

**2019 – 2024**

**Mid Canterbury Suicide Prevention /  
Postvention strategy and action plan.**





**EVERY LIFE  
IN MID CANTERBURY  
IS A LIFE WORTH LIVING**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every death has an impact...

- Increased risk of self-harm and suicidal behaviours - particularly in young people.
- Increased potential for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression.
- Grief with heightened feelings of abandonment and rejection, shame and stigma, anger and blaming
- Professionals also identify guilt, anger and a desire for answers.
- Confusion as some professionals feel they should not grieve and those who do can feel both internal and external stigma.
- Professionals may question their clinical abilities, affect their ability to make judgements about the risk in others and to manage their relationships with other clients/students

Not to mention the loss of the individual concerned and the significant long-term impact on immediate family.

Regionally, Canterbury has the highest suicide rate in New Zealand, with 12.6 deaths per 100,000 annually. The New Zealand average is 12.1/100,000, while Mid Canterbury is significantly higher than both of these, with 14.3/100,000.

Up until 2019, Mid Canterbury had no dedicated worker or agency delivering targeted suicide interventions. Safer Mid Canterbury responded to this pressing need by seeking funding to employ a Suicide Prevention Co-ordinator (subsequently titled Lives Worth Living Co-ordinator) for a minimum of five years. The role of the Co-ordinators is to promote and lead a standardised, whole of community approach to addressing this issue.

A Mid Canterbury Suicide Prevention Network was formed in November, 2019 and widely welcomed by local agencies and a Charter, focused on collaboration to achieve wellbeing for all and a reduction in suicide in Mid Canterbury, is being developed (see Appendix 1).

The Mid Canterbury Suicide Prevention/Postvention Strategy and Action Plan, 2019-2024, summarises the Network's feedback on what could be improved in both the suicide prevention and postvention phases of the suicide continuum and outlines a number of projects and initiatives to collectively improve community awareness of suicide, promote wellbeing and resilience, support at-risk individuals, families and communities and support those who have experienced suicide, over a 5-year period.

This is summarised as follows:

# MID CANTERBURY SUICIDE PREVENTION/ POSTVENTION STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN, 2019-2024



## Our vision

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Every life in Mid Canterbury is a life worth living



## Outcomes

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- o Wellbeing for all
- o Reduced suicide rate for Mid Canterbury

### Our mission: We will achieve our Vision by:

- Empowering the community to take charge of their own and others' wellbeing
- Increasing awareness of suicide prevention amongst community leaders and those agencies which work with key target groups in the community
- Agencies involved in suicide prevention/postvention working collaboratively, using agreed best practices and approaches, to reduce suicide in Mid Canterbury
- Providing adequate support to at-risk individuals, families and communities
- Supporting individuals, families and communities to respond to grief and loss and empower them to move forward with their lives

### Our focus areas: We will respond to each stage of the Suicide Prevention Continuum:

1. Promotion: promoting wellbeing and resilience
2. Prevention: preventing suicide and self-harm and responding to suicidal distress
3. Intervention – responding to suicidal behaviour: ensuring the community is aware of the signs of suicidal behaviour, that people can engage with others they are concerned about and know how to access assistance; ensuring clinical and community agencies are able to identify and adequately support at-risk individuals, groups and communities
4. Postvention – supporting after a suicide: individuals, families and communities are well supported to respond to grief and loss and are empowered to move forward with their lives

### Key projects which will be developed to increase wellbeing and reduce suicide include:

- 1.
- 2.

### Working Collaboratively:

We recognise that we must work together to increase wellbeing for all and reduce suicide in Mid Canterbury, and the following values and shared ways of working will guide the implementation of the Mid Canterbury Suicide Prevention/Postvention Strategy and Action Plan, 2019-2020:

- \*
- \*
- \*

# 3 | BACKGROUND

## INTRODUCTION

In 2019, Safer Mid Canterbury responded to the ongoing issue of suicide in Mid Canterbury and the lack of suicide prevention services in the District by securing funding for a five-year period to employ a Suicide Prevention Co-ordinator (titled Lives Worth Living Co-ordinator/Facilitator).

