capturing presentation of risk data from wider partners including emergency and blue light services where possible.
- Engage with statistical neighbour areas showing lower rates of suicide to understand transferable learning.
- Launch the suicide learning review process to inform future prevention activity.

#### 4. Key Messages

- Suicide remains preventable through collective action, early intervention, and strong partnerships.
- Shropshire has implemented significant new initiatives in 2024–25 that will support future reduction in suicide risk.
- Local partners and communities are asked to:
  - Promote and recruit Orange Button volunteers, further details available at: [Orange Button Community Scheme | Shropshire Council](#)
  - Encourage take-up and completion of suicide prevention training (including the free to access Zero Suicide Alliance e-learning available at: [ZSA FREE online training](#))
  - Embed safety planning approaches across all services
  - Further information about local support is available via: [Healthy Shropshire | Shropshire Council](#) and [Suicide concerns and prevention | Shropshire Council](#)

#### 5. Reminder of Support for Concerns About Suicide

If you or someone you know is struggling, help is available:

- **Samaritans** – Call or text **116 123** (24/7) | Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)
- **Papyrus** – For under 35s | Call **0800 068 4141** | Text **07860 039967**
- **Shropshire Mental Health Support** – Visit [www.shropshiremhs.com](http://www.shropshiremhs.com) | Call **01743 368 647**
- **Shout Mental Health Text Line** - Text 'STW' to **85258**, free of charge and at any time, to start a conversation with a trained mental health professional
- **NHS 111** – Select the mental health option (24/7)
- **FREEPHONE 24/7 Urgent NHS Mental Health Helpline** 0808 196 4501 or email [access.shropshire@mpft.nhs.uk](mailto:access.shropshire@mpft.nhs.uk)
- **Shropshire Rural Support** – Call 0300 123 2825 (or text 85258) [www.shropshireruralsupport.org.uk](http://www.shropshireruralsupport.org.uk)
- **Bereavement Support** – Call **0345 678 9028**
- **Local & National Resources** – Visit [shropshire.gov.uk/suicideprevention](http://shropshire.gov.uk/suicideprevention)

## 6. Call to Action

Please find the Call to Action for partners to support suicide prevention in Shropshire in Appendix B.

### Risk assessment and opportunities appraisal

**Financial implications**  
(Any financial implications of note)

The suicide prevention programme needs to consider sustainable investment as currently relying on a 12 month grant with uncertainty about continuity in future years beyond 2026/27.

### Climate Change Appraisal as applicable

None

### Where else has the paper been presented?

System Partnership Boards	
Voluntary Sector	
Other	

## List of Background Papers - NA

### Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) or your organisational lead

Cllr Bernie Bentick, Portfolio Holder for Public Health & Protection, Shropshire Council

### Appendices:

**Appendix A. Suicide Prevention update - presentation**

**Appendix B. Call to Action**

**Appendix C. Data from Department of Health and Social Care, Fingertips (below)**

### Latest Position 2022-24

- Shropshire is statistically higher than the England average for suicide deaths for all persons with a rate of 13.5 per 100,000 compared to England average of 10.9 per 100,000
- This equates to 119 deaths by suicide during this period

[Nearest statistical neighbours \(NHS England\)](#)

