

Collaborative Efforts to Target Men for Suicide Prevention: A Case Study on Community Interventions

Introduction:

In response to a series of suicides in a local area, Harmless, a suicide prevention organization, and its Tomorrow Project undertook a collaborative effort to raise awareness and educate local agencies about the remaining risk factors. This case study examines the initiatives implemented, the outcomes achieved, and the key learnings obtained from this collaborative work.

Objectives:

1. Raise community awareness about suicide prevention and remaining risk factors.
2. Increase early identification of distress and suicidal thoughts among men.
3. Encourage referrals to mental health services for individuals at risk.

Collaborative Initiatives:

1. **Local Level Community Awareness:** Harmless and the Tomorrow Project conducted various awareness campaigns at the local level, targeting men specifically. These campaigns involved distributing informational materials in key community spaces, such as pubs and male-dominant venues. Additionally, self-referral information was printed on beer mats to provide discreet access to support resources.
2. **Signage in Male Dominant Spaces:** To maximize visibility, signage promoting suicide prevention and helpline information was strategically placed in spaces frequently visited by men, including the back of buses, shops, barbershops, faith centres, sport centres, and transport services.

Outcome Evaluation:

To assess the effectiveness of the collaborative initiatives, Harmless and the Tomorrow Project tracked referral rates before and after the activities. The

evaluation focused on male referrals to mental health services, aiming to determine whether the efforts had successfully increased early interventions.

Results:

Following the implementation of the collaborative initiatives there was a notable increase in male referrals for a period of eight months. These referrals were primarily attributed to local individuals who had engaged in conversations with friends or colleagues and identified signs of distress and suicidal thoughts earlier than would have otherwise been possible. This early identification led to prompt referrals into mental health services, thereby potentially preventing further suicides.

Key Learnings:

1. **Training Non-Professionals:** Suicide prevention efforts should extend beyond professionals and target individuals at the community level. Providing training and resources to non-professionals, such as community members and volunteers, can significantly enhance early identification and intervention.
2. **Community-Level Engagement:** To sustain the increased interventions and maximize impact, activities aimed at suicide prevention should be repeated regularly, ideally on a bi-annual basis. This repetition reinforces awareness and ensures continued engagement from the community.
3. **Involvement of Non-Mental Health Agencies:** Engaging agencies outside the mental health sphere is crucial for successful suicide prevention initiatives. Collaborating with local businesses, barbershops, faith centres, sport centres, and transport services increases the reach of prevention efforts and ensures that information and support are readily accessible to individuals at risk.

Conclusion:

The collaborative efforts undertaken by Harmless and the Tomorrow Project to target men for suicide prevention objectives proved successful in increasing male referrals to mental health services. By raising community awareness, engaging non-professionals, and involving agencies outside the mental health sphere, early identification of distress and suicidal thoughts was enhanced. These initiatives serve

as a valuable case study, emphasizing the importance of community-level engagement and sustained efforts in suicide prevention initiatives.

We work across the U.K. to support suicide prevention endeavours so if you'd like to know more or work on a pilot of work for your locality, please do get in touch.

