

From: Graham Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

Andrew Scott-Clark, Director of Public Health

To: Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee
10 May 2019

Subject: **Progress and future plans regarding the “Release the Pressure” social marketing campaign**

Classification: Unrestricted

Previous Pathway: This is the first committee to consider this report

Future Pathway: None

Electoral Division: All

Summary:

In 2016 Kent County Council’s Public Health team designed and launched the *Release the Pressure* social marketing campaign.

It was designed to raise awareness that support for any mental health problem (from just having an off day, through to crisis point) is available 24/7.

The imagery and words were designed to particularly appeal to middle aged men (who are at highest risk of suicide) but the support line is available to anyone aged 16 and over.

This paper provides a review of recent campaign activity and details the future plans for *Release the Pressure*.

Recommendation: The Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee is asked to:

- a) **NOTE** the progress relating to Release the Pressure
- b) Make **COMMENTS** and **SUGGEST** ways to strengthen future delivery

1. Introduction and background

1.1 The *Release the Pressure* social marketing campaign was launched in 2016 as a response to two main factors:

- Approximately three quarters of people who die by suicide are male
- Approximately 70% of people who die by suicide are not known to secondary mental health services

- 1.2 *Release the Pressure* was designed to use a social marketing approach to reach individuals not in touch with other services and encourage them to start talking about whatever is bothering them before the pressure becomes too great.
- 1.3 The campaign highlights that talking to anyone (e.g. friends, family, clinicians) is likely to help, but for those people that don't have anyone they feel that they can talk too, then trained and confidential support is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- 1.4 The 24/7 support can be accessed via a freephone telephone number (0800 107 0160) or via webchat through www.releasepressure.uk. It is provided by a charity called Mental Health Matters and all staff are qualified to a minimum NVQ Level 3 in Counselling Skills.

2.0 Release the Pressure development and design

- 2.1 The campaign was designed in 2016 following focus groups with local residents who have had suicidal thoughts to identify the words which they felt would resonate with others in similar situations.

Figure 1 – Release the Pressure original imagery



- 2.2 The design was always intended to be adaptable and over the last few years it has been used in a number of different ways, across a range of mediums. For instance;

Figure 2 – Release the Pressure examples



2.3 The campaign also uses social media channels, and advertising online, on radio and on digital TV to raise awareness of the issues and the help available.

2.4 Paying for Google adverts has been particularly effective, with the *Release the Pressure* advert being shown when anyone in Kent searches for terms such as “suicide”, “feeling suicidal” or “I want to die”. As an illustration in 2018/19 the *Release the Pressure* advert was displayed 1307 times to Kent and Medway residents who had googled the term “I want to die”. On 176 occasions the individual clicked on the advert and visited the website where they could access immediate help either via phone or webchat. In total nearly 7000 individuals clicked through to the website from a Google advert in 2018/19.

3.0 Release the Pressure in 2018/19

3.1 Although originally developed by KCC, the 2018/19 campaign was funded entirely externally by the Kent and Medway STP as part of the NHS England ring-fenced suicide prevention programme (which is led by KCC Public Health). Therefore the 18/19 campaign also covered the Medway area.

3.2 Approximately £80,000 was spent on the *Release the Pressure* campaign in 2018/19 (this figure includes some spending in Medway, a Kent-only figure isn’t possible given the given the nature of TV, radio and online advertising). It is worth noting here that Public Health England have estimated that the average cost to the UK economy of each suicide is £1.67million¹.

¹ Public Health England, Local Suicide Prevention Planning, Oct 2016 http://www.nspa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/PHE_LA_guidance-NB241016.pdf

- 3.3
 - 1) The production of a wide range of materials which have been distributed by partners across the county. These include pens, banners, leaflets, business cards, posters, bags and infinity cards.
 - 2) Paid for advertising (online, radio, digital TV, outdoor). There were two main periods of paid for advertising. The first was around World Mental Health Day in October 2018, and the second was between December 2018 and March 2019 during the festive season and into the new year
 - 3) Promotion through the social media channels of KCC and other partners
- 3.4 Particularly positive was the support of Bluewater Shopping Centre which agreed to display the *Release the Pressure* posters in 56 restroom locations free of charge. This was a great vote of confidence in the campaign by a major commercial partner who saw the benefit of the campaign.

Figure 3 – Release the Pressure in Bluewater Shopping Centre



4.0 Release the Pressure impact

- 4.1 Since the introduction of the campaign in 2016 there has been a slight fall in the number of suicides across Kent and Medway. However, it would be too simplistic to claim a direct causal link between the campaign and the fall in suicides. The campaign has however contributed to a culture where people are more willing to speak about their mental health and to seek help when they are struggling.
- 4.2 There have also been unsolicited testimonies from individuals that say that speaking to the support line has kept them alive. For example, please see this exchange which played out on Facebook.

Figure 4 – Screenshots from Facebook relating to Release the Pressure

What better way to kick off our Stress Awareness Month then with some brand-new Release The Pressure merchandise from [Kent County Council](#)?

Release The Pressure is a freephone, 24/7 helpline which you can access at anytime if you want to talk to someone about a mental health issue - or anything else! If you're feeling stressed this month and want to vent some of those feelings, call Release The Pressure on 0800 107 0160.

Talking to someone can help relieve those stress levels and could really make a difference.



I called this service and spoke to a guy called Mike. He listened to me and help me get the help I needed. This service helped to keep me alive and for that I am so grateful.

