



TAKING OWNERSHIP OF SUICIDE ON THE UK RAIL NETWORK

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SUMMARY

In January 2010 Network Rail, the UK's infrastructure controller entered into a unique five year contractual relationship with one of the country's leading charities, Samaritans to seek their expertise in addressing the increasing problem of suicides on the rail network and how to prevent or mitigate against them.

This paper charts how an increasing suicide rate at the turn of the century led to that decision, the contribution Samaritans made to creating a suicide prevention programme for the rail industry and the journey the two organisations have been on to deliver it.

The paper also captures the tensions that exist in a highly fragmented and performance driven industry when it is asked to voluntarily come together to deliver a common goal for both its own benefit and that of society as a whole.

Above all though the paper has been written to allow industry colleagues from around the world to learn from the experiences Network Rail have had in delivering a bespoke programme which seeks to address a complex social issue that in part has found its way on to the railway.

INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with the arrangements Network Rail on behalf of the UK rail industry has put in place to prevent or mitigate against suicides on its network.

The programme is financed by the company and is free at the point of use to all operators and stakeholders. Whilst funding has an important part to play in delivering schemes to prevent suicides the success of the programme depends not only upon the collaboration of organisations but of the people within them.

It is also important to note that suicides exist in the wider social context and whilst there is uniqueness about an individual taking their life on a railway line the rail industry is a microcosm of the society it operates within. Therefore it must work with appropriate governmental departments to find a longer term solution and whilst doing so ensure that through its actions it does not displace rail related suicides elsewhere.

THE DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

The administrative structure of the UK rail network dictates that any suicide that takes place on it is the responsibility of the infrastructure controller which in this case is Network Rail. This places a considerable onus and burden upon that duty holder both in terms of social responsibility and the impact such events have upon train performance for which they are wholly accountable.

From 2001 the percentage of suicides on the UK rail network relative to the general population began to increase reaching a peak of 4.4% in 2006, as shown in figure 1.

It was at this point Network Rail began to consider the issue of suicide prevention as a stand alone activity requiring specialist management. Up until that time the impact of such events were managed in a piecemeal way and accepted as part of the fabric of the rail industry's business.

Whilst the number of suicides in 2006 could be considered enough in its own right to affect this change the real driver was the impact such events were having on train performance and train operating companies. In terms of minutes delay to services 1.3m had been accrued between 2001 and 2006, as figure 2 shows, at a cost of circa £116m (US \$174m) to Network Rail alone. This amount of loss in an industry regulated as it is was considered to be unsustainable as was the impact such events were having on front line rail staff, particularly train drivers.

