

Suicide 
Prevention
Scotland.

Sharing Practice: Suicide Prevention Approaches Taken in Schools

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Pockets of Practice: Suicide Prevention Approaches Taken in Education

Introduction

This document captures emerging practice that is happening across schools in Scotland. This has been done to share emerging practice and promote connections and learning.

Throughout the document those leading on the work in their area share in their own words why they started this work, what they have done and what has been achieved. To complement this, a podcast has been produced which focuses on the work of three local authorities and discusses the common learning and their advice to others. This can be found [here](#).

Views or statements shared in this document do not imply formal endorsement or promotion of any specific approach, service, or model. This document is not intended to provide clinical guidance or professional advice.

Policy Context

The suicide prevention work happening in schools sits under the [Scottish Government's Whole School Approach Framework](#), which aims to support mental health to be embedded within our schools, through eight principles:

- ♥ **Leadership and management that supports mental health and wellbeing across the school**
- ♥ **An ethos and environment that promotes positive and respectful relationships and values diversity**
- ♥ **Effective curriculum and learning and teaching to promote resilience and support mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing and learning**
- ♥ **Enabling children's and young people's voices and participation to influence decisions**
- ♥ **Supporting staff professional learning and development in order to ensure their own and others' wellbeing**
- ♥ **Identifying need and monitoring impact of interventions**
- ♥ **Working with parents, carers and the wider community**
- ♥ **Targeted support and appropriate pathways to the right support**

Each of the emerging practice stories captured has been labelled with the principles that they have focused on.



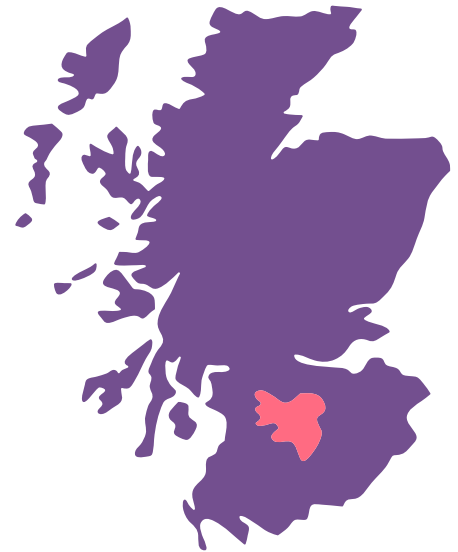
South Lanarkshire Council

The Whole School Framework Principles focused on:

- ♥ **Principle 1** - Leadership and management that supports mental health and wellbeing across the school
- ♥ **Principle 2** - An ethos and environment that promotes positive and respectful relationships and values diversity
- ♥ **Principle 5** - Supporting staff professional learning and development in order to ensure their own and others' wellbeing

"The training has helped give me the language and listening skills that I hadn't actually realised was missing in these situations. It has enhanced my communication with young people in situations of distress"

School Staff Member- South Lanarkshire Council



What was the challenge you faced?

There was an increase in suicides amongst young people and young adults across Lanarkshire. In addition, there was local information indicating an increase in the number of primary school-aged children sharing they had thoughts about self-harm and suicide.

How did you respond to this challenge?

A Cross-Lanarkshire Multi-agency Steering Group was convened to review and amend previous guidance for the Children's Services workforce who work with children and young people who may be at risk of suicide and/or self-harm. The South Lanarkshire representatives launched the updated [guidance](#) - Lifelines Lanarkshire - in May 2021. This was disseminated to South Lanarkshire Children's Services agencies and staff alongside a video introducing the guidance and highlighting key messaging. Additionally key messaging and the guidance is promoted in annual child protection briefings for all education staff, and a newly formed support and development group has been created to provide peer support for education staff.

The guidance holds several sections, a key one being on confidentiality, information sharing and child protection. This was drafted alongside the child protection committee and legal team in the local authority to support staff to reach a decision about information sharing by considering best practice in the light of legal frameworks, including the views and rights of children and young people.