At that time Mid Canterbury had no dedicated agency/worker delivering targeted suicide interventions. Other agencies had limitations around what they could deliver and there was no standardised whole of community approach to this serious community issue.

As well as being a rural community without access to the kind of specialist services available in larger centres, Mid Canterbury has experienced challenges such as the Mycoplasma Bovis outbreak, which has put significant strain on the farming community's mental wellbeing and resilience. The District has also seen a number of youth suicides, with a resulting contagion effect amongst young people.

# 4 | LIVES WORTH LIVING SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAMME

## The role of the Lives Worth Living Co-ordinators is to:

- 01 Identify workforce training requirements and provide and/or arranging for training to meet local needs.
- 02 Develop a Suicide Prevention and Postvention Plan for Mid Canterbury (2019-2024)
- 03 Postvention response within 24 hours of death.
- 04 Inform the Canterbury coordinators of the specific needs of the Mid Canterbury community
- 05 Become a voice and influence national suicide prevention to ensure it meets the needs of the Mid Canterbury Community.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME ARE TO:

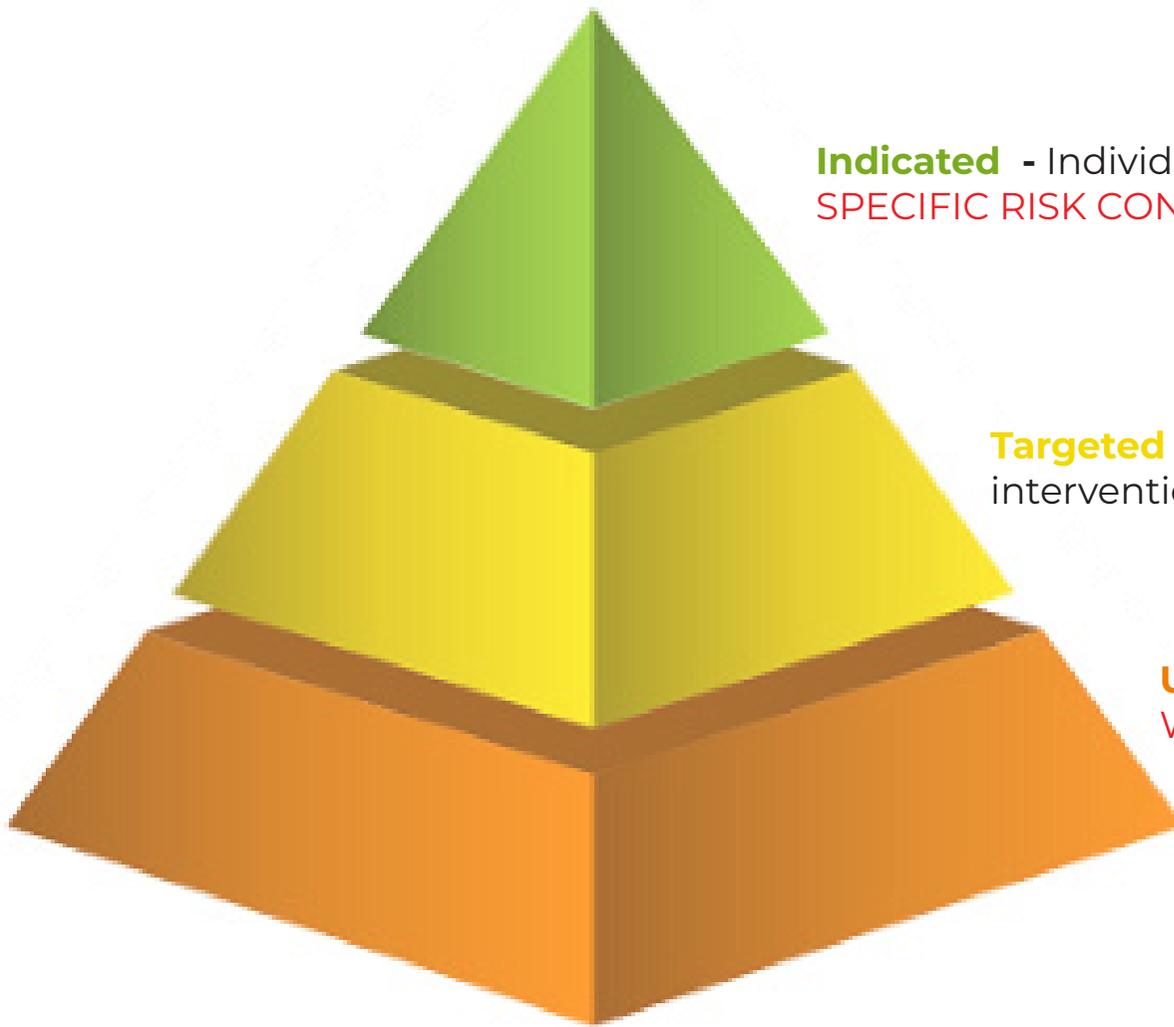
1. Increase community awareness of suicide risk factors and signs
2. Increase public understanding of how to identify and support at risk individuals
3. Provide postvention support in the event of a death
4. Deliver consistent messaging with a standardised approach

