**Thematic Review: Working with Multiple Disadvantage and Trauma**

# **Sharing learning**

Working collaboratively to prevent abuse and neglect is a key priority of the East Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board (ESSAB). We do this by sharing learning from Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs) to drive improvement in safeguarding practice. All staff and managers are encouraged to discuss and share the briefing, to ensure that the learning outcomes are used to consolidate existing best practice and develop practice where required.

# **Background**

The ESSAB commissioned this thematic Review to understand the circumstances of four women aged between 19 to 51 years old who died between May and November 2020, either from suicide or from causes linked to drug overdoses. All four women had contact with a number of the same health and social care services.

A number of parallel themes were identified including:

* Childhood trauma
* Poor mental health
* Domestic abuse
* Substance misuse
* Homelessness
* Difficulty engaging with individuals who are hard to reach
* The impact of Covid-19 on service delivery and the impact on people’s mental health and wellbeing.

# **Key Findings**

## Suicide prediction and prevention requires consideration of multiple factors including background, events, and stressors.

## Organisational policies and practices will need to change to support hard to engage people who have traumatic life histories.

## Think Family approaches may be useful to support engagement and harm prevention.

# **Key points for learning and reflection**

**Reliance must not be placed solely on what a person says**: adverse experiences, trauma and prolonged substance misuse use can result in frontal lobe brain damage, which can affect behaviour and decision making. Undertaking a mental capacity assessment to assess their ability to put a decision into effect (executive functioning) is therefore essential.

**It is important to consider who may be best to work creatively and proactively with an adult who does not wish to engage**. For example, the adult may have already established a positive working relationship with another professional, such as a worker from a voluntary agency, care agency or health service.

The following themes were identified for learning in the review.

## **Suicide Prevention**

* Do you complete[Safety plans](https://www.every-life-matters.org.uk/safety-planning/) with individuals at risk of suicide?
* Have you read the Health Education England Self-harm and Suicide Prevention Competence [Framework](https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/docs/default-source/improving-care/nccmh/self-harm-and-suicide-prevention-competence-framework/nccmh-self-harm-and-suicide-prevention-competence-framework-public-health.pdf?sfvrsn=341fb3cd_6) to help identify and work with people who are at risk of self-harm and suicide?

## **Trauma informed**

* Do you and your agency take a Trauma informed approach which recognises and responds to the impact of adverse childhood experiences in adulthood?
* Do you ask individuals about their childhood experiences?

## **Multiple Disadvantage**

* Are you confident in when and how to refer individuals with Multiple disadvantages to the [Multi-agency Risk Management (MARM)](https://www.eastsussexsab.org.uk/documents/multi-agency-risk-management-marm-protocol/) forum to manage their risks?
* Have you considered the effects of substance dependency on mental capacity?
* Do you offer different approaches to engage with individuals such as face to face, text, phone, and virtual communication?
* ****Does your agency ensure cases are kept open when an individual is not engaging?
* Does the individual have a lead practitioner to maintain contact, provide assertive outreach and initial support from other agencies?

Managers are encouraged to explore the learning points above in team meetings and supervisions. If you require further information about the SAR and action plan please contact: Lucy Spencer, SAB Development Manager [lucy.spencer@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:lucy.spencer@eastsussex.gov.uk)

# **Further reading and resources**

* [Sussex Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures](https://www.sussexsafeguardingadults.org/)
* [Assessing and supporting people with multiple and complex needs: Guidance for positive practice](https://www.eastsussexsab.org.uk/documents/assessing-and-supporting-people-with-multiple-and-complex-needs-guidance-for-positive-practice/)
* [Sussex SAR Protocol](https://www.eastsussexsab.org.uk/documents/sussex-sar-protocol/)
* [Sussex Information sharing Guide and Protocol](https://www.eastsussexsab.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Sussex-Information-Sharing-Guide-and-Protocol-v2.pdf)

A range of multi-agency safeguarding courses, including domestic violence and abuse, and coercion and control are available through the [East Sussex Learning Portal](https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/jobs/learning-portal).

# **What to do if you or someone you know is affected by suicide?**

* [East Sussex mental health directory](https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/social-care/health-advice/mental-health/east-sussex-mental-health-directory)
* [Preventing suicide in Sussex](https://www.preventingsuicideinsussex.org/)
* [Grassroots stay alive app](https://prevent-suicide.org.uk/find-help-now/stay-alive-app/#:~:text=A%20safety%20plan%20that%20can,their%20reasons%20to%20stay%20alive.)