Alongside the guidance, in-house training was developed by South Lanarkshire Council Psychological Services to be delivered at the skilled level (in line with the [Mental Health Improvement and Suicide Prevention Framework](#)). Training was rolled out to key staff in Children's Services – including those working with primary aged children - to increase confidence in supporting children and young people at risk of self-harm and/or suicide, as well to enhance their skills and confidence in using the guidance. Since the launch in 2021 nearly 800 members of the workforce, including school counsellors, have attended the training.

To complement the guidance, self-harm and suicide prevention leaflets were produced for young people and families, which were designed and launched with the involvement of young people.



What were the barriers?

The primary challenge was delivering training to the large number of staff and volunteers across Children's Services who would be using the guidance. This was overcome by collaborating with managers to develop a clear strategic delivery plan, initially targeting key staff and later expanding into multi-agency training.

What were the enablers?

Having membership of the steering group include education, social work, health, the Samaritans, and Police Scotland, ensured buy in from all services. This has been invaluable in implementing the guidance, and has been supported by having the forward written by the Head of Children and Justice Services on behalf of Children's Services in South Lanarkshire.

The roll out of staff training has been on Children's Services and Education Resources Plans, which has enabled a high profile and commitment to implementation at all levels.

Reviewing and using training feedback has also been beneficial for ensuring areas for continuous improvement.

What has the impact been?

Impact has been evaluated using pre- and post-training ratings, alongside follow up surveys and focus groups. The findings demonstrate statistically significant improvements in staff knowledge and understanding of self-harm and suicide. There was also a significant increase in staff confidence and preparedness to support children and young people at risk. There is evidence that these improvements are maintained over time.

The guidance is now being applied consistently by secondary school staff and pupil support teams, and there has been a noticeable rise in the use of safety planning approaches to help prevent self-harm or suicidal behaviour. Additionally, staff have been more proactive in signposting children, young people, and families to appropriate services to ensure they can access the support they need.

It has also been noted that the multi-agency guidance ensures a consistent approach to assessment and intervention when supporting children and young people across Lanarkshire and wider Children's Services.

The leaflets produced for young people and families are reported to provide reassurance to parents and carers and reduces feelings of isolation and stigma.



Clackmannanshire Council

The Whole School Framework Principles focused on:

- ♥ **Principle 6** - Identifying need and monitoring impact of interventions
- ♥ **Principle 8** - Targeted support and appropriate pathways to the right support

“By taking a whole-systems, holistic approach ... we have seen a significant reduction in the rate of suicide in 11-25 year olds, going from 31st out of 32 (2018/19) to 1st in Scotland (2022/23), based on the rolling five year average of deaths per 100,000 for this age group”

Principle Educational Psychologist- Clackmannanshire Council



What was the challenge you faced?

Clackmannanshire has historically had a higher-than-average rate of deaths by probable suicide per 100,000. This is alongside many known risk factors for poor mental health outcomes in general, specifically our high rates of socio-economic deprivation and childhood adversity.

How did you respond to this challenge?

Working through the Family Wellbeing Partnership, a wide range of teams within the Council (Education and Children's Services, Housing, Employability etc); colleagues within both the NHS and our local Third Sector Interface and associated organisations came together. Two pots of funding were utilised from the Scottish Government; the Counselling in Schools and Community Mental Health Supports and Services grants to create a continuum of mental health supports across all ages and at the levels of mild/moderate mental health needs, targeted support, and crisis intervention. The continuum consists of:

Digital mental health service for mild/moderate mental health needs across the three age bands of 5-12, 10-26, and parents/carers. These are Mind Moose for children and young people aged five to twelve, Kooth for those aged ten to twenty six years old, and Qwell for all adults in Clackmannanshire.

Face-to-face service is provided for those who need more targeted support. Five to twelve year olds can access the Creative Therapeutic Interventions for Children Service which consists of music therapy, therapeutic art groups, animal-assisted therapeutic interventions and play therapy. Those aged ten to eighteen can access the Counselling in Schools Service.

