

Two people injured after Mercedes car collides with wall

TWO people were left injured after a traffic collision in Tamerton Foliot in the early hours of Saturday morning.

Emergency crews were called to Tamerton Foliot Road at about 1am where a silver Mercedes had collided with a wall at the Old Vicarage.

Police say there were two people in the car – the driver, a 34-year-old man from Plymouth, and the front seat passenger, a 25-year-old woman.

The woman was removed from the car at the scene by firefighters from Crownhill station using hydraulic cutting equipment.

Both injured people were taken to hospital and were later released.

The road into the village was closed for most of the day on Saturday and throughout Sunday as Highways Crews worked to clear spilled oil.



HOLE IN THE WALL: The damage to the wall in Tamerton Foliot Road. Inset: the Mercedes car

Murder probe after body found

POLICE have launched a murder investigation after a 49-year-old man died at a picturesque church building.

Two men are being held by officers after being arrested on suspicion of murder.

The Major Crime Investigation Team is probing an incident at St Barnabas Church, the former Dartmouth Apprentice restaurant, which is now used as a halfway house supported living project.

They said the arrested pair were both local men. They were awaiting questioning last night. Detectives are meanwhile appealing for information from the public.

Inspector Mark Waldron said: "At 6.10pm on Saturday, August 22, police were called to Newcomen Road in Dartmouth where a male was receiving CPR from paramedics. That male has subsequently died.

At this stage the cause of death is unknown and an investigation is ongoing. His next of kin have been informed.

"Two males are currently in custody awaiting interview at Torquay police station."

He said police were investigating the possibility that there had been some kind of altercation before paramedics arrived.

Anybody with information should contact police on 101 quoting log 515 of August 22.

Anger as man with mental health issues is kept in cell

by **SAM BLACKLEDGE**

Chief Reporter [@samblackledge](#)

A MAN with mental health issues was kept in a police cell for 48 hours because there were no beds available, prompting fresh outrage from one of the force's most senior officers.

Last year Paul Netherton, Assistant Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall Police, made national headlines when he used social media to bemoan the lack of facilities to care for mental health patients.

His tweets sparked a huge debate, with the Government eventually introducing a new law to crack down on the use of police cells to detain those in mental distress.

At the weekend Mr Netherton sent another message following an incident in Exeter which he branded "unacceptable".

Speaking to The Herald yesterday, he said: "We had an individual who caused a problem on Thursday afternoon. He was arrested under Section 5 of the Public Order Act.

"Very quickly it became apparent that the root cause was mental health issues."



MESSAGE: ACC Paul Netherton

The man was taken into police custody and sectioned under the Mental Health Act at 1am on Friday, but it transpired there were no beds available for adult males anywhere in the region.

He was held in a cell until Saturday evening, when he was taken to a designated place of safety.

Mr Netherton said: "The health authority sent some nurses to sit with him in the custody block, but it is still

not right that he should be in a police cell having been sectioned.

"The bottom line is there are not enough beds for mental health provision in the South West, both for adults or children.

"That is exacerbated because we are under financial pressure. I think in the past the police would just accept that we had to look after some of these patients."

Mr Netherton says the force can no longer afford for police officers to sit outside cells keeping watch on people who may be a danger to themselves.

"These are patients, not prisoners," he said. "We can't do this any more.

"We will take it up with the Mental Health Forum and we will take it up with NHS England, making the point that the police are being asked to be the service of last resort."

Plymouth MP Johnny Mercer, who has made mental health issues a priority during his first few months in Parliament, said the situation was "completely unacceptable" and has asked for an urgent meeting with Mr Netherton and Police and Crime Commissioner Tony Hogg.

"I understood that no mental health patients were to be held in custody unless they posed a threat," Mr Mercer said.

"We should not be putting our police force in this position; it is wrong on them, wrong on the patient, and wrong on the mental health community.

"I look forward to getting answers locally, and getting resources nationally to make sure this is a practice of the past. The Home Secretary shares this view."

Plymouth Community Healthcare (PCH), which runs Plymouth's mental health services, said it had not been approached by the police asking for a bed.

A spokesman said there were beds available for young people and female patients in the city, but none for men.

The Glenbourne place of safety suite, which can only be used by one patient at a time, was full at the time Mr Netherton raised his concerns.

