

Zero Suicide Collaborative in South West England

Cornwall Partnership 
NHS Foundation Trust

Dr Ellen Wilkinson, Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

Steering group members

Gerry Cadogan, Torbay Council; Debbie Williams, Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue; Helen Smith, Devon Partnership NHS Trust; Mary Ryan; Alan Harding; Adrian James, Devon Partnership NHS Trust; Sue Wood; Rob Gough; Corinne Thomas; Salena Williams, UHBristol NHS Trust; Patricia Woodhead; Rebecca Osborne NHS Kernow CCG; Lynne and Don Hart, 'Papyrus - Prevention of Young Suicide/Lived Experience'; Ian McAllister; Robert Langdon, SW Samaritans; Jan Bond; Susan Dursley, UHBristol NHS Trust

FROM:

"no-one can do anything to prevent the tragedy of suicide"

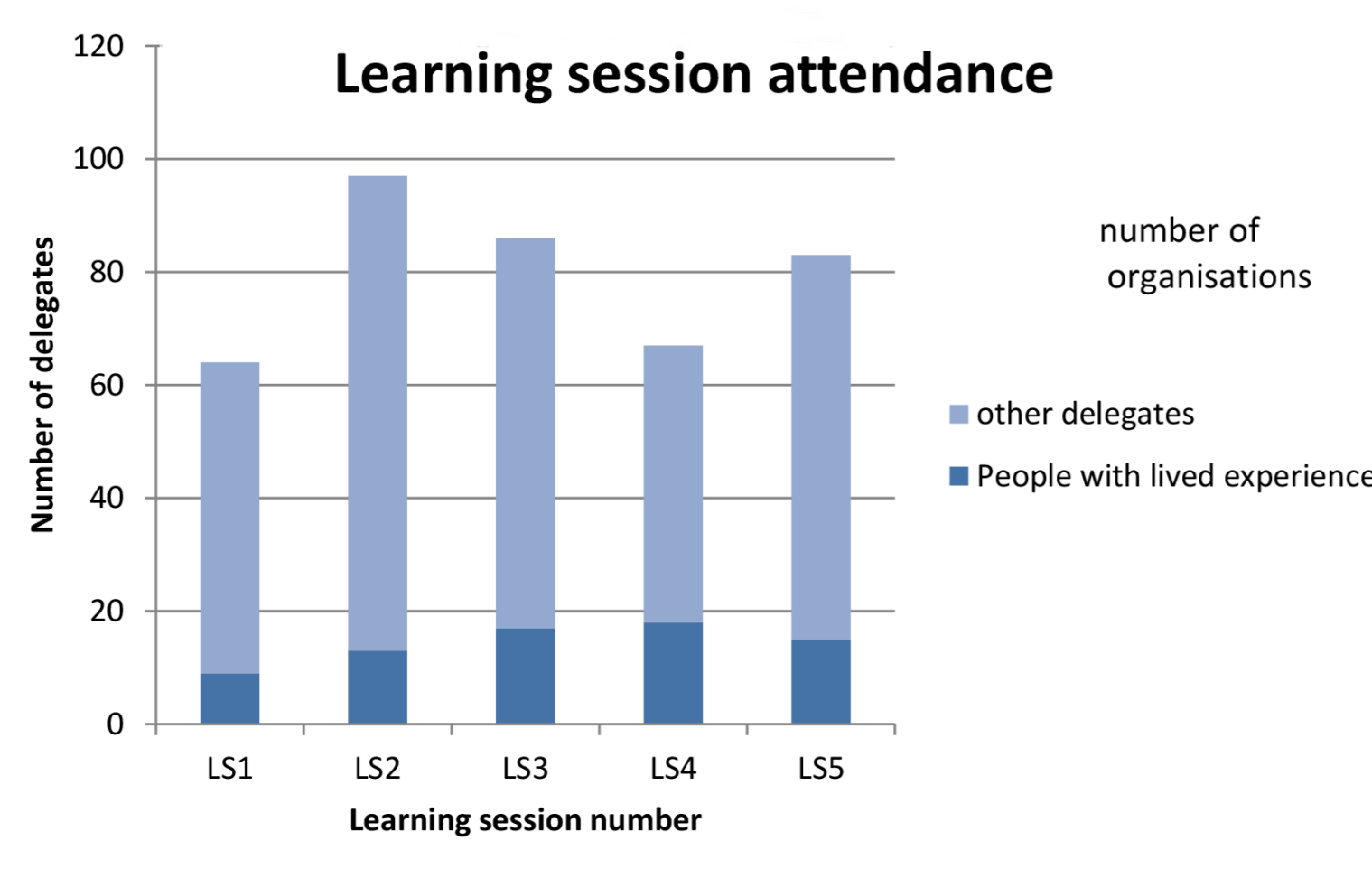
TO:

