

April 2017

As Kent's "Release the Pressure" campaign marks its first anniversary, £150,000 of new funding has been announced to bolster initiatives to reduce the number of suicides in the county and to diminish the stigma of mental health.

The highly visual awareness campaign, which aims to reduce the number of suicides by encouraging men feeling under pressure to seek help, was launched last year after figures revealed suicide is the leading killer of men under 45.

In Kent, in 2016, there was a decrease in the numbers of people taking their own lives with 140 registered suicides.

Of these, 104 (74%) were men which shows a slight fall from 116 male suicides the previous year but the rate of suicide in the county is still higher than the national average.*

During the first year of the campaign there has been a 76 per cent increase in the number of male callers to a special helpline and now Kent County Council has been awarded £100,000 from the mental health programme at Health Education England, KSS, to be spent delivering suicide prevention training to organisations and voluntary sector groups to improve the support available for people when they are going through rough patches in their lives.

Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust has also received £50,000 of funding from Health Education England, KSS to enhance the suicide prevention training provided to mental health professionals. Both organisations will work together to ensure that their training programmes are complimentary.

If you would like to register your interest in attending the free training which will be delivered later in the year, please email phworkforcedevelopment@kent.gov.uk

The campaign urges people to seek help by calling Freephone [0800 107 0160](tel:0800 107 0160) where support is available from trained and experienced staff 24 hours a day 365 days a year. The campaign website www.releasethepressure.uk also includes case studies from men in Kent who have turned their lives around after attempting suicide.

Support is free and confidential, provided by an independent charity Mental Health Matters and funded by Kent County Council. In the past 12 months, 6577 men have called the helpline. The number of male callers has grown by 76 per cent during the campaign, to a monthly average of 548. The number of women calling the helpline was 12,668 over the past year, an increase of 23 per cent.

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