The spokesman added: "PCH is committed to reducing the use of police cells for people suffering an acute mental health crisis and we continue to work closely with our colleagues in the police to achieve this."

The Herald's Safer Spaces campaign called for an end to the practice of holding mental health patients in police cells, and in May the Government used the Queen's Speech to introduce the Policing and Criminal Justice Bill, proposing an outright ban.

Man was 'shot at in the street'

A SOUTH Devon man who claims he was shot at in the street says he believes he may have been the victim of mistaken identity.

Steve McMillan said he and two friends were left shaken after coming under gunfire in Paignton on Friday night.

The trio say they heard two loud sounds which they believed to be gunfire in the seaside town's Winner Street.

Police arrived a short time later but could find no trace of weapons having been used.

"We were all talking outside Shaun's Antiques and collectibles when we heard a loud crack," Steve said.

"Something hit the wall behind us and we thought someone had thrown something at us. We even joked that it sounded like a gun.

"About ten seconds later another loud crack, which made us all duck. Again, something hit somewhere around us. We scattered."

Steve reported the incident at about 5.40pm on Friday.

A police spokesman said initial reports indicated a window had been fired at and hit. But on further inspection police could find no damage.

ANALYSIS Sam Blackledge



WHEN you are so close to a subject, as I have been to this one since the start of 2015, it is easy to lose sight of the bigger picture.

The Herald's award-winning Safer Spaces campaign was inspired by a tweet sent by Assistant Chief Constable Paul Netherton in November last year, bemoaning the lack of facilities for mental health patients.

A lot of water has passed under the bridge since then – outrage expressed, heads scratched, promises made and backs slapped.

"That's it", we thought when the Government announced the

introduction of a new law in the Queen's Speech. We've won.

Needless to say, it is not quite that simple. Nine months on from the moment Mr Netherton first lit the blue touch paper, he returned to the topic this week to highlight yet another "unacceptable" detention. Health bosses in Plymouth have privately expressed their dismay, all too aware of the power the ACC wields on social media.

Was this the moment we took two steps back after a year-long battle to take one forward?

I would hope that it is, in fact, a brief setback on a longer journey.



■ Sam Blackledge

It is absolutely correct that an investigation should begin into this particular incident, but the measures which are now in place will take time, and we must be patient.

Safer spaces being found - but more must be done

SAM BLACKLEDGE

reports on The Herald's campaign to reduce the use of prison cells for mentally ill

THERE has been a sharp reduction in the use of prison cells as a place of safety for people with mental health issues – but police chiefs admit there is still “much to be done”.

Newly-published statistics, released exclusively to The Herald by Devon and Cornwall Police, show the number of people being held in cells in Plymouth under the Mental Health Act every month is now down into single figures, bringing to an end our campaign to raise awareness of the issue and call for change.

Chief Inspector Cath Farrin, in charge of local policing and partnerships in the city, said: “It is great news that the number of vulnerable people being detained in police custody under the Mental Health Act has reduced.

“The police are working closely with partner agencies to ensure those people requiring support have access to a health-based setting to receive the right care.”

Along with using specially-designed safe spaces to detain and assess mentally ill people, the authorities are also working to reduce the number of Section 136 detentions by treating patients in the community.

There has also been progress in dealing with young people, with the new under-18s place of safety at Plym Bridge House now fully operational.

Steve Waite, CEO of Plymouth Community Health care, said the figures were ‘encouraging’ and he expects the trend to continue.

“The under-18s place of safety has been a major step forward in meeting the needs of vulnerable young people, and we will continue to work with our partners such as the police and social care organisations to further develop the service in the coming years,” he said.

Devon and Cornwall Police say there were 30 under-18 Section 136 detentions across the force area in 2013/14, falling to 25 incidents in 2014/15.

Since January this year there have been five such incidents, and one since April 1.

Assistant chief constable Sharon Taylor said: “Those coming into contact with the police and suffering from mental illness are very often not criminals and should not be in police cells as a result.

Campaign analysis

WHEN The Herald launched Safer Spaces back in February, we had no idea where it would lead.

They say you should never launch a campaign which you are not absolutely guaranteed to win, but this was a leap into the unknown to tackle a complex and sensitive subject.

Over the last six months we have been granted unprecedented access to Plymouth's secure units; interviewed mental health patients and their families; and

started a much-needed debate across the city and beyond.