"everyone has a role in preventing suicide"

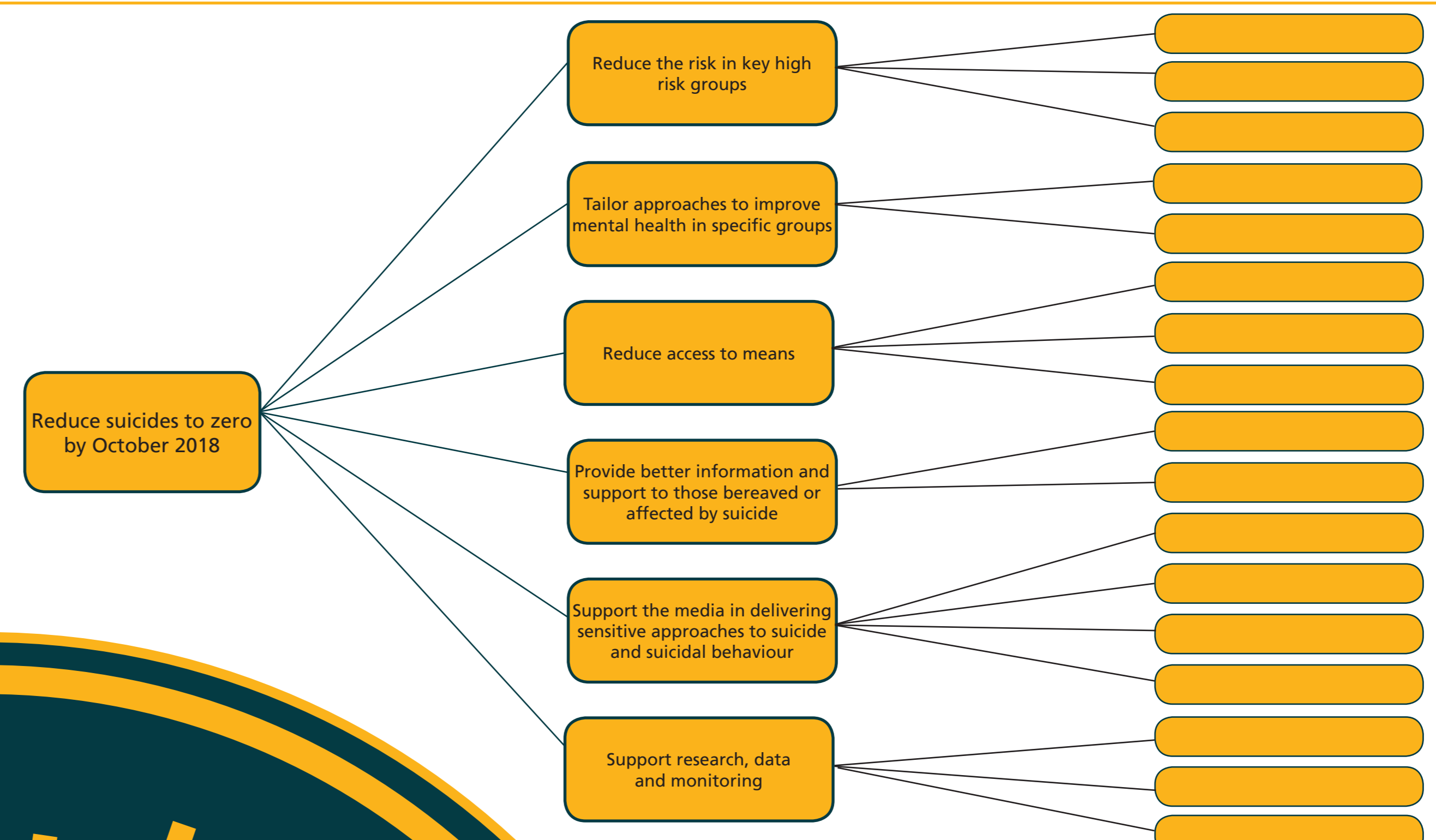
Introduction to the SW Zero Suicide Collaborative

Suicide is not just a health issue. Its causation and consequences sit within all of society. This Collaborative therefore involved 60 organisations, with Faculty including: Public Health, Mental Health, Primary Care, IHI Fellows, Experts with Lived Experience, Samaritans, bereavement charities, charitable and voluntary organisations. In addition, police, fire rescue, railway and coastal safety (Royal National Lifeboat Institution) agencies became involved.