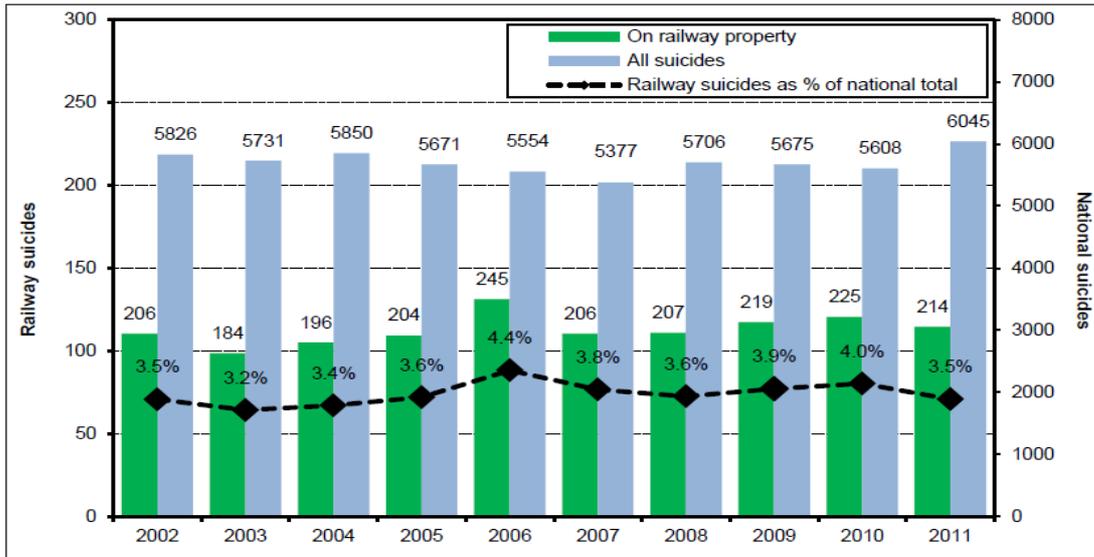
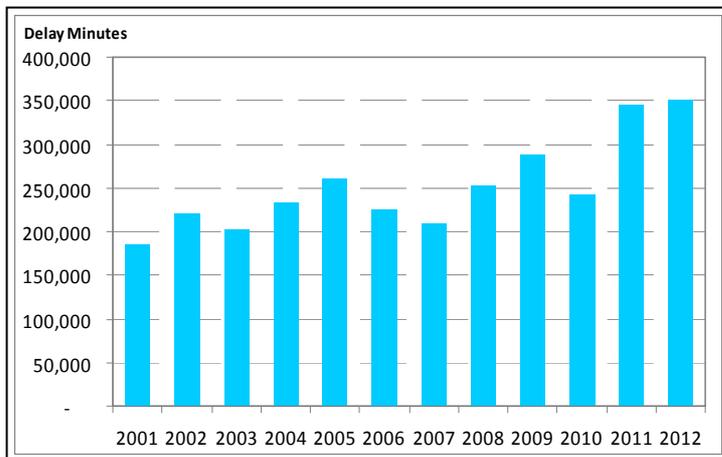


Figure 1: UK rail suicides as a percentage of the national total

The new focus given to this issue by Network Rail and its stakeholders led to a slight reduction in suicide events in the following years. However their impact was still high and it quickly became apparent that as an infrastructure operator Network Rail did not possess the knowledge or skills required to understand or sufficiently manage this complex social issue.

In recognition of this in 2009 the company sought a partner organisation that could help them address this knowledge gap. On 1st January 2010 it entered into a five year £5m (US \$7.5m) contractual relationship/partnership with one of the UK's biggest and most recognisable charities and a specialist in emotional support for vulnerable people, Samaritans.



Founded in 1953 by Chad Varah, a vicar in London, the charity's vision is that "fewer people die by suicide". The partnership was therefore an excellent fit for both parties with Samaritans being able to directly interact with millions of people traveling by rail each year whilst providing Network Rail with the necessary expertise to develop and sustain a suicide prevention programme.

Figure 2: Delay minutes attributable to suicides on the UK rail network

THE AIM OF THE NETWORK RAIL/SAMARITANS PARTNERSHIP AND THE MEASUREMENT OF SUCCESS

The aim of the partnership and the suicide prevention programme, that it was agreed Network Rail should lead on behalf of the UK rail industry was to reduce suicides on the network by an aspirational 20% between 2010 and 2015. Using the financial year 2009/10 as a baseline in which 234 suicides were recorded, see figure 3, this would mean a reduction of 47 events by 31 March 2015 bringing the overall number down to 187 per annum.

To achieve this target it was considered that 4% would be taken off the baseline per annum i.e. 9.4 events, albeit that this figure would be 'back end loaded' to allow the industry time to embrace the suicide prevention programme as a whole.

Figure 3 shows clearly that the rail industry is currently below that rate although in 2010/11 (Year 1 of the programme) the number of events fell to a six year low with just 203 being recorded. In the following two years (Years 2 and 3) though the number of events have risen above the baseline.

