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Bae Abertawe
Swansea Bay University
Health Board



Report Title	Suicide & Self-Harm Prevention			
Report Author	Jennifer Davies, Consultant in Public Health, PHW			
Report Sponsor	Keith Reid, Executive Director of Public Health, SBUHB			
Presented by	Keith Reid, Executive Director of Public Health, SBUHB			
Purpose of the Report	To update on the activity being taken on suicide and self-harm prevention through the Swansea Bay Suicide & Self-Harm Prevention Multi-Agency Action Group (S&SH MAG)			
Key Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suicide rates have been a concern across Swansea Bay (SB) for a number of years. • S&SH MAG was formed in 2019 tasked with overseeing a co-ordinated approach to multi-agency activity, given the need for joined up & collaborative working in order to successfully prevent suicide & self-harm. • The ongoing response by agencies to the COVID pandemic has meant that the work has not been progressed as originally intended. • Some work has continued which is summarised below and the S&SH MAG has recently re-convened. It is currently reviewing and updating its Terms of Reference, including governance and accountability. • The challenges/issues identified below continue to pose a risk in terms of the likelihood of both increasing rates of suicide & self-harm locally and our ability to effectively prevent these. • Suicide is preventable but this requires partnership working across agencies. There is a need to consider whether our current arrangements for Swansea Bay are fit for purpose to meet and address these challenges from a governance; partnership; resourcing; strategic leadership and direction setting perspective. 			
Specific Action Required (please choose one only)	Information	Discussion	Assurance	Approval
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recommendations	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the contents of the report • Support the establishment of a short life Task & Finish group to develop arrangements to integrate oversight of work in the field of suicide and self-harm across Swansea Bay to report within 3 months. 			

Swansea Bay Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Multi-Agency Action Group (S&SH MAG): Update

1. INTRODUCTION

Death by suicide is a tragic event, which usually occurs in response to a series of complex factors that are contextual to the individual. However, if risk factors at the individual, group and population level are addressed effectively suicide is largely preventable.

Swansea Bay Suicide & Self-Harm Multi-Agency Action Group (S&SH MAG) was established in 2019 with the aim of developing an action plan to co-ordinate & stimulate actions across agencies, in line with the six key strategic objectives highlighted within the Talk 2 Me 2 national strategy (2015-20) – now extended to 2022.

During the pandemic, most of the S&SH MAG's intended actions/activity were halted. Last June the group decided to meet informally given concerns over the mental health impact of the pandemic on our communities. The S&SH MAG has recently re-convened and intends to review its Terms of Reference (ToR) and ways of working.

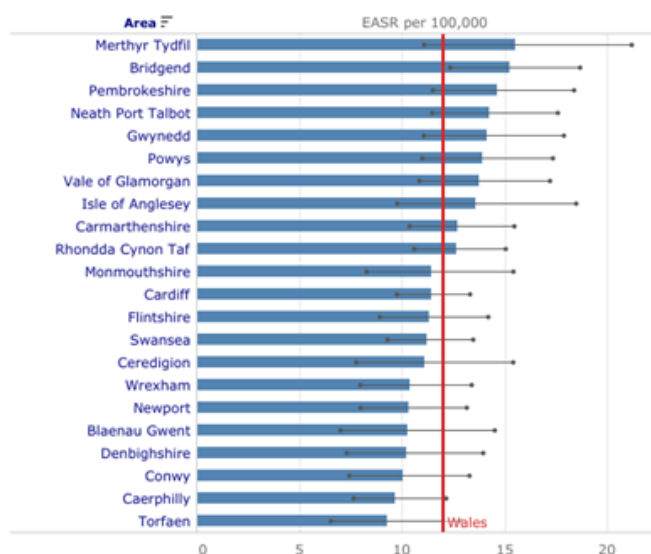
2. BACKGROUND

The national suicide data (published by PHW) has not been updated due to the pandemic. For the period 2014 – 2018 the overall rate of suicides across Swansea Bay UHB was in line with the Wales average, at 12.3 per 100,000 and 12.0 per 100,000 population, respectively (European age-standardised rate EASR). Suicide rates for our local authority areas were not significantly different from the majority of areas for the period 2014-2018 as can be seen below. This equates to a total of 89 and 119 suicides in Neath Port Talbot and Swansea respectively over that time period.

