



City and Hackney **MIND**

Advocacy Briefing: **World Mental Health Day Preventing Suicide in Hackney and the City**

This briefing highlights the problem of suicide in the City of London and the London Borough of Hackney. It recommends ways for local organizations to support suicide prevention, and provides contacts for further information and advice.

It is produced by City & Hackney Mind, the local association of Mind -- the leading mental health charity in England and Wales. Mind works to create a better life for everyone with experience of mental distress. Suicide, *'Building awareness - reducing risks: suicide and mental illness'*¹ is the theme for World Mental Health Day, on 10 October 2006.



Suicide rates in Hackney and the City

Suicide rates in City & Hackney slightly exceed London rates.

Most recent figures show that between 2001-2003, 13,462 people died from suicide in England which is 8.6 per 100,000 people. 14% of these suicides took place in London (8.3 per 100,000). The suicide rate in City & Hackney for this period was 8.6 per 100,000 people. Of the 32 London boroughs recorded, City & Hackney had the 11th highest suicide rate. All but one borough with a higher suicide rate than City and Hackney were inner London boroughs. Suicide rates vary immensely across London. Figures showed that inner London boroughs such as City & Hackney had significantly higher suicide rates than the England average.

Key Issues

A study of suicide deaths in City & Hackney between 2000 and 2005 revealed:

- Men accounted for most suicides in the Borough. Of 124 deaths by suicide and undetermined injury, 98 were men. At a ratio of 3.8 males to 1 female, this exceeds a national average of 3.5
- Black and ethnic minorities accounted for many of the suicides. White people accounted for 68% of the suicides, while Black and other minority groups accounted for 1 in 3 suicides, and people from the Turkish community made up 7%
- Young people also accounted for many of the suicides. People aged between 21 and 29 made up 23% of the suicides, while people aged 30-49 made up 56%
- Most suicides were by hanging or strangulation. Reflecting national patterns, this method was used in 40% of the deaths, while drugs and other narcotics were used in 22% and multiple injuries (such as falling from buildings or jumping in front of vehicles) in 12%

Risk Factors

Many people in City & Hackney may be at higher risk of suicide due to factors such as:

- **Transience:** The Borough has very transient populations from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, and there is significant movement in and out of the Borough and within it, according to the 2001 Census. Transience can also undermine the cohesion of local communities
- **Population density:** City & Hackney has a very high population density when compared to other boroughs in London
- **Ethnicity:** A large proportion of residents originate from countries outside the UK. The largest ethnic group is from Asia. City & Hackney has a relatively high level of ethnic diversity and socially rented housing
- **Social groups:** National Mind has found suicide rates to be higher among men, Asian women, and young lesbian and gay people.³ In the Borough, the White and Mixed population has a majority of males. Moreover, the local Chinese population has twice as many females as males, and the Asian and Black populations have more females
- **Employment:** Hackney has a greater proportion of semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers and unemployed people or people on state benefits than both London and England & Wales. National Mind found that 7% of people who died from suicide aged 20-64 years were unemployed.
- **Isolation:** The largest household type in City & Hackney is that of single person households. This exceeds the levels found in London or England & Wales.
- **Divorce:** The Borough has a high divorce rate and more households with dependent children than averages for London, England and Wales. Over a third of these are one parent households⁴

The national picture

Suicide has a devastating impact on families, the people who survive, and wider society.

- Around 4,500 people kill themselves in England and Wales each year, and at least 10 times that number attempt to take their lives
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death, after accidents
- Factors associated with suicide include misuse of drugs and alcohol, unemployment, social isolation and family breakdown
- People with a diagnosed mental health problem are at particular risk: 90% of suicide victims suffered from a psychiatric disorder at the time of their death⁵

National Mind has identified key factors that may increase a person's risk of suicide:

- **Social group:** Suicide rates are highest among men, Asian women, and young lesbian and gay people; people misusing drugs or alcohol, in prison, and who have attempted suicide in the past, or are suffering from mental illness.⁶ Males represent 72% of suicides (aged 15 years+) in London. Nationally, suicides account for a fifth of all deaths in males aged 15-34 years⁷ and among men aged 15-24, it is the most common cause of death
- **Mental health:** London boroughs with the highest suicide rates had highest admissions for schizophrenia, suggesting a link between suicide rates and mental health problems. London's more deprived boroughs have higher rates of suicide and mental health morbidity
- **Methods:** The most common methods of suicide used in London are hanging, strangulation and suffocation (40% adult male suicides, 27% female suicides) and poisoning (22% of male suicides, 41% female suicides). Most poisoning is related to drugs and anti-depressants

A study found that most suicide victims are in contact with health care providers shortly before.

