**Loneliness and suicide: Samaritans note to Scottish Government**

* North East Glasgow Suicide Prevention Partnership undertook a [literature review and survey](http://library.chps.org.uk/mediaAssets/CHP%20Glasgow/Final%20Report%20May%202014%20%28Including%20Appendix%20One%29.pdf) of service providers in regard to men and social isolation in 2014 (noting that tackling isolation in men could have a clear impact on suicide rates). The report includes details of seven projects aimed at tackling this in the region (p10).
* The [US national suicide prevention strategy](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK109907/) recognises ‘connectedness’ as a theme – among people, families and communities. This is defined as “the degree to which a person or group is socially close, interrelated, or shares resources with other persons or groups.” The U.S. Air Force Suicide Prevention Programme followed this theme, with one of its main components as strengthening social support. Similarly, the US Defence Department’s [#BeThere Campaign](http://www.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/1224164/connection-saves-lives-be-there-to-help-prevent-suicide/) seeks to reduce and prevent suicide in the workforce through teaching colleagues to make every day connections.
* For some groups defined by age, sex, ethnicity or geographic location, there are distinct disparities in the suicide rate that have led to particular interventions for that group. In the USA, nonfatal suicidal behaviour and high suicide rates among American Indian populations have been linked to disruptions in interpersonal connectedness and connectedness with wider society. As such, some suicide prevention interventions for these communities have been designed to strengthen their connectedness with one another by drawing upon common history and traditions. (See: <https://www.ihs.gov/suicideprevention/> )
* A programme for American Indian/Alaska Native youth also sought helpers from the [community](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/n/surgnssp/appf/def-item/glossary.gl1-d10/) to identify and connect with young people at risk of suicide. An analysis of this reported a substantial drop in suicidal gestures and attempts. (Source: May PA, Serna P, Hurt L, Debruyn LM. Outcome evaluation of a public health approach to suicide prevention in an American Indian tribal nation. Am J Public Health. 2005;95(7):1238–1244. [[PMC free article](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1380310/)] [[PubMed](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15933239)])
* In Japan, an elderly depression screening programme included educational health workshops that promoted connections with others in the community, especially elderly neighbours. This programme involved other interventions as well as this, however saw positive results for suicide prevention. (Source: Oyama H, Koida J, Sakashita T, and Kudo K. Community-based prevention for suicide in elderly by depression screening and follow-up. Community Ment Health J 2004;40:249–63.)
* Australia’s suicide prevention strategy recognises social isolation as key risk and seeks to direct targeted resources towards addressing it. They have recognised the increased risk of elderly males living in remote and rural locations and sought to promote help-seeking behaviour in this population. <https://www.lifeinmindaustralia.com.au/docs/LIFE-framework-web.pdf>

The Samaritans

July 2017