Potential patients include citizens of SW England. In the UK, only 25% of people who die by suicide were recently known to mental health services, and only 63% had seen a general practitioner, so a whole system approach was necessary, reaching well beyond traditional health services. The breakthrough collaborative series was used as a model for learning sessions. A launch event and 6 collaborative meetings were held, bringing together 60 different organisations and over 300 people in total.



Driver Diagram



Reduction of Access to Means

Patients told us that after they were discharged from hospital with medication, often a further month's supply was issued by their general practitioner (GP), leading to potentially toxic quantities. Whilst each individual system appeared safe, the two systems did not align with patient need. This was confirmed by an audit completed by a general practitioner and a psychiatrist where 70% of discharge letters misleadingly failed to refer to the statistically significantly elevated suicide risk in all patients immediately after leaving hospital. The discharge letter now consistently includes a standard sentence reminding the GP of this. The results have been shared so that practices can now arrange to review medication after a psychiatric admission, and consider smaller quantities until the risk is considered to have reduced.

Posters in Pubs

Collaboration between Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Cornwall Council Public Health, BBC Radio Cornwall, The Samaritans and St Austell Brewery created posters for pub washrooms to attract customers' undivided attention to sources of help for people in distress. Local people's images were combined with slogans suggested by radio listeners, enhancing awareness of suicide as an issue and reducing stigma, especially for middle aged men, who are recognised as a high risk group. Over 100 slogans were proposed. The posters are now in place in 26 pubs in Cornwall and the posters have also been adopted in police stations, health centres and council offices.



Letter of Hope

A group of people with lived experience have written a Letter of Hope to support those contemplating taking their own lives, to ask them to hold on just a little longer; to give themselves time.

The idea was prompted by an initiative in the United States and members of the group, which included survivors of attempted suicide as well as those affected by the loss of someone who had taken their own life, believe that the letter can and will save lives. The letter is the result of many months of work striving to find the right words that might help someone in their darkest moments. The authors report that writing the letter has been a very emotional experience. It is being trialled in different settings within Devon with measurement of the outcomes and feedback invited before rolling out the letter more widely.

Letter of Hope

Dear Friend,
We are a group of people from Devon who are writing this letter of Hope to you because we care about you and what happens in your life. We do not know you, you do not know us, but we care.
We care because, like you, we were struggling to stay alive. We attempted suicide. We went to A&E, were referred to the Crisis Team, or admitted to hospital after attempting suicide and we have survived. We have done more than survive; we have found the courage to live again. So please, if you are ever in such a dark and desolate place that you feel like taking your own life, this letter has been written to ask you to hold on. Give yourself time.
We understand pain, especially emotional pain, which often others don't.
Emotional pain hurts so much. It is that pain, along with loss, that brought us to suicide and to hospital. Later we learnt that it was not death we wanted, but to end the terrible thoughts, feelings and pain we were experiencing. Because of the experiences we have been through, we came together to write to you offering Hope.
We survived. We want you to get through this too.
We don't pretend to know exactly what you are feeling, because your feelings are uniquely your own. It is okay to feel the way you do. You are not weak, selfish, or crazy.
You are not beyond help.
Please believe in yourself, in what tomorrow might bring. Believe that you can get through this moment. Allow hope into your life. None of us claims that it is easy. It can be challenging. But however hard things get, life offers possibilities that you may have forgotten exist or have never even dreamed of.

There can be a time in the future when something makes you smile, sunshine brings you comfort, when the day ahead is so much better than today.
Please give yourself time.
We ask you to remember to seek help before life gets too painful. Ask for the help you need. You are not alone. Talk to a trusted friend, see your GP, contact a support group, talk to the Samaritans on Freephone 116 123 or another National Helpline, many of which are listed on the back of this letter.
By talking things over a great sense of pressure is released, it becomes possible to feel better and for your problems to seem smaller and more manageable.
Please remember, if you ever feel suicidal, ask for help. Be clear to the person you speak with. Use words like: 'I can't cope, I feel bad, I feel out of control, or I feel crazy.' Tell people it's so painful I don't want to die, or simply, please help me. We could write so much more to you, a long, long letter, in fact we did, we all did from our different perspectives and from our hearts, and it was those letters that led us to what is important, to the message in this letter to you.
Please keep this letter, though we hope that you will never need it again. We also hope that you can find someone or something to believe in. That can make all the difference. We have lived and we have loved again. We believe you can too.
We wish you well and we wish you a good life.
With love,
Devon 'Letter of Hope' Group

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SOUTH WEST STRATEGIC CLINICAL NETWORK

South West
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Sponsored by SW Strategic Clinical Network and South West Academic Health Science Network
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