Suicide Prevention – Period End Report for P13 2020/21

RISSG
RAIL INDUSTRY SUICIDE STAKEHOLDER GROUP

Round up (07 March—31 March 2021)

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Round Up

There were 18 suspected suicides involving trains in Period 13, 11 fewer than the same period last year. Due to the reclassification of some events, this brings the total number of fatal suicide incidents for 2020/21 to 247, which is 36 fewer than in 2019/2020. However, at the time of writing two incidents still remain pending a classification.

16 of the fatalities, or 89%, involved males and two involved females. The age of the identified individuals ranged from 17 to 70 with 14 of them known to have a mental health condition.

Network Rail's Wessex Route, Southern Region, experienced four of the 17 events.

There were 10 different operators involved in recorded suicide events overall, with Southwestern involved in three of the incidents and Great Western involved in two.

During the period, three individuals attempted suicide on the network. Of the three, two individuals were male and the other was female. Two of them had known mental health conditions.

Delay minutes in the period totalled 26,455, bringing the total for the year to c.352,442 minutes. The event that accrued the most delay during the period took place on 25 March at Weybridge and totalled 5,723 minutes.

Suspected suicides this year have cost around £34.9m in Schedule 8 payments. Events this period account for around £3m of that total.

A fatality at Weybridge led to 5,723 delay minutes. It involved a Southwestern train, one of three incidents that the Operator was involved in during the period

Interventions

The BTP recorded 137 life-saving interventions during the period, bringing their total for the year to 1,810. When further incidents involving contact with vulnerable people that have taken place across the network are taken into consideration, the yearly combined total for both types of intervention interaction is 2,548. 194 of these interactions took place in Period 13.

Table 1 —Contact with Vulnerable People and Life-saving Interventions from 2015/16 to 2020/21 (sources: BTP, RSSB and Samaritans)

Publication of National Suicide Prevention Strategy Progress Report and Mental Health Recovery Action Plan

The National Suicide Prevention Strategy Progress report was published on Friday. It details the steps taken to reduce deaths by suicide since the fourth progress report, which was published in January 2019. The Government COVID-19 mental health and wellbeing recovery action plan aims to prevent, mitigate and respond to the mental health impacts of the pandemic during 2020 to 2021.

This year the NHS will receive around an additional £500 million to address waiting times for mental health services, give more people the mental health support they need, and invest in the NHS workforce. This wider spend on mental health will support the NHS in their work to prevent suicides. In recognition of additional pressures faced by the suicide prevention voluntary sector during the pandemic, with many more people seeking help and support compared to previous years, the Government are making £5 million available as part of the £500m, specifically to support suicide prevention voluntary and community sector organisations. As part of this funding, a grant fund will be available to help ensure that the financial gaps incurred as a result of these additional pressures are covered. Further details on the application process for the grant fund will be published shortly.

Department of Health & Social Care

Department of Health and Social Care - mental health funding for children and young people announced

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has announced £79 million of funding to support children and young people to access mental health services. The funding will mean children and young people facing a mental health crisis continue to get support through 24/7 crisis lines and will benefit from additional funding to support follow-up crisis treatment at home, where necessary.

The funding will also be used to:

- increase the number of Mental Health Support Teams in schools and colleges with the aim of having 400 in place by April 2023,
- improve access and reduce waiting times for community mental health support,
- improve access to eating disorder services

For more information, visit the DHSC website

Million Hour Challenge — 2nd Anniversary

On March 27th, Samaritans celebrated the 2nd anniversary of the rail industry volunteering initiative, Million Hour Challenge. The initiative aims to bring the rail industry together to help Samaritans be there for those struggling to cope, whilst also improving the mental health and wellbeing of staff within the rail industry.

Rail staff can get involved in the challenge in any way that suits them and is still within current pandemic restrictions. This could include organising fundraising events or virtual tea breaks with colleagues to look after staff's own wellbeing, sharing and raising awareness of Samaritans services on social media or supporting local Samaritans branches where volunteers can sign up to listening volunteer vacancies and help with admin roles – all contributing hours to the ambitious target.