Suicides, 2014 to 2018

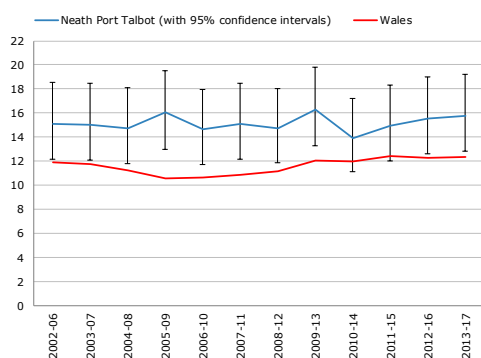
European age-standardised rate (EASR) per 100,000, persons aged 10+, local authorities

←→ 95% confidence interval

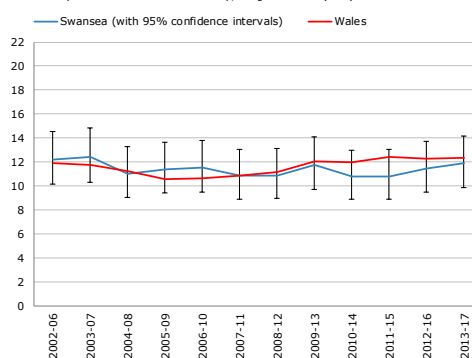


Although not significantly higher than the Wales EASR for 2014-18, NPT has tended to have much higher rates over a number of years (see below), primarily driven by suicides in men.

Suicides, age-standardised rate per 100,000, all persons aged 10 and over, Neath Port Talbot and Wales, 2002-17
Produced by Public Health Wales Observatory, using PHM & MYE (ONS)

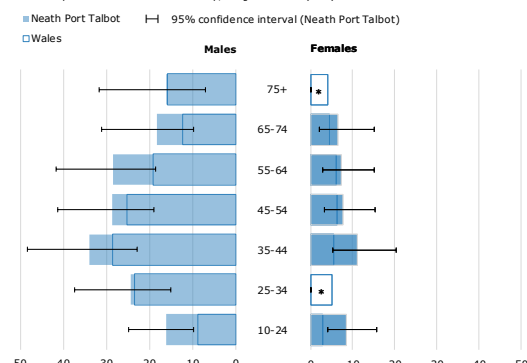


Suicides, age-standardised rate per 100,000, all persons aged 10 and over, Swansea and Wales, 2002-17
Produced by Public Health Wales Observatory, using PHM & MYE (ONS)



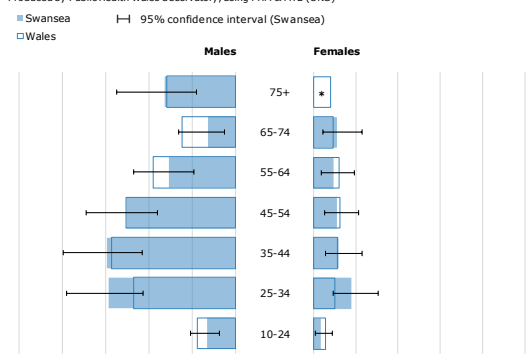
Also concerning is the analysis for 2008-17 which showed that for NPT, the rate for 10-24yrs was significantly higher than the Wales rate.

Suicides, age-specific rate per 100,000, males and females aged 10 and over, Neath Port Talbot and Wales, 2008-17
Produced by Public Health Wales Observatory, using PHM & MYE (ONS)



* Rates have been suppressed where there were less than 3 deaths
Please note that some rates are based on small numbers of events and should therefore be interpreted with caution.

