

# £5 million launched to support suicide prevention services

- Funding will help these services meet increased demand from the pandemic
- £4 million suicide prevention grant fund will support Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector suicide prevention services
- Grant to focus on supporting high risk groups, including children and young people and those with pre-existing mental health conditions

People experiencing suicidal thoughts or approaching a crisis will be supported by a £5 million boost to suicide prevention charities, following increased demand during the pandemic.

The suicide prevention Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector saw an increase in the number of individuals seeking support – with some services seeing up to 20% more contacts over the last year, compared to previous years.

Recognising the increased pressures, the £4 million grant fund will open next week for applications from VCSE organisations that support suicide prevention.

The support will be targeted at high-risk groups who have struggled most during the pandemic, such as people with a pre-existing mental illness, children and young people, NHS and social care staff who've faced enormous pressure over the last 18 months, and people in contact with the criminal justice system.

The funding will provide organisations with additional resource that will enable them to either set up new projects or expand or sustain current services to ensure people are supported. The other £1 million of the funding has been set aside to support existing and ongoing voluntary sector suicide prevention programmes.

Minister for Mental Health, Gillian Keegan, said:

I know the last 18 months have been really challenging and many more people have been asking for help with their mental health.

I want to be clear: we are here to support anyone struggling – and if you need help, I encourage you to reach out.

The entire suicide prevention voluntary sector has played a crucial role in providing people with the help and support they need throughout the pandemic and I encourage them to apply for this funding so we can continue to support our communities.

This fund is on top of £10.2 million already given to mental health charities over the course of the pandemic, and will ensure that suicide prevention organisations can continue to provide support to all those who need it.

More widely, the Mental Health Recovery Action Plan, backed by £500 million, has ensured the right support is being offered to people with a variety of mental health conditions who have been impacted most by the pandemic.

£200,000 of the grant funding will also be ring-fenced specifically to help support small community groups and organisations which play a vital role in responding to local needs, ensuring communities up and down the country can access suicide prevention support.

Earlier this year, the government published the latest progress report against the National Suicide Prevention Strategy, which included a refreshed cross-government suicide prevention workplan to reduce suicides as far as possible. Actions taken during the pandemic to reduce suicides as far as possible include:

- The acceleration of rolling out 24/7 all-age crisis services, so anybody requiring urgent support could access those services rapidly
- NHSE embedding a comprehensive package of emotional, psychological, and practical support for NHS staff, available online, including a specific helpline and text service for counselling and support

Alongside NHS services, the VCSE sector is crucial to providing support to people, which is why the government is supporting them to continue delivering their life-saving projects.

Professor Louis Appleby, Advisor to the Government on the National Suicide Prevention Strategy, said:

The response of suicide prevention charities to the pandemic has been nothing short of outstanding. They were among the first to respond to the distress that many have felt. They have worked tirelessly to support people who are anxious, isolated or at risk. They have been an invaluable partner to the NHS.

All this has stretched their resources to the limit, at a time when fund-raising from the public has been harder. This grant funding opportunity is in recognition of the contribution they have made.

- The VCSE grant fund is being administered by PwC on DHSC's behalf, following an open tender process.
- A specialist panel will assess the applications to decide who the funding should be awarded to. The panel will include experts from within the suicide prevention sector and people with lived experience.
- The application portal for the VCSE grant fund will open on 2 December 2021.
- A breakdown of the £500 million funding announced in March can be found [here](#)

- For anyone who needs support, visit the [NHS website](#)