Rail staff can also contribute to the 'Million Hour Challenge' by taking part in Samaritans online training courses such as 'Wellbeing in the Workplace' toolkit and 'Managing Suicidal Contacts', to learn how best to approach someone who appears vulnerable to get them to safety.

Andrew Haines, chief executive of Network Rail said: "The Million Hour Challenge is a great opportunity for the rail industry to make a real difference to those who may be struggling to cope. The past year has seen so many people pushed to their limits, that's why we want to get out and help, so please get involved."

We ask that this report is only shared with rail industry colleagues and partner organisations due to the sensitive nature of the material that is covered in it

Call 0300 123 9101 to request police assistance in situations where you believe someone may be about to take their own life on the railway

To request Suicide Prevention Programme materials please email: suicideprevention@raildeliverygroup.com

To add yourself or a colleague to the distribution list for this report please email suicideprevention@raildeliverygroup.com

The station team at Berwick upon Tweed taking part in the 310k Steps Challenge

310K Steps Challenge

ScotRail and LNER bravely took on the Samaritans 310k Step Challenge and have had incredible results! The challenge encouraged participants to take 310,000 steps over the 31 days in March, raising vital funds for Samaritans while promoting physical and mental wellbeing.

A team of 10 at ScotRail raised over £3,200 and clocked 520 hours towards the Million Hour Challenge. When asked why they took on the challenge, one of the participants said "Working in social media and reporting suicides has opened my eyes to how often they happen on the railway. I wanted to support the Samaritans personally for all they do for those in need."

The Berwick Station team from LNER also participated, raising a further £430 and clocking over 4 million steps.

Health Education England - Suicide Bereavement e-Learning

NHS
Health Education England

Health Education England has added a new e-learning session to an overall adult Suicide and Self-harm Prevention module within the MindEd programme. In the session called 'Postvention Support for Staff and Organisational Response' learners have an opportunity to deepen their understanding of the impact of bereavement by suicide on family, colleagues and friends, by following the story of two people affected by a suicide. The session explains how effective and timely support after a suspected death by suicide can help supportively manage the distress experienced by people affected, and how colleagues can support those affected by suicide on their return to work.

For more information and to access the session, visit the Postvention Support for Staff and Organisational Response session.

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention takes place

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention took place on Wednesday, 24 March. Dr Sharon McDonnell, Managing Director of Suicide Bereavement UK and Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Manchester, presented the findings of the research 'From Grief to Hope' and Jacqui Morrissey, from the Support After Suicide Partnership (SASP) leadership team spoke about the vital work that SASP is doing to support their members and those setting up bereavement services.

Mental Health posters installed across Hertfordshire stations

Richard Godwin and Natalie Stretton with one of the helpline posters that have been placed across Hertfordshire

Following the discovery that a large number of mental health related incidents were taking place at Hertfordshire stations, the rail industry collaborated with the local Public Health Authority and obtained details of the NHS 24/7 mental health crisis line. These details were placed on A3 Foamex posters with the intention of having them displayed at all Hertfordshire stations on the North West and Central Region.

A day of action by Richard Godwin, (Suicide Prevention Co-ordinator for Network Rail North West and Central Region and West Midlands Trains), and Natalie Stretton (Route Crime and Security Manager West Coast South Route) took place on 24th March with 26 of the posters being installed at seven mainline stations in the Hertfordshire area.

A second day to install the posters at the remaining two mainline and six branch line stations is planned for 28th April.

Suicide and homelessness: national clinical survey

A study used data from the National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Safety in Mental Health to examine demographic and clinical characteristics of homeless people who died by suicide and were in recent contact with mental health services. It found homeless patients who died by suicide more often had known risk factors for suicide than patients in stable accommodation. As a result of the higher percentages of post-discharge and in-patient suicides in homeless patients as well as the high prevalence of substance misuse, this study recommends closer integration of services as well as awareness of risks during in-patient admission and in the weeks immediately after discharge.