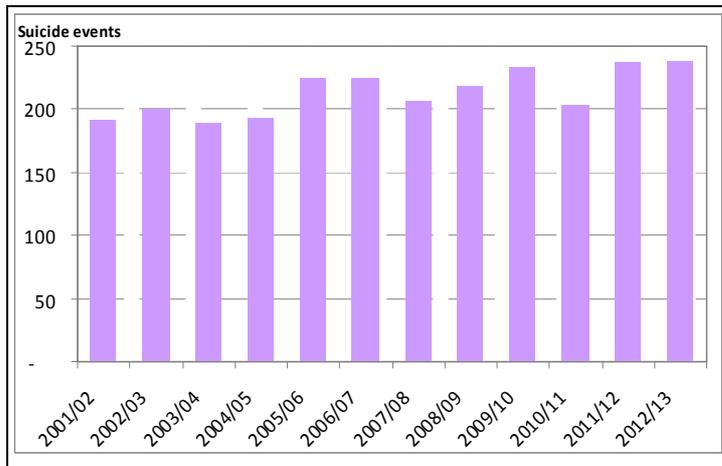


Figure 3: Suicides/suspected suicides

(and the world) at the time. A similarly high rate in Year 3 is possibly attributable to the same cause and the 'feel good Britain' psyche that prevailed over the period of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and London Olympics and Paralympics (5 June – 9 September 2012). The latter it is believed may have led people already feeling vulnerable to become more disposed to taking their own lives.

The issue here is that it may be more meaningful to use a percentage rather than a finite number as a success factor of the industry's suicide prevention programme given that as national suicide rates increase as they did in the UK in 2010 and 2011 a proportionate increase may be expected on the rail network. As figure 1 shows though this was not the case. Between 2010 and 2011 for example there was a 7.8% increase in suicides amongst the national population but of those taking their lives on the railway there was a small decrease of 0.5%.

Irrespective of these arguments the UK rail industry has chosen to retain the figure of 187 events per annum as its success criteria for the programme. This recognises the industry's 'love affair' with finite target values and the perverse but accepted logic that it will work more collaboratively the harder something becomes to deliver.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING - A MACRO PERSPECTIVE

However the industry chooses to look at success there is no doubt in this case that a general feeling prevails within the sector that the programme currently is not delivering what it has set out to i.e. a reduction in the total number of suicides on the network. This in turn exposes tensions within the industry and between partners relative to the drive and cooperation some are seen to contribute to the overall success of the programme. Ideology and business models potentially lie at the heart of this which must be appropriately managed and addressed if success is to be achieved.

There is no doubt that the partnership Network Rail entered into with Samaritans is considered to be an extremely successful one. Indeed in a very short space of time it has won a significant number of awards such as the *Charity Partnership Award* at the Business Charity Awards and the *Transport Team/Partnership of the Year Award* at the National Transport Awards which reflect that. Putting these to one side though the greatest measure of success comes from the knowledge that the industry would not have progressed as far as it has in terms of suicide prevention if it was not for this partnership.

With success and partnering come challenges particularly when a third sector organisation works closely with a public one where the complexities of the latter's organisational structure and the manner in which it does business can appear to be at odds with the goals and values of the charity it seeks to work with.

It is fair to say tensions have and do exist within the Network Rail/Samaritans partnership (as they do in any collaborative working relationship) but it could be argued that this adds to its strength and the increasingly progressive and positive way that the programme is being delivered. As a company Network Rail also recognises that in a number of significant areas Samaritans can do work to reduce suicides and their impact on the network in ways that it never could because of what it is, what it is seen to stand for and its place within the social landscape.

The fragmented nature of the rail industry in the UK also has the potential to undermine the successful delivery of nationally driven programmes such as this. The economics of delivering or contributing to a suicide prevention programme for some Train Operating Companies (TOCs) may not sit comfortably against their financial 'bottom line' particularly where the franchise agreement is short, soon to end or where operating margins are tight. Equally if they remain relatively unaffected by suicide events financial commitments to such a programme may appear to be unwarranted and unnecessary.

At a much lower level even communicating core messages in such an environment can prove challenging. Promoting campaign material at railway stations is a cornerstone of the prevention programme and yet some operators will not display it because it does not earn revenue or they fear that it will attract those seeking to take their lives to those particular locations. No evidence exists to support the latter view.