While we cannot claim to have single-handedly changed the law, we feel this campaign has had a real impact.

We have been able to hold the authorities to account, while telling the stories of families who feel let down by mental health provision, along with questioning the decision makers and promoting their initiatives.

There is still more to say and lots of work to do, but the picture is improving every day.

“It is not acceptable for anyone of any age to be held in a police cell because no mental health provision can be found elsewhere.

“Those mentally unwell are much better suited to a health placement where they can

receive the right treatment to aid their recovery.

“Since the start of 2015, mental health partners across Devon and Cornwall have been

working closer than ever to try and deal with this hugely challenging issue and ensure

people get the right treatment from the right agency.

“These figures clearly show progress is being made.”

A mental health concordant was launched across Devon and Cornwall in February 2014, aimed at improving crisis

care for people with mental health needs.

ACC Taylor added: “This is just the beginning of a new way of working and there is still much to be done to reduce the number of Mental Health Act referrals in which police are involved.



■ Assistant chief constable Sharon Taylor



■ A cell in the custody suite at Charles Cross Police Station

Campaign landmarks

February 9:

The Herald launches the Safer Spaces campaign to highlight the issue of mental health patients being detained in police cells.

February 13:

City doctor Ben Jameson says the number of mentally ill people who do not get access to support is “heartbreaking”.

February 16:

The Herald is given an exclusive tour of the Glenbourne unit, the city's designated place of safety.

February 20:

Labour Party leader Ed Miliband and Policing Minister Mike Penning praise the Safer Spaces campaign, saying it

raises an “incredibly important” issue.

March 25:

We see inside the cells at Charles Cross police station, as a pioneering street triage scheme is given the go-ahead for another year.

March 30:

A new ‘place of safety’ for young people with critical mental health issues opens in Derriford.

May 20:

The Home Secretary announces a £15 million plan to “guarantee” people with mental health problems are held in proper places of safety.

May 28:

The Government uses the Queen's Speech to announce new legislation.

June 5:

Safer Spaces is nominated for community campaign of the year in the South West EDF Energy media awards

Detentions under Mental Health Act in Plymouth

2015 (January to May)

■ Held in police custody: 35

■ Held in place of safety: 74

■ Under-18s held in specialist POS: 4

2014

■ Held in police custody: 211

■ Held in place of safety: 221

2013

■ Held in police custody: 250

■ Held in place of safety: 134

Under-18s held in custody under Mental Health Act in Devon and Cornwall:

■ 2013/14: 30

■ 2014/15: 25

■ Since April 1, 2015: 1



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Police scheme helping keep those in crisis out of cells

PROFESSIONALS from across the police, health and criminal justice sectors have come together at a national conference in Leicester to discuss a project known as ‘street triage’.

The expo last week, the first of its kind, heard progress reports from pilot schemes around the country aimed at reducing the number of people detained by police under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act.

Last year the Department of Health allocated funding to nine force areas, allowing trained professionals to provide on-the-spot advice to police officers who are dealing with people who may be experiencing mental health problems.

This can include giving an opinion on a person’s condition or sharing information about their health history.

The aim is to help officers make appropriate decisions, based on a clear understanding of an individual’s background.

In theory this should lead to people receiving appropriate care more quickly, resulting in better outcomes and a reduction in the use of Section 136.

One of those present at Tuesday’s event was Richard Poole, custody sergeant based in Exeter and operational lead on street triage for Devon and Cornwall Police.

He says our area’s street triage pilot, which was renewed for a further 12 months back in March, has been a resounding success.

“The police are not mental health experts, they never will be,” he told The Herald.

■ A pioneering scheme which pairs police officers with mental health nurses is saving lives in Plymouth – but the future of the project is far from guaranteed. **SAM BLACKLEDGE** reports

“To expect the police to appropriately deal with someone who is in a genuine crisis, without the support of the health organisations, is foolhardy. But it is what has been done for years.

“The feedback from those who have had experience of street triage has been overwhelmingly positive.

“The police often do things that don’t work so well first time, but this has done and we want to keep it.”

Last year more than 200 people with mental health issues were held in police cells in Plymouth, but the latest figures show a sharp reduction, which police and health bosses believe is partly due to the effect of street triage.

