

Release the Pressure – Briefing

1. Background

1.1 Suicide rates in Kent are at their highest level since 2002 and suicide is the leading killer of men under 45. In 2014, there were 163 suicides in the county - nearly 80% were men. The effect of someone committing suicide is devastating for families and friends of the individual concerned. The impact can be felt across the whole community. It should be noted that in 2011, the Department of Health estimated that the average cost per suicide in England is £1.7 million.

1.2 A campaign need was identified to address this growing issue in Kent among men aged 30 to 60-years-old who live in Kent and who are feeling stressed, anxious, low in mood or depressed.

1.3 Specific communications objectives:

- Increase awareness among the target audience of the help available and how to access it
- Increase discussion and debate around the issue of mental health issues
- Increase uptake of dedicated support services by men – including a free phone helpline with trained staff available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, commissioned by KCC and provided by the charity Mental Health Matters.

2. Research and planning

2.1 “Release the Pressure” was developed by KCC in partnership with behaviour change and social marketing agency [Good Business](#). The campaign drew on the principles of social marketing and behaviour change theory and was developed by:

- Examining local and national statistics and research
- Analysing existing mental health campaigns targeted at men
- Focus groups with Kent men
- Testing early versions of the campaign materials with mental health professionals and members of the public

2.2 The challenge for the campaign was that mental health and suicide are areas that the target audience do not necessarily identify with. This meant that the final creative needed to avoid direct mention of both areas, while showing that people do care and that there are services that can provide an outlet to release the pressure created by many of the social triggers (e.g. divorce, financial concerns, alcohol etc.) related to suicide.

2.3 The campaign also used a decoy approach of directing communications to a “friend” rather than directly singling out those most in need or who might not identify themselves as being in need.

2.4 The final campaign creative used images of male heads filled with words - the quotes of real men in Kent - to communicate that this pressure is understandable and talking can help.

3. Strategy and tactics



3.1 The fresh and impactful creative established a new opportunity for media coverage and social media interest. The highly visual images were displayed at key sites across the county through marketing activity and promoted on social media.

3.2 The website www.releasethepressure.uk was created for people wanting more details, featuring anonymised case studies of Kent men who have turned their lives around after attempting suicide.

PR tactics included:

- A series of editorial features with the Kent Messenger newspaper group
- A special editorial programme by local radio station, KMFM
- A campaign launch for all Kent news media with supporting information, case studies and headline statistics.
- Images, quotes and figures for KCC's social media platforms
- Retweets/sharing of partner messages including service providers and opinion leaders.
- Sharing a PR/media toolkit with partners (including health organisations, district councils and emergency services) for promotion within their own internal/external communications channels.
- Guidance for newsdesks reporting suicides and use of sensitive photographs

4. Implementation

- 4.1 The PR campaign was launched in March 2016 as research showed a spike in suicides during the March/April period.
- 4.2 A marketing and editorial pack of material was created for partners and key stakeholders to share through their own internal communications channels – this also helped strengthen local partnerships.
- 4.3 A number of media interviewees - including health experts and individuals affected by suicide - were identified, briefed and offered at regular points during the campaign to ensure coverage of the launch and further editorial opportunities to keep the campaign in the public eye.
- 4.4 The campaign received further support from Gillingham Football Club with articles in match day programmes, on its website and stadium hoardings. Gills Manager Justin Edinburgh (whose former player had died by suicide) featured in further editorial coverage.



- 4.5 The family of a man who committed suicide also came forward to support the campaign, creating huge coverage in media and social media.
- 4.6 Social media played a key role throughout with messages from the KCC Twitter and Facebook accounts and cross-promotion of content by stakeholders, partners and other media.
- 4.7 A multi-channel approach was used to advertise the campaign consisting of:

- **Outdoor advertising**
 - Bar packs

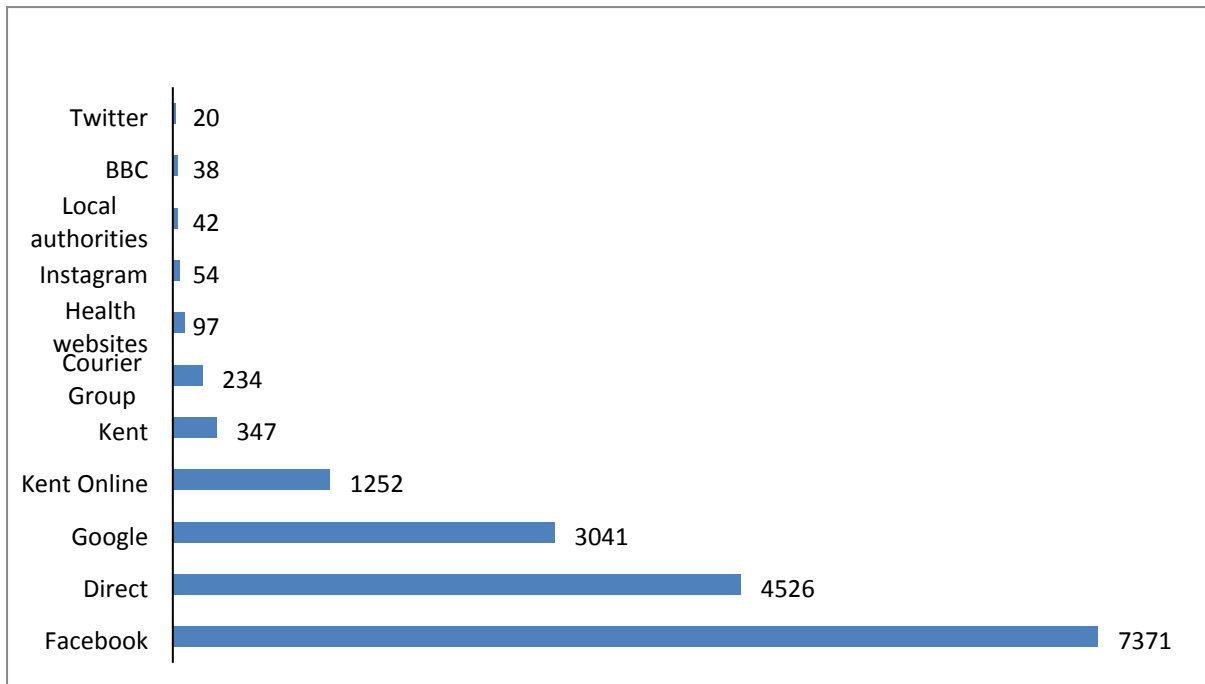
- 6/48 sheet outdoor
- Petrol ad nozzles
- Bus advertisements
- Leaflets
- **Digital advertising**
 - KM display advertising
 - Trinity digital advertising
 - Google advertising
 - Facebook advertising
 - KM native content pieces
 - Hospital screens
- **Newspaper advertising**
 - Trinity Mirror print ads
 - KM Media print ads
- **Radio advertising**
 - Heart radio ads
 - KM Fillers
 - KM Special Programme
 - DAX digital radio

5. Measurement and evaluation

5.1 A suspected suicide can only be confirmed as such by a coroner and this can take over a year. Therefore the impact of the campaign on overall suicide numbers won't be known until 2017. However, the campaign was evaluated in a number of ways including:

- 20% increase in male callers during campaign period
 - **Helpline calls – Average calls per month last year - 1,171**
 - **Calls in first month of the campaign - 1507**
 - **Following the campaign calls to the helpline have increased by:**
 - **15% overall**
 - **20% amongst men**
- 20,000 unique visits to the website
- 515 people clicked on web chat option from the website
- 19 million impacts with men through all channels

5.2 Of the unique visits to the website, by far the most effective in driving traffic to the site were the Facebook adverts, however the number of people going directly to the site by typing in Releasethepressure.uk was also high, with 4,526 during the campaign period. The most popular time that male targeted ads were interacted with was from 5pm – 11pm. Even after the end of the advertising campaign, there are still approximately 100 visitors per week to the site, as a result of campaign literature being distributed to key stakeholders.



5.3 Caller Testimonials

The helpline provided some feedback from callers who responded to the campaign:

- "Release the Pressure really spoke to me."
- "I was panicking but I feel so much better now, thank you."
- "Getting your number was the best thing that has happened to me."
- "Thank goodness the help line is there for me"
- "Thank you for your help I feel I have a good plan in place and I can settle now."

5.4 Media coverage included:

- **TV and radio** packages on BBC South East Today, BBC Radio Kent and Heart FM plus a special suicide awareness programme on KMFM.
- **30 print articles** across Kent's newspaper groups including KM, Kent Regional News, Kent on Sunday series and News Shopper titles.
- **Online articles** on 20 Kent news sites and partner organisations' websites.

5.5 The story was widely debated and shared on social media, including:

- BBC Facebook posts (79,000 followers) with over 60,000 views of South East Today's video.

5.6 "Release the Pressure" has since been publicised as part of Mental Health Awareness Week and continues to feature in communications work around suicide prevention. The Campaign received significant national interest and has been presented to both the Local Government Association Public Health Conference and the Faculty of Public Health annual conference this year. As a result of the campaign, Public Health England has invited the Tim Woodhouse, the responsible Programme Manager, to be part of a national panel of experts

overseeing the development of new suicide prevention guidance for local authorities.