Digital crisis intervention service through our keyword partnership with Shout offers 24/7 text-based support which is capable of supporting mental health needs up to and including risk of immediate harm from self-harm or suicide.

All of the services provided are capable of being combined into packages of support that are self-directed and which can offer wraparound support 24/7, 365 days a year. A wide range of publicity and marketing work has been undertaken to promote and raise awareness of the services, this includes traditional print media, social media posts, and a Directory of Mental Health Supports website. The theoretical rationale behind each of the services came from work that was undertaken on the Scottish Attainment Challenge which highlighted that to be trauma-informed and effective for a developing brain support is needed to have relational regulation, which all the services are, and that sensorimotor regulation was important, which the face to face services provide.



What were the barriers?

The main barriers encountered have been concerning the requirements regarding things like procurement of services, ensuring services comply with e.g. GDPR laws, etc. While these are not insurmountable, they can place significant demands on both workload and timescale, resulting in less fluid and responsive delivery of services in the initial stages. Developing effective partnership working relationships with colleagues both across the Council and our partner organisations has minimised these delays as far as possible.

What were the enablers?

The key enabler has been the culture of permission and transformation that has been developing through the work of the Family Wellbeing Partnership, which supports services to work together more effectively and challenges us to find new solutions and ways of working to better meet the needs of our communities. This fosters a culture that unites across local authority, third and private sector divides with a shared vision and purpose of transformative change.

What has the impact been?

Partners within the Family Wellbeing Partnership have anecdotally reported an increased confidence in feeling able to signpost to effective locally-procured services that are quality-assured, structured and easily available.

Since launching four years ago, services within the continuum have worked with over 7,000 children, young people, and their families across Clackmannanshire, with a strong impact of deprivation noted as the majority of referrals coming for face-to-face services are from those living within SIMD1-4. In addition, within our digital services, we have seen a strong trend towards out of hours usage, suggestive of the need for wraparound services which operate outwith traditional working hours.

In terms of impact, 71.5% of children and young people who access positive mental health and wellbeing services (e.g. Kooth) show an improvement, with that figure rising to 92% for those accessing such a service from within an 'at risk' group (e.g. those with additional support needs). Specifically concerning suicide, 2023 figures showed a 22% increase in the number of conversations happening on the Text Clacks platform, and 91% of users accessed the platform more than once. In the third quarter of 2024/25 we saw the first instances of users of the Text Clacks service requiring an 'active rescue' (when risk is judged to be immediate and significant, requiring the involvement of emergency services), with six being undertaken in that three-month period – this highlights the important role the service plays in managing crisis situations. Although the rate per 100,000 deaths by probable suicide in Clackmannanshire as a whole remains the highest in Forth Valley, we have seen a significant reduction in the rate of suicide in 11-25 year olds, going from 31st out of 32 (2018/19) to 1st in Scotland (2022/23), based on the rolling five year average of deaths per 100,000 for this age group.

Recent cost avoidance work has also demonstrated significant predicted savings across the lifespan/economy as a result of providing these types of services. Our partners at Kooth have worked with the York Health Economic Consortium (YHEC) to explore the cost avoidance savings of providing their service. Within Clackmannanshire, this gives a return on investment of £2.56 for every £1 invested, equivalent to £92,245 in 2024. Further, a report into the lifetime cost savings of offering a music therapy intervention to primary school children in Northern Ireland, identified cost savings across the lifespan of £7,252 per child. This is equivalent to £304,584 for the children who accessed this intervention in 2024. Finally, the Samaritans have estimated the economic cost of suicide in Scotland to be equivalent to £1.4m per person. This gives a potential saving from the six active rescues of between £1.4m and £8.6m. Taken together, we see a return on investment of between £13.50 and £67.64 per £1 invested in 2024. While some of these savings are speculative and difficult to quantify due to the anonymous nature of services (meaning we can't follow to conclusion those who required an Active Rescue for example), these figures do illustrate the economic case for investing in services of this nature, quite aside from the human cost of experiencing mental health distress, loss through suicide etc.