Suicides, age-specific rate per 100,000, males and females aged 10 and over, Swansea and Wales, 2008-17
Produced by Public Health Wales Observatory, using PHM & MYE (ONS)

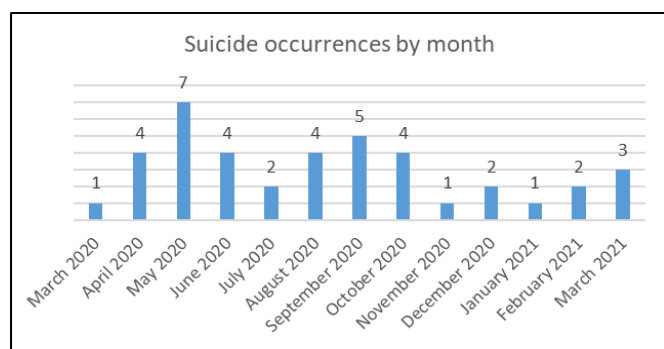


* Rates have been suppressed where there were less than 3 deaths
Please note that some rates are based on small numbers of events and should therefore be interpreted with caution.

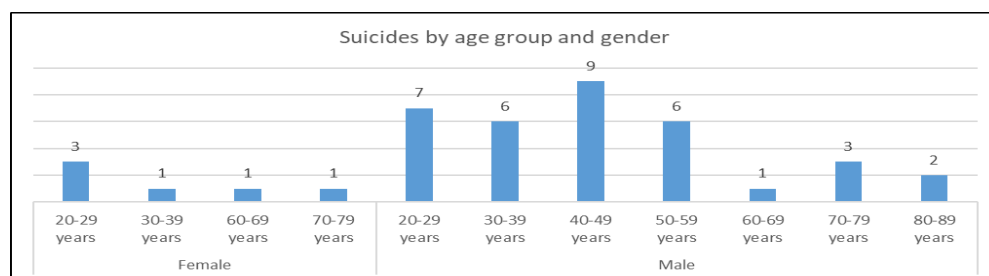
The South Wales Police have produced an annual ‘*suspected suicide*’ report covering the period March 2020 – March 2021, for the different local authority areas. It is important to note that these are suspected suicides, based on more recent data as part of an attempt to develop a ‘real-time’ surveillance process regionally.

Whilst caution is needed when considering these figures, across the force area 155 occurrences were reported as ‘suspected suicides’ during that period, of which 40 were within Swansea Bay, 30 in Swansea and 10 in NPT. This is based on location of suicide, which for 63% of all suicides took place at the persons home address or the address of a partner/family member (this includes garages/sheds and temporary residences hotels/hostels).

Across the force area, a total of 19 out of 155 were linked as being Covid related with ten in the first three months of March to May 2020. For Swansea Bay 6 out of 40 were categorised as Covid related; one in April, four in May and one in January. The overall pattern of suspected suicides throughout the year is shown below for Swansea Bay.

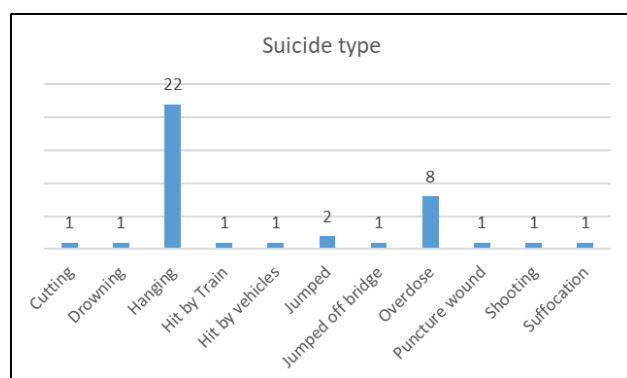


The age and gender distribution of these suicides are noted below. In keeping with previous published data, the highest rates were in men 40-49yrs. However, it is notable that there are a number in the younger age groups. In terms of ethnicity, the majority (33) were noted as White – North European, one as Asian and six had no ethnicity recorded.



Thirty four (85%) were known to the police, either as victims of crime, offenders or reporting persons. Of these, fifteen (44%) had previously been linked to domestic abuse occurrences. Ten (25%) were known to mental health services (recorded since September 2020).

Twenty two (55%) of the suspected suicides were by hanging and eight (20%) were recorded as overdose. This remains in line with previous trends on means.