# 5 | MODELS AND DEFINITIONS OF SUICIDE PREVENTION

## Structured Suicide Prevention

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The model of Mrazek and Haggerty is useful in deciding on the scope and objectives of Suicide Prevention activities and is used by the World Health Organisation and other countries including Australia to structure suicide prevention activities.



**Indicated** - Individuals with identified  
**SPECIFIC RISK CONDITIONS**

**Targeted** - Sub populations who require tailored  
interventions to address **ELEVATED RISK**

**Universal** - Wellness messages given to the  
**WHOLE POPULATION**

**Indicated Interventions** for individuals with identified risk and where mental health is a significant contributor. The care, treatment and management of these individuals is generally the responsibility of the DHB and Primary Care clinicians, however identifying those people in our community who need this support is a key component of this project.

**Targeted Interventions** are data driven targeted responses aimed to address concerns in high risk populations. This is a key aspect of our targeted programmes.

**Universal Interventions** are delivered to the whole population and are not normally suicide specific. Population wellness messages will be the responsibility of this initiative in partnership with other key organisations. Consistent messaging is of high importance. These wellness programmes often have more generalised topics and although are not suicide specific, they often address underlying risk factors.

# 7 | TREATY OF WAITANGI

While the Mid Canterbury Suicide Prevention/Postvention Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2024 is a strategy for all people in Mid Canterbury, it recognises the special relationship between Maori under Te Tiriti o Waitangi is key to achieving the vision of the Strategy and to promoting wellbeing and suicide prevention for Maori communities.

The Action Plan 2019-2024 includes strategies for supporting Maori leadership and participation in wellness promotion and suicide prevention and ensuring that Maori cultural concepts, values and practices are honoured and protected.

## MID CANTERBURY SUICIDE PREVENTION NETWORK

Following the appointment of the Lives Worth Living Co-ordinators, a workshop was held on 29 November, 2019 with local agencies involved in suicide prevention to form a Mid Canterbury Suicide Prevention Network.

Forty people attended the workshop, which focussed on what agencies were currently doing to support suicide prevention and postvention in the Mid Canterbury community and what could be done better.



# KEY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN SUICIDE PREVENTION WERE:

- More training for local agencies
- Connecting up/collaborating
- Caring for people working in suicide prevention
- Easier access and pathways to mental health services
- More education programmes
- Opening up conversations in the community and getting messages and awareness out there
- Building resilience – for example, teaching wellbeing and resilience in the classroom
- Developing resources such as a directory of services
- Creating a diary of community talks and events and promoting it
- After hours services



# COMMENTS ON IMPROVEMENTS IN POSTVENTION WERE:

- Programmes/activities which promote community resilience
- Educating parents on the complexities of today’s teenagers
- Promoting the 5 Ways to Wellbeing and 1737 district-wide
- Supporting each other at a professional level
- More communication between services in the local community and CAF
- Promoting best practice messaging consistently inter-agency
- Establishing a red flag system we all follow to identify risks and know what to do
- Co-ordinating processes for referral
- Having more information available at Ashburton Hospital
- More staff training
- Continued networking
- Need for an urgent counselling response
- More support around families afterwards (6 weeks on) linking them in (connectedness)
- Acknowledging the needs of target groups such as seniors, youth, rural communities, people with disabilities, and people with limited English

Comments and ideas for improving prevention and postvention services have been developed and incorporated into the Mid Canterbury Suicide Prevention Action Plan, 2019-2024.