- Many had their care reduced at their last appointment with a health worker because they were deemed to be improving or doing well, according to a study in Manchester in 1999, *Aftercare and clinical characteristics of people with mental illness who commit suicide*.⁸ Indeed, the patient had often initiated a reduction in supervision and a cut in drug dosage. On the other hand, only a third of the suicide victims had an identifiable key worker
- The study suggested that levels of care, care plans and contact with a key worker should be maintained for a longer period after a person at risk of suicide appears well

Suicide High among Minority Ethnic Women, Report August 2006

Minority ethnic women in the UK are twice as likely to commit suicide or self harm than the national average, says a new report by the Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership (GVAWP). GVAWP aims to raise awareness and improve how services respond to, protect and support minority ethnic women. The report describes why minority ethnic women are twice as likely to commit suicide or self harm, and describes key issues that impede their disclosing mental health difficulties. "The report sets the context in which self harm and suicide among minority ethnic women must be viewed," said Councillor Irene Graham, Glasgow City Council's Equality spokesperson. "It cannot be divorced from experiences of racism, sexism, class inequality, patriarchy, gender violence and immigration issues." The report, she explained, highlights the complexity of issues and cautions against seeing generational conflict as the only reason. It suggests a complex set of factors including family honour, language barriers, gender discrimination at home and in wider society, low self-esteem and racial discrimination by society."

The Department of Health published a National Strategy for Suicide Prevention in England (2002).⁹

- It aims to help meet the target set by the Government's White Paper *Saving Lives: Our Healthier Nation* (1999)¹⁰ – that of reducing suicide deaths by 20% before 2010
- The Strategy sets out a programme of activity to reduce suicide. Its objectives include:

- Reducing risk among high risk groups, including young men
- Promoting mental well-being in the wider population, through employment, housing and tackling substance misuse
- Reducing the availability and lethality of suicidal methods
- Improving the reporting of suicidal behaviour in the media
- Promoting research on suicide and suicide prevention

How to help

Work with others

Local agencies and people must work together if we are to reduce suicide. Social services, statutory and voluntary organizations, community groups, faith groups, schools and colleges, friends and families must each be ready to work together to reduce suicide in the Borough.

- This is necessary because of the many factors affecting a person's risk of suicide, as well as the diverse population and range of needs in City & Hackney.

Intervene

Health and voluntary agencies must take the lead in reducing suicides by identifying people at risk at an early stage. They should:

- Provide consistent long-term care and comprehensive support from health professionals
- Refer individuals to voluntary organisations for counselling, befriending, employment and support
- Develop counselling, training and employment support that is more culturally and linguistically relevant
- Extend support to people experiencing isolation or stress from career, housing, financial, cultural, family, drug or alcohol problems

Raise awareness

Local service providers (including housing advisers, substance misuse workers, employment and training advisors, educators, and even banking staff) must be aware of the signs and factors that increase a person's risk of suicide. They may be the only person that a single isolated individual comes into contact with, and able to make a positive intervention. Increased awareness across all agencies and more active referral will lead to earlier intervention and greater prevention.

MIND urges:

- Staff training in suicide risk signs and factors
- Increasing publicity of services
- Regular inter-agency communication

Promote well-being

Government and local councils must continue to develop and support local health, regeneration and community development strategies.