You can read the full study here.

North West and Central Region - New staff member

During the period, Gary Jones joined the North West and Central Region as the Suicide Prevention Coordinator for the North West Route. Gary joins Network Rail after over 30 years experience with the BTP and says he is looking forward to the challenges that this new role will bring him.

‘There is always hope’ campaign launched

According to research carried out on behalf of the industry, almost three quarters of 18-24-year-olds (69%) say that Covid-19 has had a negative impact on their mental health compared to 28% of over 65s, while nearly half of Brits (48%) agreed that their mental health has taken a hit since the pandemic began. Mental health symptoms have surged among all age groups over the last 12 months, with respondents reporting increases in anxiety (40%), loneliness (31%) and depression (31%).

The research was carried out as part of Network Rail’s new ‘There is Always Hope’ campaign. The campaign launched on 08 March and aims to encourage those struggling with their mental health to seek help before they reach a crisis point.

The Chasing the Stigma charity partnered with Network Rail to create a new film which portrays a young man looking distressed and withdrawn, who finds himself surrounded by positive moments of hope as he moves through a railway station.

At the end of the film, he finds himself having a moment of connection with a fellow passenger, which leads to them striking up a conversation as they embark on their journey. By showing these moments of care and connection throughout the film, the aim is to show that no matter how desperate you may feel, there are people around you who care and there is always hope.

The film ends with a call to action encouraging people to download the Hub of Hope app if they are struggling with their mental health. The Hub of Hope app is provided by Chasing the Stigma and brings together all of the mental health support available to someone in any given area, from NHS support and national charities like Mind and Samaritans to voluntary, private and third sector services.

The Hub of Hope can be accessed through the app, Chasing the Stigma website or at www.hubofhope.co.uk. The app also has a *Need Help Now?* button that links straight through to Samaritans and Crisis Text Line.

Suicide in the media

During the period, two television documentaries about suicide were aired on successive days.

On 16 March the BBC’s digital channel, BBC3, released ‘Roman Kemp: Our Silent Emergency’.

The Capitol Breakfast DJ lost his best friend, Joe Lyons, a radio producer, to suicide in August 2020. Roman said he felt compelled to make the show in order to highlight the issue of men’s mental health and examine why increasing numbers of young men are taking their own lives. Roman also spoke about the lasting effects that suicide has on the friends and family left behind. He is now urging that young people are given more education about speaking about their feelings when they are experiencing difficulties. Roman said:

Roman Kemp (right) with his friend Joe Lyons who ended his life in August 2020

“We are talking about kids from the age of 14 taking their own lives and that to me is so shocking and something that parents should be aware of. ...That is why I wanted to go and do the research with the professors to work out if you get in early, if schools get in early from the age of five, to teach boys how to open up, what things like depression are, what tools they can use, if you teach them from the age of five, then by the age of 16 they are open to everything and that is what is important.”

Roman Kemp: Our Silent Emergency can be viewed on the iPlayer here: https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p098hsv6

On 17 March, ‘Caroline Flack: Her Life and Death’ was broadcast on Channel 4. The hour long documentary featured emotional interviews with Flack’s mother and sister and examined how the media and social media contributed to the TV star’s decision to end her life in February 2020. The show revealed that Caroline was someone who suffered from depression and often became overwhelmed with life’s events. Her family feel that the unkind media coverage and scrutiny led to her feeling unable to cope with life. Following the broadcast, many viewers and fellow celebrities took to social media and used the hashtag #bekind.

Caroline Flack (left) and her sister, Jody.

Her sister, Jody, closed the documentary by saying:

“It is an hour that makes you long to plead with anyone and everyone — if you are ever thinking of going, please don’t. Please, please stay.”

Caroline Flack: Her Life and Death is available on the All 4 television app or through signing in to My4 here: https://www.channel4.com/programmes/caroline-flack-her-life-and-death