Scottish Borders Council

The Whole School Framework Principles focused on:

- ♥ **Principle 1** - Leadership and management that supports mental health and wellbeing across the school
- ♥ **Principle 2** - An ethos and environment that promotes positive and respectful relationships and values diversity
- ♥ **Principle 5** - Supporting staff professional learning and development in order to ensure their own and others' wellbeing

“The work has enabled the cluster to look at key issues of attainment and attendance through the lens of mental health, to understand the causes of poor attainment and attendance and the challenges and inequalities being faced by young people and families and consequently, to strengthen the support that is on offer. The Creating Hope Award has provided the framework and training to embed open conversations about suicide prevention in this work and make it a central part of their overall approach across the community.”

Mental Health Improvement Specialist -NHS Borders



What was the challenge you faced?

There has been an increasing level of suicidal ideation amongst young people and adults across educational settings within the Teviot and Liddesdale cluster area – this has been an issue for several years now. Historically, an approach called ‘Towards a Mentally Flourishing School’ was used to take forward a whole school approach to mental health at Hawick High School. This was co-produced with the local health visitor and suicide prevention lead but the extent to which it was embedded in the school improvement planning and the resources to do this was limited.

How did you respond to this challenge?

The school communities within the Scottish Borders are organised into geographical clusters, with each cluster covering a secondary school, primary schools and Early Years Centres in each area. These clusters are led by a Cluster Lead Headteacher and, in the Teviot and Liddesdale area, supported by a Cluster Wellbeing Lead.

Within the Teviot and Liddesdale cluster, the Wellbeing Lead utilised funding to deliver training to build staff capacity and confidence about suicide prevention. This has been undertaken by hosting Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) within Hawick High School in June 2024, from which five members of staff were trained. After which these trained staff stepped into Suicide Prevention Champion roles, identifiable by a United to Prevent Suicide badge, enabling colleagues to contact them directly or through the Child Protection Co-ordinator if there are any concerns over suicidal intent and planning.

This work has since received a Creating Hope Champions Award, a [scheme](#) which is open to any group, organisation, service, team or business within the area and aims to engage local groups and organisations in promoting good mental health, nurture positive environments within communities and create hope, enable our local communities to have a clear understanding of suicide and its prevention, and be able to respond in helpful and informed ways when support is needed, connect people to the information and support they need to be mentally healthy and suicide safer and recognise, support and promote mentally healthy and suicide safer communities that are caring, compassionate and inclusive.



Within the area, there is also a “[What Matters Hub](#)” established by the Health and Social Care Partnership. The Cluster Wellbeing Lead regularly attends this alongside Social Work, NHS, and Third Sector colleagues. This takes place at a busy, local café venue and has maximised the support pathways that are available as not only does it create a non-stigmatising route to accessing support, but it also creates opportunities for staff to connect immediately with staff in other parts of the system.

Across the local authority there is also a Scottish Borders Council Mental Health First Aid scheme which is a peer support scheme for any staff in distress who may need a compassionate response and connecting to further support.

What were the barriers?

The main barrier over the years has been the leadership buy-in which had been limited since the co-creation of ‘Towards a Mentally Healthy School’ in 2014. This changed in 2024 when the Cluster Wellbeing Lead was seconded into post and both the Cluster Lead Headteacher and Hawick High School Headteacher both fully backed the work done on training and the development of the Creating Hope Awards.

What were the enablers?

The key enabler has been leadership through the Cluster Wellbeing Lead and Cluster Lead Headteacher as well as the Senior Management Team with Hawick High School.

Having the award system in place has also been a driver as it has allowed the school to highlight the work undertaken and promotes to other schools the learning and benefits from investing in training.