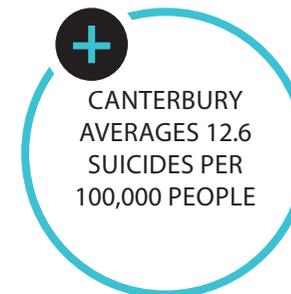
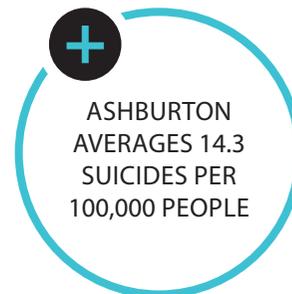
A Charter is being developed, committing signatories to working collaboratively to address increasing wellbeing for all and reducing suicide in the Mid Canterbury District.

# 9 | PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

This document incorporates the vision of the New Zealand Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2029 and its outcomes of reduced suicide rates and wellbeing for all. It also recognises the work of Pegasus Health, which holds the contract for suicide response for Canterbury.

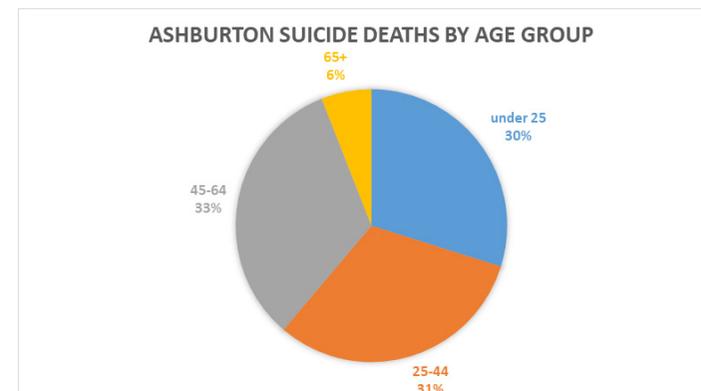
The Plan identifies a number of suicide prevention and postvention projects and initiatives identified by the Mid Canterbury Suicide Prevention Network which will be undertaken over the next 5 years. Working collaboratively to deliver the Plan will contribute to reducing suicide in the District and increasing community awareness and wellbeing.

**ASHBURTON DISTRICT HAS A HIGHER SUICIDE RATE THAN EITHER CANTERBURY OR NEW ZEALAND:**



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**APPROXIMATELY 1/3 OF SUICIDES IN ASHBURTON DISTRICT ARE UNDER 25. THIS IS HIGHER THAN THE CANTERBURY RATIO.**



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# MID CANTERBURY SUICIDE PREVENTION/POSTVENTION STRATEGY, 2019-2024

## **Our Vision:**

Every life in Mid Canterbury is a life worth living

## **Mission**

We will achieve our Vision by:

- Empowering the community to take charge of their own and others' wellbeing
- Increasing awareness of suicide prevention amongst community leaders and those agencies which work with key target groups in the community
- Agencies involved in suicide prevention/postvention working collaboratively, using agreed best practices and approaches, to reduce suicide in Mid Canterbury
- Providing adequate support to at-risk individuals, families and communities
- Supporting individuals, families and communities to respond to grief and loss and empower them to move forward with their lives

## **Values**

## **Objectives**

The four key objectives which emerged from the Mid Canterbury Suicide Prevention Network and wider consultation and research are:

1. Promotion: promoting wellbeing and resilience
2. Prevention: preventing suicide and self-harm and responding to suicidal distress
3. Intervention – responding to suicidal behaviour: ensuring the community is aware of the signs of suicidal behaviour, that people can engage with others they are concerned about and know how to access assistance; ensuring clinical and community agencies are able to identify and adequately support at-risk individuals, groups and communities
4. Postvention – supporting after a suicide: individuals, families and communities are well supported to respond to grief and loss and are empowered to move forward with their lives