- These contribute to stronger community cohesion and general well-being of the local population
- GPs should identify and refer patients suffering from depression to specialist services for counselling and support as early as possible so that intervention can occur before the problem escalates and suicide becomes hard to prevent
- New healthcare guidelines are needed to ensure that levels of care, care plans and contact with a key worker are maintained for longer periods after a person at risk of suicide appears well
- Helplines and local services should be available 24 hours a day, and widely and clearly advertised in all languages spoken in City & Hackney

Expand befriending services

Befriending services for isolated people in City & Hackney could be improved

- Support groups should be developed specifically for Asian Women
- Cross-cultural projects should bring together people from different age groups and cultures; to foster greater integration, build relationships and strengthen community support
- A Carers Support Group could be created by voluntary organisations in City & Hackney for people who support individuals with mental health problems. This would help them to care effectively, as well as identify people at risk of suicide and enable timely preventative measures

City & Hackney Mind's Services

City & Hackney Mind offers the following services to people suffering from mental health problems:

- Befriending, counselling and prescribed drugs support (culturally specific counselling for Afro-Caribbean and Turkish/Kurdish communities)
- Advocacy and advice
- Education and employment support
- Supported housing and drop-in centres

Endnotes

¹ The World Mental Health Day Project, <http://www.wmhd.net/>

² Facts and figures from: "Deaths from suicide and undetermined injury in London", Paul De Ponte, August 2005, London Development Centre for Mental Health and London Health Observatory

³ Mind Factsheets and Booklets – Suicide, <http://www.mind.org.uk/>

⁴ Information taken from City of London Resident Population Census 2001, Corporation of London, <http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/> and Hackney Borough Profile 2006, London Borough of Hackney, <http://www.hackney.gov.uk/>

⁵ Mental Health Foundation, June 2004, <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>

⁶ Mind Factsheets and Booklets – Suicide, <http://www.mind.org.uk/>

⁷ Facts and figures from: "Deaths from suicide and undetermined injury in London", Paul De Ponte, August 2005, London Development Centre for Mental Health and London Health Observatory, <http://www.lho.org.uk/viewResource.aspx?id=9780>

⁸ Appleby, L. et al. 1999, 'Aftercare and clinical characteristics of people with mental illness who commit suicide: a case-control study', *The Lancet*, Vol 353.

⁹ National Suicide Prevention Strategy for England, <http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/01/95/48/04019548.pdf>

