

Start to End Suicide

Evidence tells us that stigmatising attitudes result in people being less likely to get help or give help. If we don't speak up about persistent stigma, we are at risk of perpetuating a society where we remain reluctant to reach out for help for ourselves or to support others.

This is why 'Reach Out; Start to End Suicide' was setup, it is dedicated to the prevention of suicide. It is based on the foundation belief that suicide is preventable and everyone has a role to play in preventing suicide. START utilising its foundation within therapeutic arts developed incredibly innovative interventions that: proactively engage with the Salford community; provide support and hope to those directly affected by suicide; and challenge stigma.

It has brought together the people of Salford as they build resilience, caring, save lives and end the stigma that surrounds mental illness and suicide. It is a people's movement that is delivering outstanding results. We aim for a community that makes it the norm and acceptable to feel free to discuss their feelings and told that they matter. Through raising public awareness, education and equipping people with the confidence to have conversations, to support those at risk of suicide, we know we can save lives being lost and contribute to reducing suicides in Salford.

Salford suffers from very significant health inequalities, average health levels in the city are much worse than the national average. Typical life expectancy for Salford residents is three years less than for England as a whole, and with

average life expectancy in the city's most deprived areas is 10.6 years lower for men and 10.3 years lower for women than in its least deprived areas.

(PHE,2017). 'Reach Out; Start to End Suicides' is focused on strengthening community action and overcoming health inequalities through having the community at the heart of this project. 'Reach Out; Start to End Suicide' encourages health behaviour change among the general population of Salford. It is disseminating behaviourally focused messages with the intent of influencing the decision making processes of individuals in Salford. We are decreasing stigma, raising suicide knowledge and increasing the public's confidence to help people who may be struggling. The scale and reach of the project is critical in reaching at-risk individuals who have not engaged with the health care system and are at high risk of suicide.

Above and beyond

'Reach Out; Start to End Suicide' maximised its impact through its innovation and delivery of:

- 250+ people attending 'Vigil of Remembrance' which harnesses the community in support of those that have lost loved ones to suicide. It delivers support and destigmatises the grieving of a loved one lost to suicide. It provides education on suicide prevention and the roles that everyone can play in ending suicide while instilling hope through performance and participatory arts.

- ‘Surviving Suicide; voices of suicide and attempt survivors’, brought together 18 suicide/attempt survivors within a therapeutic arts setting that allowed healing and support. Suicide/attempt survivors created art works that communicate their stories and experiences of suicide and the impact that it has had on their life. Participants reported 111% increase in their mental health & wellbeing. 100% also reported increases: in confidence/self-esteem; social activity/less isolated and more connected to their community. These results directly reduced the incidences of suicidal ideation and increased crisis awareness and support. These artworks are touring Salford as educational/engagement tools accessible to all Salford residents.

- 2,000 Salfordian pledges of support on yellow cut-out hands are planted to make up ‘Sea of Hands of Support’, a participatory art installation, as a mass display of support for anyone who is suicidal. This highly impactful engagement tool allowed over 3,000 conversations that enabled people to identify warning signs of suicide and empowered them to start a conversation that can save a life. 96% of those who engaged with ‘Sea of Hands of Support’ reported increased awareness of suicide prevention.

- Last year ‘Turn Yellow for Suicide Prevention’ grew to 1,239 suicide prevention promotional materials displayed across 277 sites.

- ‘Builders Lunch’ saw us attend worksites where we fed 271 construction workers pizza. They are the hardest to reach and highest risk profession of

suicide. We chatted about mental health and suicide prevention. 97% reported an increased awareness of suicide prevention.

Innovation

Reach Out; Start to End Suicide is effecting meaningful change with its multi-faceted community focused suicide prevention intervention. Every facet of the intervention is innovative within its own right, and collectively reaches out to the Salford community in a scale that hasn't been seen in Salford before.

'Reach Out; Start to End Suicide' is Salford's first orchestrated suicide prevention programme of activities that include:

- The 'Vigil of Remembrance' is the first of its kind with in Greater Manchester and harnesses the community in support of those that have lost loved ones to suicide. It delivers support and destigmatises the grieving of a loved one lost to suicide and enables reflection on the person rather than the act of suicide itself. It also provides a platform for education on suicide prevention and the roles that everyone can play in ending suicide and instilling hope. The vigil is also a participatory event as we have a procession of remembrance which see loved ones of those lost to suicide carry flags in a procession that marks the opening of the vigil. In 2018 we had 109 flags which grew to 126 in 2019, these represent the lives lost in Salford over the previous five years.
- 'Turning Salford Yellow for Suicide Prevention' educates and empowers Salford's community, on mass, to meaningfully connect with people around

them, raise awareness, improve community attitudes and increase public dialogue on suicide, while improving the community's resilience, saving lives and challenge stigma on a scale never before seen across the region or the country.

- 'Surviving Suicide; voices of suicide and attempt survivors', in a first in the country brought together suicide and attempt survivors within a therapeutic setting that allowed healing and support for all. The suicide and attempt survivors created art works that communicate their stories and experiences of suicide and the impact that it has had on their life with the support of bereavement and mental health support workers. These artworks on another first tour Salford as educational and engagement tools accessible to all Salford residents.

- 'Builders Lunch' is the first time this type of innovative approach to public health has been used for this target audience. It goes direct to the workplaces of this hardest to reach at risk group, with suicide being the largest killer of men aged 49 and under, and men aged 15-29 years of age, and especially within the construction and contracting industry where male site workers in construction are three times more likely to die by suicide than the average UK male. Our outreach workers talk to the workers about mental health, suicide prevention and getting support.

Sustained impact

In 2018 Start Inspiring Minds celebrated its 25th year of delivering creative therapeutic arts to those experiencing mental ill health. One of our staff members suggested that we channel our energies into make real change through a campaign preventing suicide in Salford. Sadly, we have lost several members through suicide. Our communication lead who is a suicide attempt survivor himself setting up the campaign and firstly finding out what was needed through talking to our community.

We spoke with 7 attempt survivors and 6 people that have lost family or friends to suicide in Salford, all of them said that there needs to be more education within the community about what the warning signs are, how to support people who are suicidal, and how to start a conversation with someone who they suspect is feeling suicidal. A suicide attempt survivor said “I was desperate, I couldn’t reach out and speak to anyone, I thought that I would be a burden, it would have made a huge difference if someone, anyone noticed that I was hurting and desperate, but I couldn’t”. A suicide survivor who lost their mother to suicide said “If only I knew what the warning signs were and how to talk to her, what to say, it would have saved her. I could have saved her, now I live with the guilt everyday”. She went on “We need to be taught how to spot warning signs, it would make such a big difference knowing what to look out for and how to help them”. When consulting by a questionnaire with 22 people with no experience of suicide, 86% would not be able to identify warning signs of suicide, and 77% not being able to identify who they could contact to get support for someone that was feeling suicidal

apart from the emergency services. 90% said that they didn't have the knowledge of how to ask or support someone if they were feeling suicidal.

Reflecting on his own recovery from being a suicide attempt survivor and the research he carried out he developed the tools that are now what we very proudly call Reach Out; Start to End Suicide. We place lived experience at the heart of this project, which has delivered incredible results over the past two years. We look forward to continue to start conversations that save lives in Salford.