What has the impact been?

Evaluation of the training is still being undertaken so more learning will be gathered in due course. For now, school staff that have undertaken the ASIST training have stated the training has given them confidence to make interventions and provide support to young people, their families and their colleagues as well as effectively signposting to support.

The offer has also been made at a recent business breakfast at the High School to support local employers to work towards the Creating Hope Award. Many of the young people are afforded work experience by these employers and some go on to gain employment with them. By supporting employers to embed suicide safer practices and signpost mental health support, we are collectively supporting our partners, parents, and young people through and beyond school-based education.



Renfrewshire Council

The Whole School Framework Principles focused on:

- ♥ **Principle 5** - Supporting staff professional learning and development in order to ensure their own and others' wellbeing
- ♥ **Principle 3** - Effective curriculum and learning and teaching to promote resilience and support mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing and learning

“Through a training programme of ASIST and self-harm awareness training there are now in the region of 180 staff within Renfrewshire Education services who have attended ASIST and Self-Harm Awareness training”

Development Officer - Health and Wellbeing- Renfrewshire Council



What was the challenge you faced?

Suicide Prevention work in the area has historically looked at work to support adults, this is seen across Scotland and is a complex issue relating to stigma, funding structures, and resource demands.

In terms of education our school teaching staff reported an increase in students being affected by suicidal ideation and therefore feeling they would like to be better equipped to respond to this. They also highlighted the impact of dealing with these issues was having on their wellbeing.

How did you respond to this challenge?

The Suicide Prevention Coordinator worked closely with the Development Officer - Health and Wellbeing, together they developed a mental health, suicide and self-harm policy template for education services, this was subsequently adopted by Education /Children's services and is now available in every Education Establishment within Renfrewshire.

Quantitative data from the Counselling Service in place was gathered to understand the referrals to the service where children and young people had disclosed suicidal ideation. It was found that referrals had been received from pupils ranging from primary two to the sixth year of high school. Following this, a training programme was developed to address the gap in support for young people. This was developed by the Suicide Prevention Coordinator and the Development Officer and was delivered by the Development Officer, utilising their knowledge and relationships within the education workforce given their teaching background. The programme is made of ASIST and Self-Harm Awareness training. Sessions about suicide awareness and self-harm awareness were initially arranged as twilight sessions to enable as many schools staff as possible to attend. The programme of ASIST and Self-Harm Awareness was then rolled out.

Additionally, a [mental health resource](#) for personal and social education (PSE) was developed, this includes young people's lived experiences of suicidal ideation. This resource is now used across all secondary schools. To complement this, a bespoke resource was developed for senior secondary pupils focused on [how to have a conversation about suicide](#). Schools are encouraged to deliver this as part of Suicide Prevention Week every September.



What were the barriers?

Historically education services have seemed reluctant to engage with the suicide prevention training programme and the suite of courses available, this was perceived to be because of the time commitment to attend sessions and the ability to have absence back-filled in the classroom.

What were the enablers?

Having a Development Officer in post who came from a leadership role within Education Services on this work has been a catalyst in this work. They have understood how education services work and have been able to design the training programme to overcome obstacles to have the workforce attend. And the respect and relationships they hold with education services has meant more leadership and staff buy in to attending the training.

The partnership work between The Suicide Prevention Coordinator and the Development Worker should also be recognised with both complementing the other's skills and knowledge base.

What has the impact been?

As a local area, we now have children and young people suicide prevention work taking place at pace, culturally this has been a positive change.

Across the work, the value of partnership working has come through from this work in education services and mutual understanding of our services.

In the last three years, we have gone from 2 staff trained in ASIST, to over 180 staff across education services. Qualitative data regarding impact post training, shows that staff are more confident in identifying signs and having conversation about suicide with children and young people.