Indicator	Period	Shropshire				England			
		Recent Trend	Count	Value	Value	Worst	Range	Best	
Suicide rate (Persons) <span style="color: green;">New data</span>	2022 - 24	–	119	13.5	10.9	20.2		4.6	
Suicide rate (Male) <span style="color: green;">New data</span>	2022 - 24	–	87	20.3	16.8	33.2		6.2	
Suicide rate (Female) <span style="color: green;">New data</span>	2022 - 24	–	32	7.2	5.5	11.2		2.5	
Years of life lost due to suicide (Persons, 15-74 yrs)	2020 - 22	–	98	43.3	34.1	75.9		14.2	
Years of life lost due to suicide (Male, 15-74 yrs)	2020 - 22	–	73	70.3	51.5	127.0		16.4	
Years of life lost due to suicide (Female, 15-74 yrs)	2020 - 22	–	25	15.4	17.2	43.4		6.7	
Age-standardised rate for suicide by age and sex (Persons, 10-24 yrs)	2019 - 23	–	14	6.2	5.4	-	Insufficient number of values for a spine chart	-	
Age-standardised rate for suicide by age and sex (Persons, 25-44 yrs)	2019 - 23	–	51	14.9	12.6	31.2		4.3	
Age-standardised rate for suicide by age and sex (Persons, 45-64 yrs)	2019 - 23	–	76	16.8	13.6	24.8		5.2	
Age-standardised rate for suicide by age and sex (Persons, 65+ yrs)	2019 - 23	–	37	9.1	8.2	15.0		3.6	
Age-standardised rate for suicide by age and sex (Male, 25-44 yrs)	2019 - 23	–	42	24.4	19.6	52.2		5.1	
Age-standardised rate for suicide by age and sex (Male, 45-64 yrs)	2019 - 23	–	46	21.1	20.8	38.9		7.3	
Age-standardised rate for suicide by age and sex (Male, 65+ yrs)	2019 - 23	–	26	13.9	13.1	-	Insufficient number of values for a spine chart	-	
Age-standardised rate for suicide by age and sex (Female, 25-44 yrs)	2019 - 23	–	9	*	6.1	-	Insufficient number of values for a spine chart	-	
Age-standardised rate for suicide by age and sex (Female, 45-64 yrs)	2019 - 23	–	30	12.7	6.7	-	Insufficient number of values for a spine chart	-	
Age-standardised rate for suicide by age and sex (Female, 65+ yrs)	2019 - 23	–	11	4.9	4.1	-	Insufficient number of values for a spine chart	-	

## Comparison to West Midlands LAs

When comparing the Shropshire suicide rate to West Mids LAs, Shropshire has the highest rate at 13.5 per 100,00. The average for West Midlands is 10.5 per 100,000.

Area ▲▼	Recent Trend	Count ▲▼	Value ▲▼	95% Lower CI	95% Upper CI
England	-	16,657	10.9	10.8	11.1
West Midlands region (statistical)	-	1,664	10.5	10.0	11.0
Shropshire	-	119	13.5	11.0	16.0
Stoke-on-Trent	-	90	13.1	10.5	16.1
Worcestershire	-	202	12.4	10.7	14.2
Coventry	-	107	11.8	9.5	14.1
Solihull	-	62	11.0	8.4	14.2
Telford and Wrekin	-	55	11.0	8.3	14.3
Herefordshire	-	54	10.6	7.9	13.9
Staffordshire	-	238	10.1	8.8	11.4
Birmingham	-	284	9.9	8.7	11.1
Sandwell	-	86	9.8	7.8	12.1
Warwickshire	-	160	9.7	8.2	11.2
Wolverhampton	-	68	9.6	7.5	12.2
Dudley	-	78	9.2	7.3	11.6
Walsall	-	61	8.2	6.3	10.6

## Comparison to Statistical Neighbours

- When comparing the Shropshire suicide rate to nearest statistical neighbours as defined by NHS England (places with similar demographic/geographic profiles), Shropshire is ranked 7<sup>th</sup> highest out of 16 areas with a suicide rate range of 7.8 per 100,000 in West Berkshire to 19.4 per 100,000 in Cumberland
- This indicates that areas with a similar demographic profile to Shropshire may be skewed towards experiencing a higher death by suicide rate compared to the England average.

### Areas Shropshire and neighbours

Show 99.8% CI values

Area ▲▼	Recent Trend	Neighbour Rank ▲▼	Count ▲▼	Value ▲▼	95% Lower CI	95% Upper CI
England	-	-	16,657	10.9	10.8	11.1
Neighbours average	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cumberland	-	7	137	19.4	16.1	22.7
Cornwall	-	11	232	15.0	13.1	17.0
Westmorland and Furness	-	5	88	14.8	11.8	18.3
North Yorkshire UA	-	1	239	14.1	12.2	15.9
Northumberland	-	10	114	14.0	11.4	16.7
Cheshire East	-	15	148	13.7	11.5	16.0
Shropshire	-	-	119	13.5	11.0	16.0
Devon	-	14	297	13.5	11.9	15.1
East Riding of Yorkshire	-	6	130	13.5	11.1	15.9
Dorset	-	12	129	12.8	10.5	15.1
Somerset UA	-	4	172	11.4	9.7	13.2
Suffolk	-	8	215	10.7	9.3	12.2
Herefordshire	-	3	54	10.6	7.9	13.9
Wiltshire	-	2	137	10.0	8.3	11.7
Gloucestershire	-	9	171	9.9	8.4	11.3
West Berkshire	-	13	33	7.8	5.3	10.9

Source: Office for National Statistics

[Indicator Definitions and Supporting Information](#)