THE CORNERSTONES OF THE SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAMME

2006 saw the publication of 'Guidance on action to be taken at suicide hotspots'¹ This work, commissioned by the National Institute for Mental Health England is considered by some to be the definitive piece of work in this area and was subsequently used by Samaritans to shape the suicide prevention programme they presented to Network Rail in 2009.

The programme comprised:

- **Hotspot Identification.** Through data analysis which took account of event numbers, performance impact (both actual and potential) and socio-economic factors, 175 were hotspot or priority locations were identified across the network
- **Communications campaign.** Following academic research it was established that 80% of those taking their lives on the network were white males between the ages of 30 and 55 from poor socio-economic backgrounds. Campaign material was specifically designed around this group (see figure 4) comprising of posters that could be displayed at stations (or other locations as required) through to beer mats that could be used in pubs and clubs where that target demographic might drink
- **Training.** Two bespoke courses were designed for rail staff (although these are now delivered to external groups too such as station watch groups).
Managing Suicidal Contacts (MSC) training provides a skill set to allow individuals whilst going about their railway business to approach an individual showing signs of vulnerability and intervene in a potential suicide attempt with confidence. The second course, Trauma Support Training is geared towards those that may experience the trauma of a suicide event or have to manage those that have. An industry acclaimed booklet 'Journey to Recovery' accompanies this course
- **Emotional Support Outside Branch.** This recognises that there are vulnerable people in society who may consider or have considered the rail network as a place to take their lives. Where such are identified Samaritans volunteers will work with them away from (or 'outside' of) their usual branch offices. For example Samaritans volunteers may visit detention centres where they are geographically close to the rail network and share with the inmates the help and support that they can offer them should they feel the need for it



Figure 4: Campaign images

- **Media management.** It is generally recognised that irresponsible press reporting of suicides has the potential to lead to copycat events and contagion. The press in the UK is not banned from reporting suicides but at times this freedom can lead them to sensationalise or glorify such events. Guidance for media editors produced by Samaritans forms part of the programme to try and counteract that. Application of the guidance is monitored by both Network Rail and Samaritans media teams and 'breaches' followed up
- **Professional support.** The programme was introduced because of Network Rail's lack of experience in the field of suicide prevention and because as an industry body its influence would be limited in some key areas, such as the press. Its partnership with Samaritans allows a well respected charitable organisation to do some of that on its behalf and provide expertise to help inform decision making e.g. why lineside memorials dedicated to those that have taken their lives should be removed at the first opportunity or why psychological barriers have the potential to influence the behavior of a suicidal person
- **Adopting a multi agency approach.** The complex nature of suicides and their impact upon a whole suite of agencies and organisations makes it impossible for just one of them to address the issue in isolation. Success will come through inter agency cooperation where all parties act together to achieve a common goal irrespective of those they may have themselves for the same issue. To that end a steering group for suicide prevention was established, chaired by Network Rail and comprising of industry partners namely the British Transport Police (BTP), TOCs, trades unions, academics and Samaritans
- **Post incident support.** Following a suicide event Samaritans are on call to attend the location and provide support to those (staff and the public) that may have witnessed and been traumatised or in some other way affected by it

Over the years the scope of the programme has grown and three other key themes have emerged. The first is the introduction of physical and or psychological barriers at many hot spot locations to prevent vulnerable



Figure 5: Platform edge hatching at Northallerton station

people accessing the running line. These may comprise of mid platform fencing which prevents 'customer' access to high speed lines where it is not required or platform hatching which has the potential to disrupt ideational thinking such as that shown in figure 5.

The second is around moving the problem off the rail network. This is not with a view to displacing it elsewhere but with one that recognises that the industry has a wider part to play in society and interacting with it to reduce the overall number of suicides. The argument runs that by reducing the number of such events as a whole fewer are likely to take place on the rail network.

