

NICCY Platform Piece - Young people still vulnerable to suicide and accidental death

WE'VE all read the media headlines, and our hearts have gone out to each and every family that has lost a young person to suicide.

Right now we can do more to reduce the number of young people who take their own lives.

In my report on adolescent suicide and accidental death there are recommendations, which I believe provide a clear path to help young people.

My main thought is deceptively simple.

We know that what a child experiences can affect their adolescent years. If that child experiences multiple traumas such as abuse and having a parent who has drug or alcohol problems, for example, they are more vulnerable to suicide in their adolescent years because of the effect that these traumas can have on their ability to cope with problems in later life.

Learning from research we can see that these are issues, if addressed early, which children can be supported through. This support can help them develop the skills and resilience required to deal with these issues and problems throughout their teenage years, young adulthood and later life.

There is no getting away from the feeling of loneliness – even in a crowd – for a young person who is experiencing depression or mental health issues. Yet, too often adults label young people in their teenage years as 'difficult' or 'troublesome' but never ask why they are troubled. Often, it is the case that childhood experiences and difficulties are the source.

Government, statutory agencies, voluntary and community groups can work together, to strengthen the safeguards for children and young people. If we are to address this sensitive and complex issue the ongoing needs of vulnerable children must be identified and provided for.

With the creation of the Safeguarding Board Government has made strides towards putting in place more support for children and, I hope, learning lessons from the past.



There is now the opportunity to create a mindset and a framework that does not wait, but is proactive in helping a child, supporting a child, creating a pathway for that child which will be a protection against the issues in later years.

We must not waste that opportunity.

The loss of a child or young person due to suicide or accidental death is a tragedy and I am deeply aware of the profound impact of this loss on everyone it touches. Together we can do more and we must do more.

Finally - I urge any young person who is having thoughts about suicide or wanting to harm themselves, or who is worried about a friend, to talk to an adult they trust or to contact ChildLine online or on 0800 1111 to get the help and support they need.

- **Patricia Lewsley-Mooney is the Commissioner for Children and Young People.**
- **The Commissioner launched a major report: [Still Vulnerable: The Impact of Childhood Experiences on Adolescent Suicide and Accidental Death.](#)**