# 11 MID CANTERBURY SUICIDE PREVENTION ACTION PLAN, 2019-2024

The Vision, Mission and Objectives of the Mid Canterbury Suicide Prevention Strategy will be achieved through a number of projects and initiatives outlined in the four areas of the Action Plan below:

## ACTION AREA 1: PROMOTION – PROMOTING WELLBEING AND RESILIENCE

Activity/Project	Target Group	Action	Timeframe	Outcomes/how we measure success	Partners (bold indicates lead agency/agencies)
MHI01 Training	Rural Support Trust; First Responders; Kahoanui: Community agencies	ATTENDANCE AT MHI01; RISK ASSESSMENT	Completed	Participant survey	<b>Lives Worth Living (LWL)</b>
Lifekeeper training/education on risk assessment	Community organisations; NGOs; Voluntary agencies	Online programme	Online training - ongoing	Participant survey	<b>LWL</b>
Wellbeing and Resilience Workshops	Community/frontline staff; volunteer organisations; Ashburton District Council	2 hour workshops	Ongoing	Participant survey	<b>LWL</b>
Webinars: -Resilience -Wellbeing -Education and awareness of mental health	Community/NGOs/all target groups	Online	Ongoing	Participant surveys	<b>LWL</b>
Attend community events/shows/expos/Ashburton A and P Show/rural events/AGMs to promote education and awareness of wellbeing	All target groups	Community events	Ongoing	Visitor surveys	<b>LWL</b>
Promotion	Mid Canterbury community	Messaging on wellbeing and resilience and information on helplines/useful sites etc, via print media; radio; Facebook; Facetime; ZOOM; public talks	Ongoing	Feedback from public	<b>LWL</b>

## ACTION AREA 2: PREVENTION – PREVENTING SUICIDE AND SELF-HARM AND RESPONDING TO SUICIDAL DISTRESS

Activity/Project	Target Group	Action	Timeframe	Outcomes/how we measure success	Partners (bold indicates lead agency/agencies)
AEIOU Training	Frontline staff; community organisations	Ongoing training to all target groups working interagency	Ongoing	Participant surveys	<b>Lives Worth Living (LWL)</b>
Take a Navigator role to guide persons of concern through appropriate referral pathways	All community	Navigate those at risk and needing intervention through the appropriate agency	Ongoing	Timeframes, surveys	<b>All agency</b>

## ACTION AREA 3: INTERVENTION – RESPONDING TO SUICIDAL BEHAVIOUR; ADEQUATE COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE, SUPPORT AND PATHWAYS TO CARE

Activity/Project	Target Group	Action	Timeframe	Outcomes/how we measure success	Partners (bold indicates lead agency/agencies)
Postvention Response	All community	Interagency response team appropriate to the target age group; wrap around supporting families and friends affected by loss by suicide	24 or as requested	Review of process	<b>Agencies involved in the response team</b>
Bereaved by suicide/grief programme	Those affected by loss	8 week programme for those who would like to engage support through grief process 4 months post loss	4 months post loss	Group member surveys	<b>LWL/Skylight/Waves/Safer Mid Canterbury</b>

## ACTION AREA 4: POSTVENTION – SUPPORTING AFTER A SUICIDE

Activity/Project	Target Group	Action	Timeframe	Outcomes/how we measure success	Partners (bold indicates lead agency/agencies)

## 13 | REFERENCES:

1. Canterbury District Health Board Suicide Prevention Co-ordinator Workplan Draft 2015
2. Every Life Matters – He Tapu te Oranga o ia tangata: Suicide Prevention Strategy 2019-2029 and Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2019-2024 for Aotearoa New Zealand, Ministry of Health, NZ, 2019.
3. Lives Worth Living Programme, Safer Mid Canterbury – various presentations and papers
4. Mid Central District Health Board Suicide Prevention and Postvention Action Plan 2018-2019
5. Safe Communities Foundation of New Zealand – various webinars and papers
6. Southern District Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2020-2023, Southern Health and WellSouth, 2020

## APPENDICES:

1. MID CANTERBURY SUICIDE PREVENTION NETWORK CHARTER