Finally, thinking is changing within Network Rail around financial investment in suicide mitigation measures. Developing a business case for suicide prevention activity is notoriously difficult in the UK rail environment where all schemes must yield some return upon investment (be it financial or performance). The 'random' nature of suicides and a dependence upon counterfactual information to prove a case does not lend itself easily to such a model. The dominance of that approach has lately been challenged by the BTP (whose stated goal is to 'preserve life') and their view that investment in certain areas should be made 'because it is intrinsically the right thing to do' and not because it must meet stringent economic criteria. Schemes are now being delivered on the strength of this argument which in the past would never have received funding.

PROGRAMME GOVERNANCE

Formal delivery of the programme is charted along four key routes which are designed to touch one another at various points to ensure consistency of message and delivery. On paper this works well but in practice the size of the industry and the forcefulness of the controlling mind behind the programme possibly exert more influence on the deliverables than the structure of the programme itself.

The National Suicide Prevention Steering and Working Groups

Delivery of the overall programme and its future direction is overseen by a cross industry steering group that meets every four weeks chaired by Network Rail.

The outputs of that Group are cascaded through the industry in a number of ways depending upon their potential impact on industry partners:

- those pertinent to Network Rail are cascaded directly by the programme manager for the project to Network Rail's ten suicide prevention representatives (one for each administrative area of the network) together with anyone else in the organisation that needs to be made aware of them, the BTP and Samaritans
- items that TOCs just need to be made aware of are cascaded through their own suicide prevention representatives or managing directors
- items that require across the board TOC endorsement or engagement are progressed through senior industry or government sponsored meetings

The number of people involved in these arrangements has the potential to dilute, delay or derail the introduction of the outputs emerging from the National Suicide Prevention Steering Group (NSPSG).

The National Suicide Prevention Working Group (NSPWG) sits below the steering group and seeks to translate strategy into deliverables. That group comprises of cross industry representatives, meets four weekly and is chaired by the programme manager for the project.

All of Network Rail's route suicide prevention representatives attend this meeting and it is from here that they take back to their routes and industry partners the current thinking and direction of the programme

Network Rail's delivery mechanism

Whilst many parties are involved in the delivery of the programme Network Rail is seen by the industry to lead it. Nationally this manifests itself now through the work undertaken by the programme manager for the project. At a local level route suicide prevention representatives, supported by a dedicated Samaritans project officer work with the company's own staff and those of stakeholders to progress the programme.

The pace of the programme at this level is very dependent upon the calibre, maturity and commitment of the route representative, together with the cooperation of stakeholders. It is clear that a correlation exists between how proactive the representative is and the cooperation they receive.

Time has taught the company that there is a model representative. It is someone that is dedicated to the programme full time, who is prepared to and is allowed to work for a fixed period in this field and one that is prepared to interact proactively with stakeholders at all levels. That model is seldom reflected in the organisation although there is a growing recognition that above all a dedicated resource needs to be assigned to the programme in each route. After much recent lobbying 50% of routes now have a full time resource to manage the suicide prevention programme locally.

The autonomous nature of the routes which leads to disparities in the deployment of resources can manifest itself elsewhere too. Some will see themselves as progressive and look to deliver initiatives which seek to reduce suicides but are out with corporate direction or thinking. For example a route based initiative to provide alternative training to that which is supported nationally suggests that the programmes messages are not being effectively delivered. This has the potential to undermine the programme or highlight a lack of joined up thinking. Such events lend weight to the argument that a strong central command and control structure needs to be in place to optimise the delivery of a suicide prevention programme.

The delivery mechanism for train operators

Train operators have their own representatives to deliver the programme. Information is supplied to them through Network Rail route representatives and their own management team who will receive appropriate messages through senior rail industry or government sponsored meetings that they are part of.

The programme achieves most success when the local Network Rail/TOC relationship is both a strong and collaborative one, see figure 6. The nature of TOCs though means that they can have their own agenda when delivering the programme and in essence can choose to change what is considered industry best practice in terms of prevention. In effect nothing binds them into the programme other than their own desire, or pressure from external sources to be part of it. This has the potential to hamper progress and reduce the consistency and coverage the programme has across the rail network. Where TOCs appear to be out with the programme much behind the scenes lobbying goes on to bring them 'into the fold'. More latterly though Network Rail has entered into discussion with the UK Department for Transport about building clauses into franchise agreements which will legally bind operators into the programme.



