HELP IS CLOSE – Press Release Dec 2024.

A campaign to reduce the number of deaths by suicide in the Lancaster area is set to launch next month.

The ‘Help Is Close’ initiative is aimed at anyone who might be struggling, for whatever reason.

Whether you have financial concerns, or issues around drinking, drug use, gambling, relationship problems, health concerns, loneliness, pressure at school or work or struggling with life in general, you will be able to access support for your mental health.

A group of organisations from the Lancaster district have come together to develop and fund a programme to be delivered through assemblies and workshops in local schools, college and universities.

Through this programme, people aged 11 to 24 will be given the tools to help them manage situations and feelings that will hopefully enable them to better manage difficult situations throughout their life course.

There will also be a district wide, all-age campaign under the Help Is Close banner that will direct people of all ages to local support that is listed in the Lancaster District Digital Directory, which can be found online at [directory.lancastercvs.org.uk](http://www.directory.lancastercvs.org.uk).

The campaign literature will feature the website and a QR code that will take people straight to the directory, where they will be able to find services, groups and activities that can help.

Sarah Baines, development lead for Lancaster Integrated Care Community, who is leading on the programme and campaign, said: “It became evident when we started looking at the number of deaths by suicide in our district that they were high compared to other areas.

“It also became apparent, when talking to people in our community that most people either had personal experience or knew of people who had been affected by suicide. The effects of a death by suicide are deep and far reaching. One death by suicide is too many.

“People sometimes feel so overwhelmed and just don’t know where to turn for help. Our district has lots of amazing groups and charities that are here and wanting to help, it’s just knowing where they are and how people can access them.

“Help can be accessed by telephone, webchat, text, online and face-to-face, no one is judging, and a lot of the organisations are confidential and anonymous, please just reach out. *Help Is Close*.”

If people feel they may be experiencing a mental health crisis, they are encouraged to contact the Lancaster and South Cumbria Mental Health team, which is available 24/7 on 0800 013 0710 or by calling NHS 111 and selecting option 2.

Amanda Housley, director of operations for Lancashire and South Cumbria Mental Health Trust (LSCFT), said: “It’s important that our communities in Lancaster know that help is out there through the many support groups found in the Lancaster District Digital Directory, which we encourage people to take a look at.

“We can all play a part in helping those needing support with their mental health and wellbeing, which can begin with starting a conversation with the person you are concerned about. I appreciate this isn’t always easy, but by talking, you may help the person open up and feel like they can share how they feel.

“You can signpost them to the directory or our services at LSCFT, such as Talking Therapies, for some additional support.”