A Whole University Approach to Suicide Prevention

mhl
mental health learning

Developing A Comprehensive Strategy for Promoting Mental Health and Preventing Suicide

Alice Newton-Leeming

Director of **Mental Health Learning**

Alice.Newton-Leeming@mentalhealthlearning.co.uk

Our focus

- Suicide and university students
- What are the risk factors?
- Developing a whole university approach to suicide prevention strategy

Suicide and University students

- 3.9 per 100,000
- 2/3 by males
- Significant higher rate in males aged 25-29 in first undergraduate year
- Significant difference between students under 20 and over 30

Debt

Higher risk groups

mhl
mental health learning

- Bereaved or affected by suicide
- Asylum-seekers and refugees
- Mental health conditions
- Male students in first undergraduate year >2x females
- Experience of abuse, trauma, conflict, disaster, bullying
- (LGBTQ+)

Whole University Approach

mhl
mental health learning

Prevention: Promoting mental health and resilience

Intervention: Early identification and support for at-risk individuals

Postvention: Support for affected individuals and the community after a suicide

mhl
mental health learning

Who will write the strategy?

Who will action each step?

Who will be responsible for implementation?

Who will review and evaluate?

mhl
mental health learning

Prevention

- Campus-wide awareness campaigns
- Mental health and suicide awareness education and training for students, faculty, and staff
- Accessible mental health services and resources
- Creating a supportive campus environment

mhl
mental health learning

Intervention

- Suicide alertness and intervention training for staff, and peer leaders (safeTALK, ASIST)
- Develop systems of communication between staff when concerns are noticed
- Develop policy and practice on information sharing
- Referral pathways to counselling services and crisis support
- Increase awareness of internal and external support
- Restrict access to locations and materials that can be used for suicide

Postvention

mhl
mental health learning

Contact the bereaved, offering to meet and provide compassionate support

Support affected students and staff – develop individual approaches for anyone identified of increased risk

Agree internal communications

Support improvement of suicide prevention strategies and action plans – facilitate research, data collection and monitoring, and lessons learned through serious incident reviews

Provide information of available support

Consider holding open meetings with affected communities

Identify a named member of staff to respond to media requests

Alert local and public health services, as appropriate

Legacy and anniversaries

Case Study: University of Worcester 10 years of Suicide Safer Project

mhl
mental health learning

1. **Campaigning/Awareness Raising**
   a. to raise awareness and tackle stigma about student suicide
   b. signpost to available support
2. **Education/Training**
   a. To improve staff and student mental health and suicide prevention literacy and skills
   b. Embed mental health and suicide prevention training into student and staff teaching curricula
3. **Student and Staff Support**
   a. to improve awareness of mental health and suicide prevention/postvention resources and support options for students and staff,
4. **Research**
   a. contributing to UK student suicide research through two PhD studentships which commenced in October 2016:
      1. student suicide incidence, recording/monitoring, and current suicide prevention and response strategies in UK higher education institutions and barriers/facilitators that may influence provision.
      2. exploring support needs and roles for staff in higher education following a student suicide.

Additional reading and support

mhl
mental health learning

- Student Minds Mental Health Charter
- PAPYRUS Prevention of Young Suicide Safer Universities
- Student Mental Health and Wellbeing in Higher Education – Nicola Barden and Ruth Caleb
- www.officeforstudents.org.uk
- www.studentminds.org.uk
- https://studentspace.org.uk

Thank you

Alice Newton Leeming

www.mentalhealthlearning.co.uk