Figure 6: A joint route and train operator initiative at Attenborough station (near Nottingham)

TOCs have a significant part to play in this programme because they oversee access to the network through their stations. Circa 50% of those taking their lives on the railway do so from a platform. To some degree therefore station managers are being seen increasingly as the 'gate keepers' to this programme. To that group then our messaging is critical and work is progressing to effectively target it.

Programme Management

From the outset and as part of the partnering arrangement the programme has been supported by seven Network Rail sponsored Samaritans staff, a programme manager offering a strategic overview of the programme, three project officers, supporting route and TOC based activities, two trainers and a training coordinator.

In Year 1 of the programme Network Rail put in place a dedicated programme manager to oversee its deployment across the industry and establish the infrastructure that would support it. In this year the number of suicides/suspected suicides fell by circa 13%.

The 'on paper' success of the programme in Year 1 was one of the factors that led to it being delivered as a 'business as usual' activity in Years 2 and 3 with responsibility for it being transferred to the portfolio of an existing line manager. In the circumstances the programme was supported as ably as it could be but the number of suicides increased and the strategic direction, leadership and purpose of it began to wane nationally.

This led to a number of interesting developments notably:

- route teams where sufficiently motivated began to deliver their own initiatives diluting the impact of those designed into the national programme and wresting authority away from the centre to manage and deploy them effectively. As a consequence it is considered that the programme is eighteen months to two years behind where it should be in terms of deliverables and makes returning to a central command and control structure that much more difficult

- Samaritans took on the role of programme delivery. This was never seen to be part of their portfolio and left them in a difficult position in terms of seeking to drive the programme forward but without the necessary level of authority to do so
- some stakeholders identifying Network Rail's level of commitment as a sign that they too could move suicide prevention 'down the agenda'. Consequently it has been difficult to re-engage them in a programme that they have become either sceptical or lost sight of

In April 2012 faced with this landscape and Samaritans concerned that a lack of commitment on the part of Network Rail was undermining the success of the programme the company looked to reinstate a full time programme manager to deliver the project. An appointment to that role was made in September 2012.

Ten months after that appointment a second has been made as the company and industry once more begins to recognise the sheer scale of the issue it seeks to manage together.

THE PROGRAMME POST SEPTEMBER 2012

It is widely considered that Network Rail, its partnership with Samaritans and the suicide prevention programme it has in place, notwithstanding the challenges and issues highlighted in this paper is "one of the most progressive and ambitious of all such programmes in Europe and perhaps the world"². Much has been done in the last three years to earn this accolade but it is recognised that much still remains to be achieved if the goal the industry has set itself is to be realised.

Recently in an attempt to inform and sum up for UK rail industry partners the current work and thinking around the programme and its future direction a paper was generated for tabling at various industry meetings. An abridged version of it is attached as Appendix A. It covers a period of nine months from September 2012 to June 2013.

CONCLUSION

Despite the efforts of many at all levels within the rail industry over the last three years its suicide prevention programme does not show a clear level of success against the criteria that was set for it in 2010 i.e. a 20% fall in the number of suicides on the UK rail network in five years up to 2015.

There are a significant number of variables that could account for this. Some are outside the rail industry's control such as changes in domestic welfare legislation whilst others are very much within its gift to manage. The understanding of what these are comes from the steep learning curve the programme has put the UK rail industry through in the last three years particularly in terms of what is needed to introduce, promote and sustain an initiative of this nature in a highly diverse business environment.

Understanding those lessons and applying the learning is fundamental to the programmes evolution. Indeed it has been the willingness of those at its heart to learn and adapt that makes it feel a more successful venture than the performance indicator alone would suggest. The challenge now comes for Network Rail and its partners to embrace the current momentum of the programme (generated essentially through a change in the company's organisational structure) and ensure success goes beyond the current apocryphal view of "Well, without this programme I guess there would be many more suicides on the network".