Perth and Kinross Council

The Whole School Framework Principles focused on:

- ♥ **Principle 5** - Supporting staff professional learning and development in order to ensure their own and others' wellbeing
- ♥ **Principle 8** - Targeted support and appropriate pathways to the right support

"Staff now know where and when to access support if required and so there is a perception among leadership and management that the increased knowledge and confidence in the system will result in safer communities"

Children and Young People Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Coordinator- Perth and Kinross Council



What was the challenge you faced?

Staff reported an increase in children and young people using suicide related language, experiencing suicidal ideation and engaging in suicidal behaviours. Staff voiced they felt overwhelmed by this and there was no clear structure for how to manage the situation. Additionally working in multi-agency systems was perceived as uncoordinated and a barrier to supporting children and young people.

How did you respond to this challenge?

A full-time Children and Young People Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Coordinator was employed to develop strategic approaches, guidance and support. Once in post a school survey was developed and disseminated to all schools in Perth and Kinross to ascertain concrete data on the numbers of children and young people whom education staff were concerned about. The survey also produced data on systems/pathways of support, resources being utilised, staff confidence and training needs. The results were then used to develop a guidance framework document to support staff to better engage with the themes of suicide prevention, early intervention, intervention, postvention, and recovery.

To complement this The Coordinator provided consultation, mentoring, and training, which supported staff for example to have solution focused conversations with pupils, identifying the level of support need required (low, medium, high, severe) in relation to the needs being expressed through language and/or suicide related behaviour.

What were the barriers?

The increase in demand for children and young people experiencing mental health difficulties contributed over time to produce tension in the multi-agency system. It was recognised that each system was working to and beyond capacity.



What were the enablers?

Senior leader and management commitment to resourcing strategic development; multi-agency staff willingness to adopt a [GIRFEC framework](#) utilising the [Time, Space, Compassion](#) approach all contributed to progress being made.

A multi-agency mental health delivery group was established where each agency invested time and resource to aid discussions focused on solutions to barriers. The compassionate approach helped to mediate more understanding of systems and the pressures on staff working at capacity. This reflective safe space was a key ingredient to manage relationships and the frustration being experienced across systems.

What has the impact been?

All education staff across all schools in Perth and Kinross have received awareness raising sessions on how to identify and respond to a young person. Staff who engaged in the sessions report feeling more confident in knowing how to be more proactive when engaging with children and young people around mental health and suicide ideation.

The training, mentoring and consultation model continues to support staff who have direct contact with a young person who they are concerned for, with The Coordinator providing on average 4 sessions per week. On this staff have commented that they no longer feel as if they are 'on their own' having to manage the perceived risks of working with children and young people experiencing suicide ideation and related behaviour.

There is now a protocol in place between Tayside Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Response Team informing the Named Person when a child or young person has required treatment in hospital following a suicide related behaviour. This has resulted in more robust safety planning.

Senior leadership has promoted and funded free places for all guidance/support staff to access ASIST training resulting in a larger resource base with increased skills, knowledge and confidence when supporting children and young people.

Parents have reported their gratitude to receiving support from guidance staff who are able to articulate and contain situations of concern in a way that includes parents in having a role to support their child with confidence without for example having to make referrals to CAMHS.



North Ayrshire Council

The Whole School Framework Principles focused on:

- ♥ **Principle 3** - Effective curriculum and learning and teaching to promote resilience and support mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing and learning
- ♥ **Principle 5** - Supporting staff professional learning and development in order to ensure their own and others' wellbeing
- ♥ **Principle 7** - Working with parents, carers and the wider community
- ♥ **Principle 8** - Targeted support and appropriate pathways to the right support

"Young people who have engaged in the delivery of SafeTALK have reported increased confidence to know where to signpost any friends or family members who indicate they may have thoughts of suicide"

Quality Improvement Officer- North Ayrshire Council



What was the challenge you faced?

In 2017, sadly several young people died by suicide in the area, the entire community, children, young people and staff experienced this bereavement and it was clear planned suicide prevention activity was needed. It was recognised that a multi-agency approach would have the greatest impact and that more work was needed to ensure education staff had the skills and knowledge to deliver Suicide Prevention activities.