¹⁰ Saving Lives: Our Healthier Nation, <http://ohn.gov.uk/ohn/ohn.htm>



Contacts and resources

Local	
Asian Women's Advisory Service	161 Mare St, London E8 3RH Tel: 020 85335796
City & Hackney Alcohol Service free confidential counseling for people worried about drinking	Tel: 020 7613 1313
City & Hackney Mind supporting people with mental health problems through befriending, advocacy, advice, counseling, education & employment training, drop-in, supported housing	8-10 Tudor Road, London E9 7SN Tel: 020 8985 4239 Email: services@cityandhackneymind.org.uk
Hackney & City Victim Support	192 Well St, Hackney, London E9 6QT Tel: 020 8533 5332
Hackney Family Back Up Ltd	18 Ashwin St, Hackney, London E8 3DL Tel: 020 7275 0088
Newham Asian Women's Project (NAWP) Domestic violence advice and support, legal advice, training, mental health support, counselling, Zindaagi-project on self harm and attempted suicide.	661 Barking Road, Plaistow, London E13 9EX Tel: 020 8472 0528 (general) Tel: 020 8552 5524 (advice) Email: info@nawp.org Web: www.nawp.org
Parents Education Advice & Support Group	18 Ashwin St, Hackney, London E8 3DL Tel: 020 7275 9149
Refugee Women's Association	The Print Ho/18 Ashwin St. Hackney, London E8 3DL Tel: 020 7923 2412 , Web: www.refugeewomen.org.uk
National	
Be Foundation help and information on youth suicide and deliberate self-harm	Email: info@be-foundation.org Web: www.be-foundation.org
CALM - Campaign Against Living Miserably reaching young men before they feel depressed	Rm 621 Gateway House, Piccadilly South, Manchester M60 7PL Tel: 0800 585 858 Email: janepowell@thecalmzone.net Web: www.thecalmzone.net
Childline free, 24-hour helpline for children and young people in the UK	Studd Street, London N1 0QW Tel: 020 7239 1000 , Fax: 020 7239 1001 Helpline: 0800 1111 Textphone: 0800 400 222 Web: www.childline.org.uk
Cruse - Bereavement Care	126 Sheen Road, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1UR Tel: 020 8939 9530 , Fax: 020 8940 7638 Email: info@crusebereavementcare.org.uk Web: www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk
Depression Alliance advice, information and support for people with depression and their carers	35 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7JB Tel: 020 7633 0557 , Fax: 020 7633 0559 Web: www.depressionalliance.org.uk
HOPELineUK advice and information for parents, carers, teachers, professionals and friends of young people at risk of suicide	Tel: 0870 170 4000 (7-10pm Mon to Fri and 2-5pm Sat and Sun)
London Lesbian & Gay Switchboard 24-hour information, support and referral service	LLGS, P.O. Box 7324, London N1 9QS Tel: 020 7837 7324 , Fax: 020 7837 7300 Email: admin@llgs.org.uk Web: www.llgs.org.uk
Maytree - a sanctuary for the suicidal	The Maytree Respite Centre, 72 Moray Rd, Finsbury Park, London N4 3LG Tel: 020 7263 7070 Fax: 020 7272 6863 Email: maytree@maytree.org.uk Web: www.maytree.org.uk
Mental Health Foundation pioneering new approaches to prevention, treatment and care and striving to reduce the stigma attached to mental illness	83 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0HW Tel: 020 7802 0300 , Fax: 020 7802 0301 Web: www.mhf.org.uk
MIND raising awareness of mental health and campaigning for the rights of everyone experiencing mental distress across the UK	Granta House, 15-19 Broadway, London E15 4BQ Tel: 020 8519 2122 Fax: 020 8522 1725 Info-Line: 020 8522 1728/ 0845 766 0163 Web: www.mind.org.uk
National Statistics Website	www.statistics.gov.uk
National Institute for Mental Health in England	www.nimhe.csip.org.uk
PAPYRUS (Parents Association for the Prevention of Young Suicide)	Rossendale GH, Union road, Rawtenstale, Lancashire BB4 6NE Tel: 01706 214 449 Email: admin@papyrus-uk.org Web: www.papyrus-uk.org
Relate counselling, sex therapy, relationship education and training to support couple and family relationships throughout life	Herbert Gray College, Little Church Street, Rugby, Warwickshire CV21 3AP Tel: 01788 573241 , Fax: 01788 535007 Web: www.relate.org.uk
Rethink largest severe mental illness charity in the UK - dedicated to improving the lives of everyone affected by severe mental illness	5th Floor, Royal London House, 22-25 Finsbury Square, London EC2A 1DX Tel: 0845 456 0455 Fax: 020 7330 9102 AdviceLine: 020 8974 6814 (10am-3pm Mon-Fri) Email: info@rethink.org Web: www.rethink.org
Samaritans confidential emotional support to any person who is suicidal or despairing	10 The Grove, Slough, SL1 1QP Tel: 08457 90 90 90 Email: jo@samaritans.org.uk Web: www.samaritans.org.uk
SANE improving the lives of everyone affected by mental illness, provides national Telephone helpline offering support and information	1st Floor, Cityside House, 40 Adler Street, E1 1EE Tel: 020 7375 1002 SANELINE: 0845 767 8000 Fax: 020 7375 2162 Email: london@sane.org.uk Web: www.sane.org.uk
Suicide and Mental Health Association International	PO Box 702, Sioux Falls, SD Tel: 1-57101-0702 Web: www.suicideandmentalhealthassociationinternational.org
Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide	Centre 88, Saner Street, Hull Humberside HU3 2TR Tel: 0870 241 3337 , Fax: 01482 210 287 Email: sobs.support@care4free.net Web: www.uk-sobs.org.uk
Terrence Higgins Trust supporting people with HIV and AIDS	Tel: 0845 1221 200 10am-10pm Mon-Fri and 12-6pm Sat & Sun Email: info@ttht.org.uk Web: www.ttht.org.uk