REFERENCES

¹ Aitkin P, (2006). Guidance on action to be taken at suicide hotspots. Research and Development Department, Devon Partnership NHS Trust

² Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB), (2013). Samaritan/Network Rail tackling suicide on the railways programme: 2012 annual report (page 63). RSSB

Appendix A

CURRENT AND FUTURE PROGRAMME DELIVERABLES

September 2012 to June 2013 initiatives

Funding route based mitigation schemes

In January 2013 £1.17m (US \$1.75m) of central funding was secured to deliver route based suicide mitigation works in recognition of the fact that a number of proposed schemes could not be supported by the company's existing financial arrangements. £550K (US \$825K) has gone towards engineering type mitigation works e.g. platform end fencing and the remainder to more novel schemes such as the use of smart camera technology at level crossings to warn of unauthorised access to the running line. A further tranche of funding is currently being sought centrally to extend the number of schemes that can be progressed locally.

Funding dedicated policing

In January 2013 a dedicated police unit came into being to support the work of Network Rail and the industry in its attempt to reduce suicides on the network. 50% funded by Network Rail (£625K (US \$938K)) and led by a former Chief Superintendent the Strategic Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Team works closely with the rail industry and mental health professionals to ensure suicide prevention receives the correct and appropriate level of bespoke policing.

Elements of the work undertaken by this unit together with the support of Samaritans will be fundamental to progressing the debate with local health authorities around the provision of care for vulnerable people with suicidal tendencies. This is key to our strategy of providing this group with alternatives to suicide irrespective of where and how individuals may have considered taking their lives.

Developing mitigation measures for the future



Figure 7: Mid platform fencing at Southall (near London)

It is generally accepted that a standard package of physical engineering type mitigation measures exist to prevent suicides on the network such as mid platform fencing, see figure 7 and platform end anti-trespass devices.

To ensure the industry was not becoming blinkered in its use of these measures and subsequently resistant to change and new deterrents a workshop to consider mitigation measures of the future was held on 16/17 May 2013. Led by Warwick University Business School at Network Rail's Westwood training facility a group of cross-industry partners put forward many new ideas for consideration. The use of holographic images found great favour as did the concept of separating passengers from platforms until services arrived at a stand at the station.

National suicide prevention conference

On 5 June 2013 the NSPSG held its first suicide prevention conference at Network Rail's Westwood training centre. It was attended by 180 people from across the industry from train operating company managing directors through to customer service assistants.

Hosted by Robin Gisby, Network Rail's Managing Director, Network Operations and with a key note speech from Norman Baker, MP (Parliamentary Under Secretary for the Department for Transport) the aim of the event was to share with the audience:

- the size of the suicide issue on the network
- how Network Rail and the industry are addressing the issue
- how they could personally get involved with the programme
- the concept that suicides are preventable

Feedback from the event has been extremely positive and as a vehicle to re-ignite commitment in the suicide prevention programme its success has been unprecedented.

All the material used at the conference including two new Network Rail/Samaritans partnership DVDs and a very informative South Western Railway DVD can be downloaded from:

<https://qbevents.documenthosting.com/shared/=FHpyfBFHmyQUdw>

Journey to Recovery

In March all train operating companies were able to gain access (free of charge) to a booklet designed for their driver communities helping to guide them through managing the trauma they may experience following involvement in a suicide.

The booklet was designed in conjunction with a number of train companies together with the trade union ASLEF (Associated Society of Locomotive Steam Enginemen and Firemen). The production and distribution of it has been facilitated by the Network Rail/Samaritans partnership. Having been so well received a sister publication is currently being progressed for those outside the driving fraternity.

Suicide Event Reviews

A review process has been in place since January 2013 whereby Network Rail route teams within 72 hours of a suicide taking place conduct a short survey of the event site.