How did you respond to this challenge?

A multi-agency Youth Suicide Prevention Taskforce was set up, this included Senior Leaders from the Education Service. This group developed an action plan which included the actions outlined below to be delivered by the Education Service.

A Staff training Programme was developed, this included ASIST, initially offered to those working in Pastoral Support, Area Inclusion Workers and School Counsellors, with each secondary establishment having at least one member of staff trained. Additionally ASIST top up training is offered annually, SafeTALK training is offered to all staff, an ASK workshop offered to all staff working with the 5-14 age group and Let's Introduce Anxiety Management (LIAM) – offered to all staff with a significant role in supporting children and young people's wellbeing.

Conversation guidance was developed to support education staff when a young person who has engaged in suicidal behaviour returns to school.

A communication campaign was developed in collaboration with youth services which focused on [13 Ways to Support Your Friends If They Are Struggling](#).

Activities to build young peoples' skills, knowledge and confidence were enacted, this included SafeTALK being offered annually to S6 students across all secondary schools, roll out of Suicide Talk as part of the Senior Phase HWB curriculum, schools being supported to deliver the SQA Award in Mental Health and Wellbeing (Levels 4 and 5) and a review of mental health and wellbeing curriculum and sharing of evidence-based resources.

Parents and carers were offered SafeTalk workshops to support the building of skills, knowledge and confidence and supporting conversations on suicide leaflets were produced.



Work was undertaken to improve connection between schools and community-based supports and services. As part of this work a [community map](#) was produced, highlighting available supports and services. Additionally, a Suicide Prevention Pathway was created, where if a young person attended the Emergency Department of the local hospital following a suicide attempt or a significant incident of self-harm; then permission was sought to share information with Social Work, CAMHS and The Named Person in the educational establishment. Following this an assessment visit at home is arranged and support offered.

A multiagency postvention response plan was enacted, this includes (but is not limited to) Bereavement Support information sessions for parents/carers of young people who may be struggling, identification of key friends and young people impacted who are then offered additional targeted supports and wellbeing check-ins. Education staff are also supported with bereavement guidance.

What were the barriers?

The main barrier has been finding time within the crowded Health and Wellbeing curriculum to include specific suicide prevention inputs, this has been overcome by providing bespoke teacher confidence building opportunities which has led to teachers prioritising this learning.

A lack of suitably qualified ASIST/ASK/SafeTALK trainers has impacted the delivery of training to education staff. To support this recently some additional ASIST trainers have been trained but this is still not been possible for SafeTALK, and with the loss of our Choose Life co-ordinator we have now reduced numbers of SafeTalk trainers in the authority.

What were the enablers?

Having leadership buy in has been a key ingredient for this work taking place, both within the council's central education team of Senior Managers and from establishment senior Leadership teams. Additionally, working collaboratively with the School Counselling Service has been invaluable.

What has the impact been?

The establishment and continued structure of the multi-agency Youth Suicide Prevention Taskforce has meant agencies have worked together to better understand what factors support impactful suicide prevention activities.

The actions taken by the group has enabled education staff to develop confidence to manage crisis situations and know where to signpost to additional help and support. They have also reported that they now use techniques learned through engaging with suicide prevention learning activities and that they feel more confident to talk about suicide openly and to ask the question when concerns have been raised.

Currently there are in excess of 100 members of education staff trained in ASIST, with an additional 35 trained in ASK. Over 100 staff members are trained to deliver LIAM, with 171 young people engaging in the programme so far this current school session (2024-2025).

Most importantly young people who have engaged in the delivery of SafeTALK have reported an increased confidence to know where to signpost any friends or family members who indicate they may have thoughts of suicide and confidence in noticing any concerning changes in their friends behaviours.



