

24 September 2009

Gateway Ref: 12627

LETTER TO SHA MENTAL HEALTH LEADS RE PACE INITIATIVE

The national suicide prevention strategy in England was launched in 2002 with the aim of supporting the target to reduce the death rate from suicide and undetermined injury by at least a fifth by the year 2010.

Organisations representing lesbian, gay and bisexual groups have expressed concern that the suicide prevention strategy did not address the perceived disproportionate levels of suicide and self-harm among these groups (particularly young gay men). In addition, a recent study examining the mental health and social well-being of LGB groups in England and Wales concluded that levels of substance use disorders were higher in gay men and lesbians. Results also showed those gay men and lesbians reported more psychological distress than heterosexuals.

In 2007, the National Institute for Mental Health in England (NIMHE) – now replaced by the National Mental Health Development Unit (NMH DU) – commissioned a literature review into the risk of suicide and self-harm amongst lesbian, gay and bisexual people. At that time, we did not include trans-gender people as we focused purely on sexual orientation. This review, which was published in February 2008, highlighted that there were higher rates of mental distress, substance misuse and suicidal behaviour or ideation amongst LGB groups than their heterosexual counterparts.

As a result of this review NMH DU have commissioned PACE to undertake a review of the range of web-based information, support and advice services for LGBT people in delivering promotive and preventative services and measures leading to an improvement in the mental health and well-being of LGBT individuals. This review will also include scoping how mental health and other support services work with LGBT people, including data collection and monitoring. Although the initial literature review excluded trans-gender people from this work, we have included them in this follow up project.

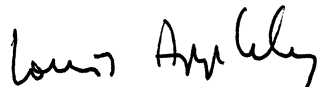
The challenge now is to promote the findings and conclusions of this review and to consider the implications for the work of the suicide prevention strategy. That is why we will now include LGB people as a specific group who have special needs under Goal Two of the strategy (to promote the mental well-being of the wider population). We are also considering adding trans-gender people within this priority. We hope that this will encourage organisations working with LGBT groups, including health and social care agencies, that actions need to be taken if we are to reduce the risk of suicide in this group of people.

We would appreciate if you could promote this project with the mainstream mental health and other services you come into regular contact with. In addition, if you have particular services that you think PACE should approach or if you know of any particular positive practice in providing services for LGBT people please let Tim Franks know by emailing tim.franks@pacehealth.org.uk .

For your information PACE have developed four scoping questionnaires to ascertain the following information:

- Working with LGBT clients in mainstream services - how do mental health and support services work with LGBT people
- LGBT strategic review - this is for strategic leads and focuses on strategy, policy, planning and commissioning in relation to suicide prevention
- Supporting suicidal clients in LGBT services - scope and nature of support provided by LGBT organisations for people who are feeling suicidal or suicide prevention initiatives targeting LGBT people
- Support for LGBT people feeling suicidal - seeking the experiences of LGBT people who have felt suicidal or who have made a suicide attempt.

If you wish to know about this project which has been commissioned through the national suicide prevention strategy implementation programme at NMH DU, please contact Keith Foster on 07766 780876 or by email at keith.foster@dh.gsi.gov.uk or keith.foster@nmhdu.org.uk .



Professor Louis Appleby
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