

Blackpool Suicide Prevention Strategy 2025-2029 - Summary

(Summary created with the assistance of Notebooklm)

What is this document about?

This document is Blackpool's first plan to prevent suicide. It was created by talking to many groups, including health and social care teams, local charities, and most importantly, people who have had suicidal thoughts or who have lost someone to suicide.

The plan aims to reduce the number of suicides and help people who are affected by suicide, creating a feeling of hope and making sure everyone gets the right support.

Why is suicide prevention so important in Blackpool?

Nationally, suicide rates are increasing. In 2023, the number of suicides per 100,000 people was 10.7, which is the highest rate since 2000, with increases seen in almost all age groups and genders.

- The number of suicides in Blackpool has been about 50% higher than the rest of the country and the local region since 2001.
- For 2021-2023, Blackpool had the seventh highest suicide rate among all areas in England.
- Many people who died by suicide in Blackpool had contact with services before their death. This means there may have been chances to help them earlier.

What makes people in Blackpool more at risk of suicide?

Several factors make people more at risk, especially in Blackpool:

- Deprivation: Blackpool is currently the most deprived area in England, meaning many people live in poverty. This leads to worse health and shorter lives compared to the average in England. Financial worries and the cost of living crisis are big risk factors.
 - People with mental health problems in poorer areas like Blackpool might face a "mental health premium," meaning they could pay an extra £1,100-£1,550 per year because their mental health affects their ability to manage money or access services.
- Drug and Alcohol Misuse:
 - Blackpool has the highest number of deaths related to drug misuse in the country.
 - A lower number of people in Blackpool who have both drug/alcohol problems and mental health issues receive mental health treatment compared to the national average.
- Children and Young People:
 - Young people in Blackpool often face many challenges like mental health problems in their families, drug and alcohol issues, special educational needs, youth offending, and poor housing.
 - Blackpool also has consistently higher rates of young people admitted to hospital for self-harm. Self-harm is a risk factor for suicide.
- Gender Differences:

- While more men die by suicide, Blackpool saw an increase in suicides among women, almost doubling between 2016-18 and 2020-22, though more recently, this rate has reduced and is closer to the national average.

- For women, the negative effects of menopause on mental health, sometimes leading to suicidal thoughts, and a lack of support from health professionals are major challenges.

- For men, seeking help for their health and a feeling of shame if they are not "healthy". They may not know about available services or find them hard to access.

- People with Police Contact: local shows that having contact with the police or being in police custody can be a precursor in some cases, making this group more vulnerable.

- Living Environment:

- Living in coastal towns like Blackpool can increase the risk of mental health problems, possibly due to seasonal jobs, poverty, and poor housing.

- Blackpool also has very few green spaces, which is thought to worsen health outcomes. Green spaces can protect against suicide.

- Lack of Support after a Suicide (Postvention): People who have lost someone to suicide have said it is hard to get quick, consistent, and caring support from professionals. This is very important because each suicide affects many people (around 135 others), increasing their risk of depression, anxiety, or even suicide themselves.

What is Blackpool's Plan to prevent suicide?

Blackpool's vision is to reduce suicides, bring hope, and ensure everyone gets holistic support.

The strategy has four main priorities:

1. Improve mental health awareness and reduce stigma:

- This means helping everyone understand mental health better and reducing the feeling of shame (stigma) around mental health problems and asking for help.

- Involving people who have lived experience of mental health problems in planning and delivering anti-stigma programs is vital for them to work well.

2. Work together across all groups and communities in Blackpool:

- This involves working closely with health services, local charities, and people with lived experience to make sure mental health support is caring and meets the needs of Blackpool residents.

- Nationally, many people with mental health needs are not in contact with NHS mental health services. The plan aims to improve access to services so people get the right care at the right time.

3. Support anyone affected by suicide:

- This priority is about providing compassionate and tailored support to families and friends who are grieving after a suicide.

- Support should be timely, consistent, and compassionate.

4. Build suicide safer communities:

- This means finding and helping high-risk groups and places in Blackpool.
- It also involves reducing ways people can harm themselves, for example, by making changes at high-risk locations.
- It also means being careful about how suicide is reported in the media, to prevent others from being influenced (known as 'suicide contagion').

Who is involved in delivering this plan?

Blackpool Suicide Prevention Partnership will deliver this plan, including:

- People with lived experience (those who have had suicidal thoughts or lost someone to suicide).
- Local Council and health services (like the NHS).
- Voluntary, Community, Faith, and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) organisations (local charities and groups).
- Emergency services (police, RNLI, ambulance).

They are all working together to prevent suicide and support mental health in the community.