

# Case study

## The Suicide Awareness Training Project

The Suicide Awareness Training Project runs across most of the East Midlands with participation from the Rural Community Councils, delivering training in the work place.

### **Background**

In 2001 there was a noticeable increase in the levels of stress and depression within farming and rural communities. As a response the Rural Community Council (Leicestershire & Rutland) set up a rural stress helpline. There was also a befriending scheme where volunteers visited farmers to help them through periods of crisis. Following the success of the scheme the RRC (Leicestershire & Rutland) developed general suicide awareness training, funded by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and Leicester City Primary Care Trust.

The training course was targeted at individuals who were likely to come into contact with people vulnerable to suicide, whether they worked in mental health, public, private or third sector bodies.

### **East Midlands Suicide Prevention Strategy**

Back in 2002, the national suicide prevention strategy was launched. One of the key goals is to promote mental health in the wider population particularly with regard to suicide prevention. In the East Midlands a suicide prevention manager was appointed to help deliver the key messages and drivers. A key part of Keith Water's role is to develop a suicide prevention strategy group in each county, which is likely to consist of agencies from health, social care, the voluntary sector, as well as involving service users; to mould each area's own suicide prevention strategy.

### **Regional collaboration**

RRC (Leicestershire & Rutland) in collaboration with the rural equivalent bodies in Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire received Big Lottery Reaching Communities Funding to roll out a Regional Suicide Prevention Project. Mike Wilbur, based in Leicestershire, coordinates and supports the workers based in the other areas.

The project is two-fold; firstly, it is a continuation of the half day suicide awareness training sessions. The second part of the project is short, half hour presentations in the work place. As many think suicide is 'nothing to do with me or my organisation', there is a need to 'knock on the door' and; do a general, brief suicide awareness talk. There is an opportunity for questions and

participants get a resource pack, which signposts how to help. The sessions encourage people to take a positive step to try and help. The projects plans to deliver sessions in doctor's surgeries, with staff in schools and with regiments in the Territorial Army.

### **Challenges and goals**

The overriding aim of the project is to breakdown the stigma around suicide in society. The training gets people talking about suicide and that takes away a huge obstacle to those that might want help. The project creates an environment where people are more readily receptive and able to talk if someone is suffering from stress or depression. The training gives participants the tools to acknowledge that someone is in difficulty, to address the issue by listening and signposting on to proper services. The project will become a focal point for information and signposting on suicide, self harm and stress through web based information.

"Suicide prevention is not solely a health issue; it is a community issue. Although many who die will be viewed as mentally ill, a lot of the background factors will be about normal life stresses and pressures." Keith Waters, Suicide Prevention Lead for the East Midlands

"Many people work in areas that have not had suicide awareness training and are not equipped to deal with such a situation." Keith Waters, Suicide Prevention Lead for the East Midlands

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