There are a number of risk factors that contribute to suicidal ideation and behaviours including; occupation; employment; financial insecurity; deprivation; negative life events; drug & alcohol misuse; self-harming behaviours; existing mental health diagnosis; and those transitioning into, within and out of the criminal justice system. Getting an understanding of which factors contributed to the suspected suicides in our area, is being looked at through the rapid response review process and reporting.

The implications of the economic impact of COVID are yet to be fully felt in our local population. The impact on mental health however is increasingly recognised and whilst a recent study suggests that to date there has been no significant increase in suicides as a result of the pandemic¹ there continues to be concern on the increased risk in the longer term given that during the 2008-09 recession there was 0.54% increase in suicides for every 1% increase in indebtedness (EU & UK).

Self-harming data is primarily drawn from hospital in-patient data. It indicates that many people who harm themselves do not attend health services and of those that do, very few will require admission. The age and sex pattern of admission for self-harm is very different to that for suicide, with higher rates among women across almost all age bands.

¹ [Suicide trends in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic: an interrupted time-series analysis of preliminary data from 21 countries - The Lancet Psychiatry](#)

A Multi-Agency Action Group (MAG) was set up in 2019 to produce a region-wide multi-sector and multi-agency action plan to co-ordinate activities to prevent suicides & self-harm across Swansea Bay. At that time, it was agreed the group would report into the joint PSB and was chaired by the Local Public Health Team. Membership includes Swansea Bay UHB, Swansea Council for Voluntary Services (CVS), NPT CVS, Swansea and NPT Social Services, South Wales Police, local authority representatives including education and safeguarding, probation services, Swansea University, Dyfodol and the Ospreys.

3. ACTIVITY TO DATE

COVID significantly impacted on the member organisations and as such for much of 2020-21 it was not possible to continue with the planned work of the group. Below outlines the current situation:

Local intelligence/data:

- SWP are the lead agency in terms of notifications of suspected suicides.
- Work has been undertaken with partners, as part of the quality management sub-group of the Regional Safeguarding Board, to develop an approach to reviewing suspected suicides in order to better understand the key drivers locally and identify priorities for action.
- At a national level, work is being progressed to develop a near-time surveillance system for Wales. The process developed to date for Swansea Bay will need to be reviewed in light of any new system.

Action plan development & implementation:

- Rapid response process for adults & children has been established across both Swansea & NPT which brings agencies together to agree what actions are needed to prevent and mitigate the risk of any further harms for families and communities.
- The Sanctuary Model, forming part of crisis support, which is a work programme within the RPB Transforming Adult Mental Health Services programme, launched in May 2020 with an amended mode of delivery in line with COVID restrictions. Face-to-face support has since started and it also now accepts self-referrals.
- Out-reach work for children and young people through pastoral care leads in schools has been tested during the COVID pandemic period. This has been reviewed to inform further support needs and issues
- A '1 year on' event was held in March 2020 which brought together a range of stakeholders. There was an opportunity to update partners on progress over the previous 12 months, share learning and consider future focus for actions.
- Welsh Government funding:
 - 2019-20 – funding was secured to undertake actions identified as needed from a wider stakeholder group, notably training (Cruse Bereavement; Asist training; Safe talk) and a large scale mental health event for rugby clubs with Ospreys in the Community, to tackle stigma. Due to the pandemic restrictions imposed and the furloughing of staff, the funding was used to purchase the 'activities' for delivery at a later point in time.
 - 2020-21 – funding was secured for the development of collateral to improve help seeking behaviours in key target groups.
 - Following discussions with national and regional leads and collaborators, it was agreed to repurpose some of the funding and to develop an integrated programme of work in partnership with the Ospreys in the Community.
 - This new work programme involves insight work with those with lived experience of, or supporting someone with, a mental health crisis and through establishing a co-production group, delivery of prioritised activities deemed important in increasing help

seeking behaviours in men, including potentially collateral in the form of case studies / podcasts. This work is underway and aims to complete by March 2022.

- Cwmtawe primary care cluster has identified self-harm as a priority work area. They have employed a project officer/worker, set up a Task & Finish group and have developed an action plan. Some of the areas for focus include actions around e.g. coding; capability & confidence building in staff; wellbeing management; responding to bereavement.
- The S&SH MAG has recently reconvened and intends to review and update its ToR, in light of the COVID response. The draft regional action plan for Swansea Bay will be re-drafted in light of this review.

