

PE1604/J

NHS Lothian Letter of 17 October 2016

Response to Petition PE1604 - Regarding investigations into suicides

Thank you for your interest and request for a response from NHS Lothian around the issues raised by this petition.

Suicides and the review process following a death by suicide is an issue that Lothian treats with the utmost importance. We are refining our processes to ensure timely reviews, to share learning from reviews and throughout this give a central role to the voices of families and carers. We also feel that given the changes to health and social care structure throughout Scotland it is a real opportunity to consider who is involved in reviewing suicides locally, what the outputs and outcomes are from each suicide review, and how, where and with whom the learning from reviews can be taken forward.

We would really welcome a greater emphasis on the learning from reviews, and the need for learning to be disseminated widely throughout Board areas as a focus at national level.

The work of the team at Health Improvement Scotland, and the Health and Safety Executive to highlight some of the issues both around suicide itself, and the review and learning from reviews has been very useful. This petition is timely in that it can build on this work, help form some of the direction around the next steps for the HIS team to look at expanding reviews and bringing together learning from reviews in order to inform across Board areas.

In answer to the petition queries directly, we utilise the joint working between the hospital based teams and the community based teams to provide protection and a focus on the health and safety of patients released from hospital. As part of discharge planning, we look at needs of individuals when they are returning to community living, identifying staff within community teams who will provide support post discharge them. This planning process ensures that there is a sharing of information and individuals understand who will be involved in their care once they are released from hospital.

Reviews on completed suicides, with areas of learning identified, are signed off by the relevant managers and executive leads. This ensures that there is visibility of the review at senior level which is then cascade as appropriate throughout the organisation, being always mindful of sensitivity and confidentiality aspects.

For each suicide review, there is family/ carer engagement and involvement. The family/ carer is contacted shortly after the death, and given an opportunity to discuss their perspectives on the death and the life of the person who has died. The investigation will be explained to them, and there will be further opportunities for them to contribute to the suicide review process. A copy of the final report is sent to the family or carer.

In Lothian we have a range of professional staff from different backgrounds, including consultant psychiatrists, who are trained and involved in the review process. This process involves staff who cared for the patient.

We are also improving our development programme focused on the learning from suicide reviews. This will entail protected learning sessions for staff to learn and reflect on issues for practice following a suicide review. This will be open to a wide variety of NHS and local authority staff including third sector colleagues when appropriate.

This forms part of our wider Quality Improvement Programme for mental health which aims to fully embed Quality Improvement into each strand of work, including suicide reviews. This is an ongoing piece of work, and we would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with Scottish Government at a later date.

To conclude, we welcome an extension to the number of suicides that are reviewed, and to the staff teams involved in the review process and that learning from reviews to be disseminated widely and the lessons and themes from reviews to be available across Board areas.

We appreciate the impact that each suicide has on family carers and friends and aim also to be as respectful, considerate and sensitive to their needs and feelings.

Linda Irvine

Strategic Programme Manager
Mental Health and Wellbeing and Substance Misuse

c.c. Mr Jim Crombie, Acting Chief Executive

Professor Alex McMahon Executive Director, Nursing, Midwifery and AHPs
and
Executive Lead for REAS and Prison Healthcare

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