

A Picture of Health

In Public Health we look at the way people in Tameside live as a whole population. This helps us understand what the main health and wellbeing challenges are for people living here, so we can look for ways to improve levels of health. We'll be sharing facts and figures about health in Tameside with you every month, to put you in the picture. We'll also be giving you information on how you can help yourself and the people around you to live well.

In focus this month: Suicide Prevention

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September 10th marks World Suicide Prevention Day, a day when we can celebrate the lives of those who have died by suicide or check in on someone you may be concerned about or that has been affected by suicide. Supporters can join in by lighting a candle and placing it near a window at 8pm (be sure to place naked flames safely, or use a battery powered alternative). Visit the Anthony Seddon Fund website to find out about local events.



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Around 26 people complete suicide in Tameside each year, and a further 50 present at the hospital having tried. If you are worried about someone, talking to them may help. Alternatively the Samaritans can lend an ear to anyone having troubling thoughts, and are available day and night. If you know your friend won't pick up the phone and make the call, you can arrange for the Samaritans to call them instead.



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We all feel helpless from time to time, but for some it can feel like there is no way out of their problems. There is always a better option than suicide, but it may take help to see clearly in moments of despair. With support and treatment it is possible to allow negative feelings to pass. The Sanctuary offer 24-hour mental health crisis support for adults; and a place to go for anyone who is struggling to get through the night. Save this number in your phone now, you never know when you or someone you know might need it 0300 003 7029.



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Suicide is the leading cause of death amongst young people in the UK, with the Office for National Statistics counting children as young as 10 in their standard reports. As a parent you may feel like you should have all the answers, but relating to the problems of a troubled child isn't always easy. If you are worried about your child's mental health and are not sure how best to help, Young Minds is a UK charity that specialises in the mental health of young people, offering support to parents and children alike.



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If you are a young person and are living with suicidal thoughts, don't be afraid to talk. You're not alone. You'd be surprised by how many people experience mental health problems; in fact 1 in 4 of us will go through it at some point. If you're not sure where to turn, visit Papyrus. You can email, text or call them for help. You can also search for their 'Stay Alive' app, it has lots of helplines, groups and advice to help you get through. If you ever need support, it's in the palm of your hand...



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It is believed that 2 children in every secondary school class deliberately harm themselves. Self-harm isn't necessarily linked to suicide. Many people do it to achieve a sense of release, but it can be a behaviour that leads to accidental death when taken too far. It should never be ignored or brushed under the carpet. If you know someone who is hurting themselves, the NHS has a leaflet that offers help and advice to find less harmful ways of coping with distress.



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How about lunch? It's not the first thing you think of when worrying about someone's mental health, but talking things over and being a good listener is one of the best ways you can help someone who is feeling low. Even better when that chat is over delicious home-made food in the Topaz Café in Ashton. Run by Tameside, Oldham and Glossop Mind, the café doubles as a place where people can access help and support to cope with a range of mental health issues.



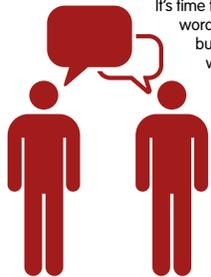
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Older people aren't immune from suicidal thoughts. Divorce or the death of a spouse, grown up children moving out, and retirement can all contribute towards feelings of loneliness and depression that are common amongst those considering suicide. Subtle clues that an older person might be thinking about taking their own life include talking about 'getting affairs in order', making a will, or not being around for a certain event. They might also start giving things away, tidying up, or shying away from social activities. If you know someone who is older, and whose life has gone through significant or upsetting changes, offer them the number for Silverline. A 24 hour helpline and friendship service for older people, 0800 4 70 80 90.



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Let's talk about suicide, but what language should we use? In years gone by we talked about people 'committing' suicide, yet suicide is not a crime. We also hear about people making a 'failed' attempt, ending up hurt, but thankfully alive. It's time to lose these outdated and unhelpful words. Talking about suicide is important, but it's also important to change the way we talk about it, because it's just one of the ways we can help reduce the stigma and save lives. Mind has produced a guidance to learn how to support someone who feels suicidal, and how to strike up the right kind of conversation.



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Every suicide leaves people behind wondering if there was something they could have spotted, or done to prevent it from happening. Bereavement can be a complicated mix of the deepest grief, resentment, shock, guilt and anger that someone they loved seemingly 'chose' to 'leave'. The illness that leads to suicide is complex, and takes away the ability to think clearly, so we can't rationalise a person's thoughts in that moment. If you have been bereaved by suicide, recently or a long time ago, the NHS has a booklet that may help you make sense of your emotions.



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If you or someone you know may be living with suicidal feelings, a GP can help. In non-emergency situations they can refer you for treatment, which might include such things as counselling or talking therapies, prescribe medication, or non-clinical alternatives like exercise or finding a support group. In an emergency, call 999. In the meantime there is help to learn how to cope from Mind.



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"If you are feeling low, you're not alone. Around 1 in 6 people have considered suicide at some time in their life. Healthy Minds is an NHS service offering free, confidential help to anyone experiencing mental and emotional health problems. Healthy Minds can help you make sense of your thoughts, and find ways to cope when they become troublesome.