Joint / collaborative working:

- Work was commenced, pre-COVID, to map key forums and stakeholder groups to ensure that the work of the MAG informs or is informed by the wider system working (see Appendix A for previous draft). This is to be reviewed as part of the S&SH MAG review.
- A national Suicide & Self-Harm Prevention Co-ordinator and 3 Regional Co-ordinators have been employed through the NHS Wales Health Collaborative on a 2 year basis. The South & West Wales Regional Co-ordinator, covering Powys, Swansea Bay and Hywel Dda is hosted by Hywel Dda Health Board and is a member of the MAG. This provides a link between the national, regional and local agendas.
- Current planned activity at a national (once-for-Wales) level includes:
 - Bereavement pathway development – insight work has been completed with those with lived experience. This is being used to work with a range of partners to improve the response & support provided.
 - Near-time surveillance system – see above
 - Men's mental health – a national group of agencies/collaborators has been developed specifically focusing on men's mental health & suicide – with the aim of increasing understanding and help-seeking behaviours.
- SBUHB have identified suicide prevention as one of their Q&S priorities for 2021-22. A steering group and lead have been identified and an outline work programme. Funding has been secured for an additional post to take forward this work across the Health Board.
- Rural mental health & suicide prevention – exploratory discussions with a range of agencies, led by NRW with RDP partners, have started with a view to shaping some work to address the issues faced by our agricultural communities.

Other related work:

Suicide prevention encompasses a wide range of activities by different organisations / partners that help to promote, protect or maintain mental wellbeing. It is beyond the scope of this paper / MAG to capture all activities that contribute to this. Some examples of related activities are summarised below:

- Transforming Adult Mental Health Services (RPB) programme has a number of work packages/projects many of which were put on hold due to COVID. Whilst some areas have been restarted, there are further discussions needed on how to ensure alignment and integration of actions and approaches (where appropriate) with different work streams. These include the Primary Care interface, the Wellbeing & Prevention and Addressing Health Inequalities work streams.
- '*Better Together*' was a Health Foundation funded project that attempted to tackle loneliness and isolation in older people. The project focused on 2 geographical areas of Swansea and was one of five projects nationally, looking at how to influence the wider determinants of health. The project evaluation has recently completed and a range of partners are involved in developing digital products for wider sharing of the learning. This links well with our academic partners' '*Connect*' project, given the highest risk groups are young people.
- Swansea Bay Children & Young People's Emotional Wellbeing Planning Group are running a pilot, using '*Kooth*', to provide virtual mental health support to children.

- Pilot underway to embed a whole school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing across schools in Swansea Bay, led by the Healthy Schools implementation lead.

4. GOVERNANCE & STRUCTURES

When originally established, it was agreed that the S&SH MAG would be accountable to the Joint PSB. Additionally, the Chair of the MAG would report to the South & West Wales Regional Suicide & Self-Harm Forum and/or ensure representation from the Swansea Bay MAG which in turn reports to the National Advisory Group (see appendix A).

Partners have identified a need to review the current arrangements, reporting mechanisms and ways of working. Members value the S&SH MAG as it is the only regional forum that currently exists with a sole focus on suicide and self-harm prevention. In particular, they noted of benefit the diverse membership; development of working relationships; sharing of information between organisations; sharing of expertise/skills; opportunity to gather new perspectives, ideas and opportunities for working differently.

Issues that members have identified include: consistency and continuity of attendance from organisations; broadening the membership – acknowledging some organisations/members are not represented; the need to consider the MAG's purpose & remit within the wider partnership and regional landscape. The issue of strategic leadership for the suicide and self-harm agenda was also raised.

However, the complex relationships between groups active in the field of suicide prevention and the establishment of a Regional Suicide and Self-Harm Forum highlight the lack of connectivity between those groups with a policy development role (such as the Regional Forum) and the commissioning and delivery of services or approaches on the ground. There is no single forum within the SBUHB area which integrates the approach to suicide and self-harm.