The process is working well and the feedback provides a level of intelligence that might not otherwise be gained. In brief the reviews allow:

- measures to be implemented rapidly that might prevent copycat suicides at the same location
- dialogue between the route and operators that has the potential to promote suicide prevention
- a national overview to be applied to all events and emerging lessons shared across all routes

Looking Ahead

Training and Intervention

Whilst a mainstay of the current suicide prevention programme, Managing Suicidal Contacts (MSC) training and the preparation it provides for 'interventions', note figure 8 will continue to be a cornerstone of the industry's suicide prevention strategy going forward.

The number of people trained increases month on month (we are now approaching 4000 in the MSC course alone) as do the number of interventions. Wherever possible frontline personnel are encouraged to attend the training and not only make interventions but ensure that any they make are recorded in the industry's Safety Management Information System too.

Interventions are such a critical part of our prevention programme that a unique category exists at the National Rail Staff Awards to acknowledge them.

Bespoke research

Currently no bespoke research exists into why circa 4% of the population that chose to take their lives on the railway do so. To address this a research programme is being brought together that will allow some of the UK's leading academics to begin work on addressing this issue. Their outputs will influence our prevention strategy from 2014 onwards.

Reviewing our prevention strategy

The work emerging from the bespoke research is not the only factor that will influence our prevention strategy going forward. A recent trend suggests that an increasing number of suicides are taking place away from station platforms and occurring at locations where access to the running lines is easier such as foot crossings.

Our prevention programme currently focuses on stations and whilst these remain a high priority for our work 'off platform' location suicides cannot be ignored.



Figure 8: Ben Rudkin, Network Rail, re-enacting a successful intervention

Franchise clauses

Network Rail has been approached by the Department for Transport to consider clauses relative to suicide prevention that could be built into franchise agreements. Suggestions will be made in the coming months for their consideration. At present there is no obligation for an operator to subscribe to the existing suicide prevention programme

Suicide hotspots

Each route has a bespoke list of locations at which the potential risk of a suicide or the impact of a suicide is deemed to be high. These hotspot or priority locations are carefully monitored by route teams and mitigation measures put in place to reduce the potential risks such an event may pose.

It is considered however that there are some locations that carry such a significant suicide risk to the network that a national overview should be maintained of them to ensure route teams have the wherewithal to implement appropriate mitigation measures to reduce that risk to a minimum.

Currently the NSPSG is undertaking work to identify which locations may appear on a national list and how these may best be integrated with work already being progressed on the routes.

Camera technology

The use of modern technology is becoming more prevalent in our attempts to prevent suicides at remote but accessible locations.

In the East Midlands smart phone technology is to be trialled but currently our focus is on infra red CCTV equipment. There are two particular types that are being pursued. They are:



Figure 9: Smart camera technology trial
The green sectors are generated using computer algorithms

- Smart cameras – these cameras and the technology that supports them allow lines or vectors to be drawn around certain points, see figure 9 and an action to be initiated when that virtual 'line' is breached. Such technology is well suited to level crossings in sparsely populated areas where the system could provide a warning if the crossing was not used in the prescribed manner. The first equipment of this type will be installed by autumn of 2013
- Fatality cameras – To work effectively the technology that supports these cameras has to be taught to recognise specific behaviours relative to the activity they are being trained to identify. Once learnt the camera and the operating system can then watch for them and activate an alarm when they are observed.

'Analytical Behavioural' technology is not new and in some arenas is extremely effective. However there is little evidence of it previously being used to prevent suicides and as such Network Rail is leading in its development for this purpose.

Resourcing – man power

Managing suicides on the network is a resource hungry activity. To address this two new resource streams will come on line in the coming months:

- Project Management Assistant – A new role is being created within Network Operations to support the Programme Manager (Suicide Prevention). The post will be in place by mid August 2013
- Track and Train graduates – From October 2013 on a six monthly rotating secondment a Track and Train graduate will be assigned specifically to each Network Rail route suicide prevention representative to assist them in delivering the suicide prevention programme

Microsite

The Samaritans maintain an industry secure website (known as the microsite) which holds a large amount of material about the suicide prevention programme. It is increasingly being used to capture all manner of material relative to the workstreams associated with the programme and has become the central repository for all the completed suicide event review forms. Access to it can be requested via s.burden@samaritans.org.