The Canmore Trust Programme

The Canmore Trust was established to support those impacted by suicide and to provide suicide prevention and postvention support. One of their work streams is focused on Education, within which they have implemented a programme developed by [Grassroots Suicide Prevention](#), which has been delivered and evaluated in English and Welsh schools, to two schools in Stirlingshire.



The Whole School Framework Principles focused on:

- ♥ **Principle 3** - Effective curriculum and learning and teaching to promote resilience and support mental, emotional, social, and physical wellbeing and learning
- ♥ **Principle 5** - Supporting staff professional learning and development in order to ensure their own and others' wellbeing

"The pupils were given the chance to think, chat and respond. A few pupils have reached out to us to say that they thought it was a very worthwhile presentation. They felt being able to talk and share ideas with others was a great way to try to make the situation more comfortable Thanks for coming in to our school to share this presentation with us"

Secondary School Pastoral Care Teacher- Stirling Council

'THANK YOU, I know what to do when I have a bit of a crash out now'

Fourth Year Pupil

What was the challenge you faced?

There is growing concern about the mental wellbeing of our young people and the rates of suicide in Scotland. From our engagement in schools we have seen that this is impacting schools, with staff having to respond to young people who self-harm or who have suicidal thoughts.

How did you respond to this challenge?

The Canmore Trust work in Education focuses on equipping school staff with suicide prevention awareness and knowledge to support their young people as well as ensuring young people have the knowledge and confidence to be able to seek support where they are feeling suicidal or have concerns for their peers.

The Programme delivered by the Canmore Trust has multiple levels and has been brought into schools through working with educational psychology teams locally.

Firstly, a letter is sent out to parents within a school and a drop in session is set up so parents can raise any concerns or questions.

Secondly, staff selected by the school are trained in suicide prevention, this has primarily been delivered during a staff development day. This training focuses on statistics, the impact of mental ill-health, how to have a supportive conversations when young people disclose self-harm or suicidal thoughts and how to signpost young people and their families to partner agencies. The aim is to be enable staff to able to support young people and have the skills and confidence to speak about suicide.



Thirdly, a programme called 'Breaking The Silence' is delivered to fourth year pupils by the Canmore Trust with teaching staff who have received training being on hand to provide emotional support to pupils during this should they need it. This programme has been coproduced by young people and subject experts and aims to give pupils the skills and knowledge to be able to spot the warning signs that someone may be thinking about suicide, respond to a peer who is struggling with their mental health and thinking about suicide and signpost their peers to further support and resources, and to know when to ask an adult for help.

Finally, learning assemblies for fifth and sixth year students have taken place, ensuring that all Senior Phase (fourth to sixth year) pupils have all had the opportunity to increase their knowledge and understanding of suicide prevention and strategies to support good mental wellbeing.

What were the barriers?

Finding appropriate time in a busy academic calendar has been the biggest barrier; both in finding time for staff training and within the fourth year timetable to deliver the Breaking the Silence programme to pupils. The learning has been that each school may require a different approach and the necessity to work closely and flexibly with key contacts at the school to establish the best time.

What were the enablers?

Having leadership buy-in has been a key enabler. Having at least two members of the education staff who have a real desire and commitment to drive forward the delivery of the program is crucial as well as having the buy-in of the headteacher and senior leadership team. This also supports overcoming timetabling barriers and ensures all staff are made aware of when staff and pupil sessions will be taking place.

What has the impact been?

Feedback received from the fourth year pupils indicates that they have welcomed the opportunity to learn more about suicide prevention, that they have developed their confidence in both spotting the signs of emotional distress or suicidality and, to a lesser extent, their confidence in starting a conversation about suicide with someone they were concerned about.

School staff have shared that they feel better equipped to support their pupils and both schools who have undertaken the programme in Stirling have asked that a similar provision could be made in the next school year.

This Programme has sought evaluative feedback from the staff and students taking part and this has been very favourable. A fuller evaluation will be available in due course.

For now, you can find out more by contacting the Canmore Trust team through their [website](#).