5. SUMMARY & ISSUES TO NOTE

Death by suicide has complex causation – it is usually the result of a number of factors that are both personal and related to wider community and socio-demographic influences. It is nevertheless, preventable. Like all multi-factorial issues, the solutions are not simple and do not lie within single organisations or single partnership forums. the challenge is one of the need for system (wide) leadership.

Mental distress, self-harm and suicide rates correlate with increasing levels of deprivation, inequalities and inequities. Given the high levels of these across Swansea Bay going into COVID, this would indicate a level of vulnerability which is likely to lead to a further widening of health inequities and a worsening of deprivation for many in our population which in turn are significant and real risk factors for self-harm and suicide. We can therefore expect to see increasing numbers and complexity of need in terms of mental health crisis/distress in many forms, including self-harming and suicide.

Issues to Note:

The S&SH MAG is a voluntary membership of a diverse range of agencies who come together to proactively consider the findings from a range of sources including local data & intelligence of suspected suicides, to drive forward collective effort.

The current arrangement means:

- The work programme has no funding or additional dedicated resources allocated and as such, pace of progress is hindered, competing alongside a number of other priorities and demands.
- There is limited capacity & capability to undertake intelligence analysis which impacts on our ability to adopt an intelligence led approach across Swansea Bay – enabling us to go beyond high level themes / risk factor analysis.
- The MAG is only able to influence, direct or progress areas of work within the scope of the membership and existing capacity and resourcing. It can highlight issues / areas where progress is needed beyond these boundaries – through its reporting mechanisms and related fora. However, it can take no responsibility or hold others accountable for progress (or lack of) on any of these areas.
- There is no 'collective' identity or presence for this work which has limitations in terms of how we work together including with those with lived experience.

These issues will be taken into consideration as part of the review of the S&SH MAG remit, ToR and action planning for the coming year.

Recommendation:

A short life Task & Finish group is required to review the current relationships between groups acting in the field of Suicide and Self-Harm reduction and develop a suitable arrangement for integrating activity across the SBUHB area. This group should be chaired by the Director of Public Health or nominated alternate and report back within 3 months. This work will be multi-sectoral and the resultant arrangements will need to command the support of all agencies active in this field.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

7. RECOMMENDATION

The Quality and Safety committee are asked to:

- Note the contents of this report.
- Endorse the establishment of a short life Task & Finish group to develop arrangements to integrate oversight of work in the field of suicide and self-harm across Swansea Bay.

Governance and Assurance		
Link to Enabling Objectives <i>(please choose)</i>	Supporting better health and wellbeing by actively promoting and empowering people to live well in resilient communities	
	Partnerships for Improving Health and Wellbeing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Co-Production and Health Literacy	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Digitally Enabled Health and Wellbeing	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Deliver better care through excellent health and care services achieving the outcomes that matter most to people	
	Best Value Outcomes and High Quality Care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Partnerships for Care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Excellent Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Digitally Enabled Care	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Outstanding Research, Innovation, Education and Learning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health and Care Standards		
<i>(please choose)</i>	Staying Healthy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Safe Care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Effective Care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Dignified Care	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Timely Care	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Individual Care	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Staff and Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Quality, Safety and Patient Experience	
Currently efforts to tackle suicide and self-harm are not integrated and this has impact on the ability of agencies to operate collectively and to access resources to support this area of work. Better integration of the planning and delivery of initiatives is likely to lead to more effective interventions being delivered more widely and thus increase access and improve outcomes.		
Financial Implications		
There are none discussed in the report.		
Legal Implications (including equality and diversity assessment)		
There are none discussed in the report.		
Staffing Implications		
There are none discussed in the report.		
Long Term Implications (including the impact of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015)		
This report considers issues that impact on a healthier, more equal Wales and which need to be addressed in relation to those Goals and also impact on the cohesion of communities. Responses to the issues highlighted involve an integrated approach across multi-sectors; collaboration between agencies and the delivery of a range of interventions aimed at reducing psychological distress and social isolation, increasing access to services in a crisis, improving mental-wellbeing and resilience, and preventing suicide and self-harm in our communities.		
Report History	N/A	
Appendices	N/A	

APPENDIX A Partnerships & Boards Map (2019)

