



Insights from experience: economic disadvantage, suicide and self-harm



Introduction

We wanted to explore what the relationship between economic disadvantage, suicide risk and self-harm looks like in people's own words, so we partnered with Ideas Alliance CIC to find out. We took a participation-based approach using Community Reporting and storytelling principles, including focus groups and individual conversations. Our aim is to share insights and recommendations directly with key decision makers, to improve suicide prevention in England. This summary provides an overview of what people told us about their experiences and what needs to change.



What is the Suicide Prevention Consortium?

The Suicide Prevention Consortium is made up of four organisations: Samaritans (lead), National Suicide Prevention Alliance, Support After Suicide Partnership and With You. As part of the VCSE Health and Wellbeing Alliance, it aims to bring the expertise of its member organisations and the voice of those with lived experience directly to policymakers, to improve suicide prevention in England.

What we heard

Experience of economic disadvantage (extracts from full report)

“ I was quite comfortable prior to 2012 when I had a full-time job. However, due to circumstances I became a full-time carer in 2015 for my mother. And that's when I realised how easy it is to go from financially stable to just barely surviving. ”

“ I got sacked from five jobs because of mental health issues. ”

Experience of suicide, self-harm or bereavement by suicide (extracts from full report)

“ I used to self-harm before when I was struggling with money as a coping mechanism. ”

“ There was a lot of money problems going on, which I think contributed to him taking his life. And there was no help whatsoever. There was no help from the mental health service. And I think that's what resulted in him taking his own life. ”



What we heard

Sense of community belonging (extracts from full report)

“ I just kind of got pushed away. That’s what I felt like, I felt like no one would listen. ”

“ I would love to help in any way I can. But I’m really not a part of this community anymore, locally. I feel so separate from it. ”

“ It’s not easy to talk to people that don’t know you. As simple as that. They seem to want a whole CV, before they can actually offer help. And sometimes kindness alone is all you need in life. ”

Things that help and support (extracts from full report)

“ Without my family, I don’t know, where I would have ended up. ”

“ I think community groups and connections play a massive role in just knowing that you have got people there and that sometimes it gives you a new, fresh feeling that you’re living. ”

“ And one of the places for me at the time and even today I spoke to is the mosque, my local faith community. ”

Recommendations

The series of stories we heard about peoples’ lived experience of economic disadvantage, suicide and self-harm presents a substantial picture of the challenges and issues a diverse group of people face. There are clearly some ‘big system’ issues within these stories such as housing, issues around social care, availability of mental health support and the workings of the benefit system. These must be looked at as part of the new Suicide Prevention Strategy and we will continue to explore these topics in other ways through our work.

We have heard stories of a system lacking in compassion and support with people not receiving the help they need when they ask for it. One that is often based on signposting to services and not listening to the individual. Many of the suggestions made focus on creating a more human and person-centred whole system approach. We also heard of a need for a system that is more aware of mental health issues and the challenges people face.

To find out more about this work and read the [full report](#), you can visit Samaritans’ website.

Contact a Samaritan. If you need someone to talk to, we listen. We won’t judge or tell you what to do. Call us any time, day or night, for free on 116 123 or visit [samaritans.org](https://www.samaritans.org) for other ways to get in touch. Whatever you’re facing, a Samaritan will face it with you.