

Sara Boyce

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Population Health Directorate
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
BT4 3SQ

Our Ref: DOH/2023 - 0233

Date: 5 September 2023

Dear Ms Boyce

**Request for Information: Freedom of Information Act 2000
Reference Number DOH/2023 - 0233**

I refer to your request dated 6 August 2023 under the above legislation.

You requested the following information for 2021-22 and 2022-23:

1. Number of GPs trained in 1) suicide awareness and 2) suicide prevention, broken down to smallest administrative area possible.
2. Number of mental health practitioners and managers employed in Multi-Disciplinary Teams, trained in 1) suicide awareness and 2) suicide prevention, broken down to the smallest administrative area possible.
3. Details of how this training was promoted to GPs and mental health practitioners.
4. Details of the training provider and the training provided.
5. Details of targets set for 2023-2024.
6. Update on progress made towards achieving the overall target of 50% of HSC staff trained in suicide prevention by 2022.

The information requested relating to GPs is not held centrally. GPs are largely responsible for directing their own Continuing Professional Development which should cover the whole of their practice and is reviewed annually as part of their annual appraisal.

Action 7.2 within the Protect Life 2 Strategy established a target and training priority, including a target that 50% of frontline HSC staff should be trained in suicide prevention. This action has been difficult to monitor and collation of relevant data is challenging. HSC Trusts have responsibility around their own staff training and how they collect training data. The Department collected data in late 2022 in relation to

HSC staff suicide prevention training. The background to the attached Assembly Question (AQW 4232 22-27 answered on 24 October 2022) shows the various types of training undertaken across HSC Trusts. (Annex A)

You will note the Department's announcement this week in relation to the extension of Protect Life 2 and an upcoming review of the action plan. As part of this review the issues we have encountered around monitoring and collecting data on HSC staff training will be considered, including consideration of areas where the approach could be improved.

The Department remains of the view that the primary care element of mental health and suicide prevention training is vitally important for all staff within a GP practice. I can assure you that this will therefore continue to be an area requiring particular attention as part of the review of Protect Life 2 and new targets/objectives will be set as part of the revised action plan. The Department has asked the PHA to consider further options for promoting training with primary care including work with GP Federation and the GP representative on the Protect Life 2 Steering Group.

The Department has also asked the Towards Zero Suicide (TZS) collaborative for details of any engagement they have undertaken with primary care or relevant data in relation to primary care suicide prevention training however a response has not been received by the deadline to this FOI request. Should further information be provided by TZS in this regard the Department will respond to you again. The online training provided by TZS would also provide a very accessible and minimal cost method for primary care to undertake suicide prevention training and the Department will also ask PHA to explore this as an option for future provision.

If you feel that the information we have provided does not fully meet your request please contact us at 02890528689 in the first instance. You have the right to request a formal review by the Department within two calendar months of the date of this letter. If you wish to do so, please write to Mr Brendan O'Neill (foi@health-ni.gov.uk), Annexe 3, Castle Buildings, Stormont, Belfast BT4 3SQ.

If after such an internal review you are still unhappy with the response, you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner at Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, CHESHIRE SK9 5AF, who will undertake an independent review.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours Sincerely

Population Health Directorate Local Information Manager

THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

ROBIN SWANN MLA

Castle Buildings, Ballymiscaw,
Stormont, Belfast BT4 3SQ

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

NI Assembly

Parliament Buildings

Ballymiscaw

Stormont

*** October 2022**

AQW 4232/22-27

Órlaithí Flynn asked:

To ask the Minister of Health (i) how many GPs are trained in suicide prevention; (ii) how many doctors are trained in suicide prevention; (iii) how many nurses are trained in suicide prevention; and (iv) what organisation is responsible for recording this data.

ANSWER

This information is not held centrally and suicide prevention training data held by HSC Trusts cannot be broken down by profession.

HSC Trusts have responsibility around staff training and how they collect that data. GPs are largely responsible for directing their own Continuing Professional Development which should cover the whole of their practice, and is reviewed annually as part of their annual appraisal.

Suicide prevention and emotional health and wellbeing training will continue to be widely promoted and staff encouraged to undertake training.

ROBIN SWANN MLA

BACKGROUND NOTE..... AQW 4232/22-27

1. Órlaithí Flynn MLA, is developing a Private Member's bill seeking to create a statutory requirement for public bodies and government departments to provide mandatory basic suicide prevention training for all frontline staff.
2. The Public Health Agency (PHA) have developed a Training Framework for Mental and Emotional Health and Wellbeing and Suicide Prevention. The Framework provides a tiered approach to training and offers information to anyone interested in how to identify the most appropriate training in mental and emotional health and wellbeing and/or suicide prevention training. The framework aims to increase awareness, understanding, knowledge, and skills to meet learning needs, whether this be within family/personal networks, communities or workplaces.
3. Through the Towards Zero Suicide programme a multi-disciplinary workstream has been set up to improve access to and deliver on identified suicide prevention competencies required across HSC Trusts and build capacity to deliver work-based learning to meet identified need.
4. There is widespread suicide prevention training in HSC Trusts and this is detailed below. The data cannot be disaggregated by profession.

Workforce figures up to end September 2022

| | Level one online Suicide Awareness | Risk Formulation | Regional SPCP (CEC) | Practitioner Safety Planning | STORM & ASIST | Post Incident Psychological Debrief T4T | Other |
|---------|------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|---------------|---|--|
| NHSCT | 4877 | 81 | 63 | 102 | 55 | 2 | 85xTake 5 – level 1 45x MHFA 51x1st Response to MH |
| BHSCT | 1407 | 37 | 37 | 732 | | 22 | |
| SHSCT | 2538 | 97 | 114 | 476 | 145 | 23 | |
| SEHSC T | 1525 | 53 | 33 | 230 | 58 | 2 | |
| WHSC T | 1060 | 37 | 37 | 209 | 24 | 8 | |
| Totals | 11407 | 305 | 284 | 1749 | 282 | 57 | 181 |

5. GP's are largely responsible for directing their own Continuing Professional Development (CPD), which should cover the whole of their practice, and is reviewed annually as part of their annual appraisal. Appraisal is managed and co-ordinated by the NI Medical and Dental Training Agency.

6. Training is an intervention with strong evidence that it can help to prevent suicide. However, caution must be exercised in making such training mandatory as it cannot be assumed that all staff are ready at that time to deal with such a sensitive issue. Instead, a process of encouraging and supporting uptake is preferred.

FOR ANSWER ON: 24 October 2022