Like · Reply · 20h



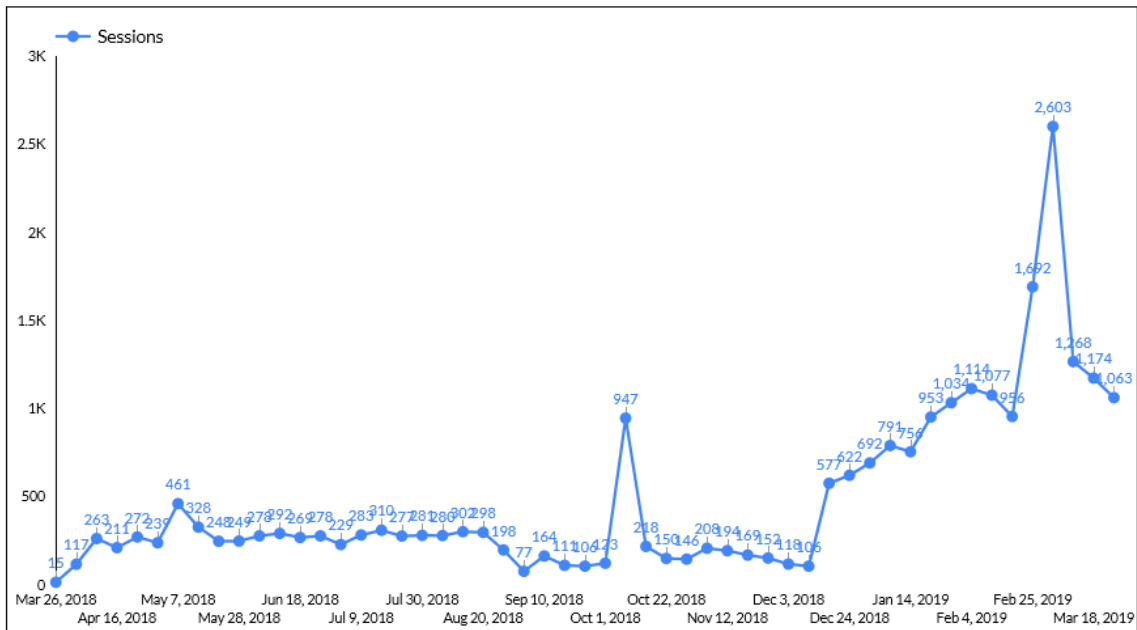
↪ View 1 more reply

Really, really glad to hear this helped, Sometimes just talking to someone who is empathetic and willing to listen and help can make a real difference. It's certainly an invaluable service. -Tom

- 4.3 There is also evidence to demonstrate the impact that the campaign has on the number of people accessing the www.releasethepressure.uk website and the freephone number.
- 4.4 In the 12 months before the Release the Pressure campaign started in 2016 (when the Mental Health Matters helpline was promoted by Adult Social Services) the helpline received an average of 1172 calls a month (14,066 a year). During 2018/19, the helpline received an average of 1829 calls a month (21,956 a year). This equates to a 56% increase in the total number of calls being received per year.
- 4.5 In addition to the calls, the service is answering approximately 100 webchats a month and hundreds of people are visiting the website for information every week. Figure 5 below shows the impact that paid for advertising has on the

numbers of people visiting the website (there were 25,339 total visits during 2018/19).

Figure 5 – Total 2018/19 weekly visits to Release the Pressure website



4.6 Please note when looking at Figure 5 above that there were two main points of paid for advertising in 2018/19. The first was around World Mental Health Day in October 2018, and the second was between December 2018 and March 2019 during the festive season and into the new year. During those periods of activity website visits increased considerably.

Figure 6 below shows some of the other testimony given to the call handlers at the end of the call.

Release the Pressure testimony

What difference can calling make?
Testimony from some of the approximately 1800 callers a month

I'm so glad I called, I had no idea it would leave me feeling so positive just by talking to you

Thank you so much for all of this. I have started to relax and don't feel so stressed now.

If I didn't have you to bitch and moan at I would probably have gone insane

You have kept me alive, I would have killed myself otherwise if it wasn't for you people on the phone

Thank you for listening it has helped. I never knew I could talk to someone like this.

I can actually wait for the my next appointment because I can talk to you everyday

5.0 Release the Pressure in 2019/20

- 5.1 KCC Public Health have led the application for additional 2019/20 suicide prevention funding on behalf of the Kent and Medway STP. This application has been successful, therefore the 19/20 Release the Pressure campaign will again be entirely funded by external ringfenced funds.
- 5.2 The 2019/20 campaign will continue to be a mix of paid for advertising, social media and the promotion and distribution of materials by partners.
- 5.3 The emphasis this year will be to secure high profile partnerships to help us reach target groups, as well as maintaining a population wide visibility.
- 5.4 Please Note: Future rates of completed Suicides may increase due to a change in how coroners are now asked to judge a death as a suicide. In the past there was an acknowledgment that the judgement of 'death by suicide' was a conservative one. Now a coroner is asked to include deaths where there is 'probable' cause of suicide. Time will tell whether this will impact on Kent rates.

6.0 Recommendation

The Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee is asked to:

- a) **NOTE** the progress relating to Release the Pressure
- b) Make **COMMENTS** and **SUGGEST** ways to strengthen future delivery

7.0 Contact Details

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Background documents: none