

Release the Pressure - suicide prevention campaign

1. Background

1.1 The 2015-2020 Kent and Medway Suicide Prevention Strategy identified that middle aged men are a high risk group for suicide, and that suicide is the leading killer of men under 45 in Kent. Suicide in Kent is higher than the national average (12 per 100,000 compared to 10.1 per 100,000 nationally). The research for the strategy showed that the industries with the highest rates of suicide are construction, transport, and building trades.

1.2 In 2015 there were 152 suicides in Kent of which 116 were men (36 women). 80% of men who commit suicide have not been in contact with any service prior to taking to taking their own lives. The campaign launched in March 2016. In 2016 there was a reduction in suicide in Kent, with 140 suicides, with the reduction coming all from men (104 men, 36 women).

1.3 Research shows that men do not like to talk about their feelings, and that they do not like the term mental health, however talking through problems and seeking help, is also identified as the key to reducing suicide

2. Campaign development

2.1 Focus groups showed that many men who attempted suicide didn't feel they had a mental illness, they just couldn't cope with the pressures of life (e.g. divorce, money worries, fear, bereavement etc.) anymore. The campaign aims to reduce the number of suicides in Kent by encouraging men who are feeling under pressure to phone a free-phone helpline (trained staff available 24 hours a day 7 days a week)

2.2 The helpline is provided by Mental Health Matters (MHM) who are commissioned to provide this 24/7 service MHM are fully aware of the support available across a range of issues and will signpost for more detailed support where needed

2.3 The campaign did not use the name of the service provider (as had been previously promoted), but responded to the insights from men, and promoted instead Release the Pressure. It uses two images of heads filled with words, and the quotes of real men in Kent to communicate that different life events can cause tremendous pressure, but that talking can help.

3. 2016 Campaign Delivery

3.1 In 2016, the campaign was promoted across Kent, focusing on the high risk groups (i.e. construction and transport trades), using a range of media to target at locations and situations where the men from these industries would have would have the greatest opportunity to see them;

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- Online advertising
- Bar mats in pubs across Kent
- Petrol nozzles
- Hospital TV screens
- Radio
- Billboards

3.2 A web page releasethepressure.uk was set up providing more details and case studies of men whose lives have been turned around after they decided to talk about their problems

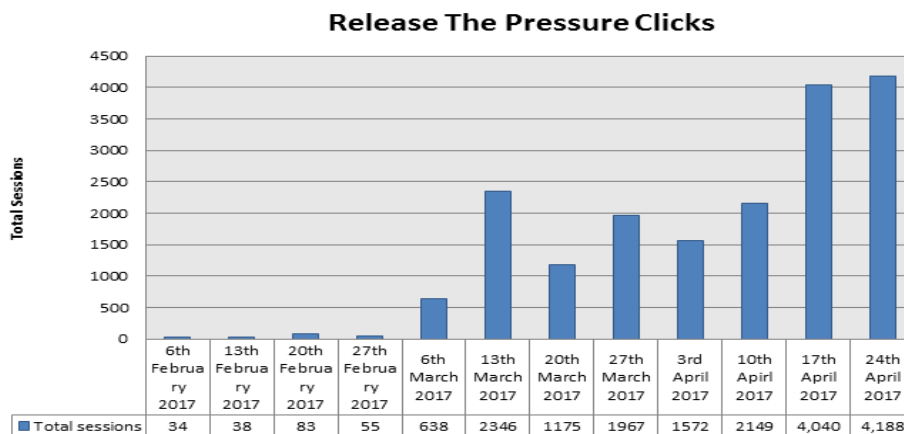
3.3 There was a sustained 76% increase in male callers to the helpline (currently there are on average 550 male callers a month)
 The campaign was recognised as best practice and featured in national publications by the Local Government Association, Public Health England and the Faculty of Public Health. It won a Chartered Institute for Public Relations *Best Public Sector Campaign* award.

The City of London are in talks with Public Health to license the campaign

4. 2017 Campaign details

4.1 A second wave of advertising started in March 2017. This included the most successful elements from the campaign in 2016 as well as a 30 second video which is being targeted at men through digital TV and online advertising.

4.2 The impact of the 2017 campaign (which started in March) can be seen by this graph which shows the increase in weekly visits to the campaign website



The value that the helpline can have is demonstrated by quotes from two recent callers;

- *“Your service has kept me alive, I would have killed myself otherwise if it wasn't for you people on the phone”*
- *“If I didn't have you to bitch and moan at, I would probably have gone insane”*

The MHM helpline number is **0800 107 0160**, the Release the Pressure web address is releasethepressure.uk