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Connecting with People

Training in suicide awareness

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Introduction to the Connecting with People Training

There is a need for concise, clinically based training on suicide and self harm to enable busy NHS and Social Care professionals to receive relevant training in these areas. *Connecting with People* is a series of training packages designed to complement the two day Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST).

The *Connecting with People* training is evidence-based and uses a mixture of lecture style presentation and facilitated discussion sessions. The flexible, modular form of the training enables it to be continuously updated to incorporate new research, and tailored to the needs of healthcare, non-NHS and third sector organisations. The training can be delivered on site, reducing impact on staff time and travel requirements.

In Wales, together with the ASIST program, *Connecting with People* will be a central part of a comprehensive suite of training for all sectors in suicide and self harm, evaluated by the NPHS. The training packages will be adapted by the *Positive Choices* Project in consultation with relevant Professionals.

Overview of the training

The main objective of *Connecting with People* is to increase empathy, reduce stigma and enhance participants' ability to talk to someone who has suicidal thoughts or following self harm, and equip them with simple distress reducing techniques.

The training is designed for individuals working both within and outside specialist services. In order to increase the relevance and impact of the training and hence increase its take up, different versions of are tailored to different sectors. The short sessions, which are focussed and relevant to particular audiences, help to maximise the number and range of people who can attend, and make the sessions accessible to people who would not normally attend training in suicide risk and self harm. The training is affordable given the current spending climate and reduced training budgets, and time-efficient, needing less time for professionals to be released from frontline and clinical duties.

Connecting with People is specifically designed to complement ASIST. By engaging participants in the subject of suicide and self harm, it can help people working in a range of settings see the benefit of investing further time in attending the two-day ASIST programme.

There are three types of training session, each of which is adapted for different audiences:

Two hour Suicide Awareness Training which aims to:

- Create empathy and challenge stigma by helping participants develop their understanding of suicidal behaviour;
- Promote understanding of the ambivalence of suicidal individuals;
- Develop an empathic, therapeutic relationship in a demanding and time pressured environment;
- Introduce the user friendly *Cole-King Continuum*, a framework designed to demystify the process of talking about suicidal thoughts;
- Promote the role of a professional's or carer's in suicide prevention.

Two hour Self Harm Awareness Training which aims to:

- Encourage empathy and challenge stigma;
- Help participants develop their understanding of self harm;
- Harm minimisation;
- Enable patients to explore additional ways of dealing with distress.

One day Suicide Response Training which aims to:

- Support Primary Care/Specialist NHS Teams;
- Increase understanding and skills in order to contribute to a community based suicide prevention approach;
- Enhance skills of assessing and responding to suicidal thoughts using a therapeutic, transparent and collaborative framework;

- Improve ability to conduct an effective assessment and instigate a safe, clinically appropriate management plan;
- Promote realistic ways for dealing with very distressed suicidal individuals in a busy morning surgery/clinical setting/home visit. Simple instillation of hope strategies using the *C-K Bank of Hope*;
- Make assessing individuals with suicidal thoughts more transparent by using the *C-K Mitigation Framework* which promotes a collaborative assessment and response to an identified suicide risk. This approach is recommended in the Department of Health National Risk Management Programme. Best practice in managing risk. London: Department of Health; 2007.

It is hoped that wide dissemination of the training will contribute to the development of a common language concerning suicidal thoughts and self-harm. Consistency of language and response across different sectors and more joined up working between services are key to improving the support available to people experiencing suicidal thoughts and those assisting them, in both the statutory and voluntary sectors.

Evaluation

In addition to evaluation by Public Health Wales, the *Connecting with People* partnership has built in an independent evaluation of the training. Feedback from participants in the training has so far been overwhelmingly positive and early indications are that the training is having a very positive impact in changing the hearts and minds of medical professionals, leading to a more patient centred approach. This is also supported by anecdotal reports from patients.

- **99%** (383/387) rated the quality of the presentation as 'very good' or 'good';
- **93%** (331/357) increased their understanding of self harm and suicidal thoughts;
- **93%** (239/256) increased self reported empathy;
- **95%** (194/205) now believed, following the session that they had a role in suicide prevention.

Testimonials

- The training is endorsed by Dr Paul Gill, Consultant Liaison Psychiatrist, RCPsych Trainer, Chair Liaison Executive RCPsych and Clinical lead in 'Better Services for People who Self Harm'.
- *'The teaching package... alongside the risk assessment pathway has vastly improved our doctors' ability to perform suicide risk assessment safely and quickly. I get consistently excellent feedback on the sessions which clearly stimulate our juniors into re-thinking their current practice. This has led to a more consistent and better service for patients who present to this ED with self harm'* (Dr Fiona Rae, Consultant in A&E with responsibility for A&E Junior Doctor Training, East Division, BCU LHB).
- *'Suicidal thoughts and monitoring were very nebulous concepts. The Cole-King Continuum provides a platform to tease out individual aspects effectively'* (Consultant Psychiatrist, BCU LHB).
- *'I have worked in A&E for 21 years, as a Sister for the last 8 years. I found [the training] informative, well constructed and extremely relevant to A&E. Junior staff would benefit greatly from this'* (Sister, A&E).
- *'A whole patient approach to risk as opposed to just scoring scales'* (Junior Doctor, A&E).
- *'I now understand that A&E staff can make a difference'* (Staff Grade, A&E).
- *'I used to think that people who killed themselves were selfish, after your training I now know how desperate they must have been'* (Consultant Physician BCU LHB).
- *'This training should be mandatory to all volunteers'* (CRUSE volunteer).
- *'Excellent session, interactive and significantly increased my knowledge and understanding in this area'* (F2 general hospital doctor, BCULHB).
- *'It's not rocket science and it was really inspiring'* (Consultant Psychiatrist BCULHB).