All nine forces implemented the concept in different ways – for example, West Midlands Police used the money to staff unmarked ambulances with a police officer, a psychiatric nurse and a paramedic.

This approach would not have been feasible in Devon and Plymouth due to the population being spread across a large geographical area, so a different way of working was designed – placing mental health nurses in police control rooms.

Sgt Poole says: “They are employed full-time with crisis or home treatment teams, and they

are stationed in our control rooms in Exeter and Plymouth so when we get a call in from a member of the public or an officer who has come across something, we can refer that incident to the mental health nurse.

“They will check their records for any relevant information, which will help us to direct the police resources.

“If the person is in mental crisis but it is not appropriate to send a uniformed police officer round, we can refer it to mental health team.

“If officers do attend, because there is a risk to that person, they go in armed with the proper information.”

Sgt Poole gives an example of a man in his own home who was acting violently.

Normally the control team would send police officers to deal with him – but the street triage system threw up some unexpected information.

“It turned out that he had an organic brain injury, which was why he was violent and confrontational,” Sgt Poole says.

“Rather than sending a team of response officers with shields, helmets, Tasers and everything else, we sent a nurse out.

“She recognised the signs and symptoms and knew his history.

“We got him into an ambulance and to the right place of care.

“Sometimes, however, the nurse will look at it and say a Section 136 is the most appropriate response.

“It’s a double-edged sword, it works both ways, but the key thing is sharing information.”

Sgt Poole recently completed a review of the first year of the Devon and Plymouth pilot, during which he discovered that 892 police logs had been referred through the system, and that 78 per cent of the people they dealt with were already known to mental health services.

“There were nine occasions where street triage intervention has directly stopped someone from committing suicide, so that’s a life saved,” he says.

“There were 76 people prevented from being sectioned under 136, and street triage was used to locate missing persons on 18 occasions.

“That’s a real key for us because when somebody goes missing and they are high risk, that is very resource-intensive.

“You’re looking at thousands and thousands of pounds to deploy people to look for that person – the police helicopter, which costs about £2,000 an hour, dog units, all the rest.

“We have still got to deliver standard services, so something has to give somewhere.”

Plymouth only has one specially-designed safe space to detain and assess mentally ill adults – the Glenbourne unit at Derriford Hospital, which only accepts one person at a time.

There has been progress in dealing with young people, with the new under-18s place of safety at Plym Bridge House, but treating people at the first point of contact is increasingly seen as the most powerful tool.

Sgt Poole says: “I was a bit skeptical to start with about whether it was going to work, but we have had positive interventions and the culture change within the police is starting to happen now.

“Officers are considering options other than Section 136, and where possible they are reaching other places to send people. “It is well recognised now that if you have got someone who is in mental crisis, the last place you want to put them is a police cell.”

Some have claimed the project is

“There were nine occasions where street triage intervention has directly stopped someone from committing suicide

simply a sticking plaster to cover up inadequacies within the NHS, but Sgt Poole says it is the best available option.

“Yes there are gaps in the health service, but it’s inevitable that police are going to be dealing with people in crisis as we are the first point of contact, we are there 24/7.

“I would describe it as a stepping stone, rather than a sticking plaster. It’s doing it the right way.

“The feedback we are getting from service users and their families is positive, now we are now able to share this information appropriately to be able to get the right response.”

Money has been allocated to allow the street triage scheme to run until next spring, but beyond that the future is unknown.

Concerns about funding were raised at the Leicester conference, but Sgt Poole says it was an encouraging event.

“What was really appreciated from all of the speakers was the fact that it’s all about saving and improving lives, improving care pathways for people who come into contact with the police when they are in crisis,” he says.

EXPO: tweets

TWEETS from the street triage expo in Leicester:
@poolybop

The one common theme at the 2015 #streettriage expo. It's not about saving money or time. It's about improving and #savinglives @DC_Police @ProfLAppleby
Police areas with highest total S136 figs have highest % use of cells; reducing overall S136 is key. #streettriage @ProfLAppleby
2000 fewer people in #mentalhealth crisis taken to police cells last yr & #streettriage is one of the reasons. @VKatDH

Interesting that 78% of persons seen by @DC_Police #streettriage scheme known to MH services...Scheme directly prevented 9 suicides. Wow. @CCLeicsPolice
Today with @NHSEngland @alexcrisp2947 opening the #streettriage event #Leicester Does evidence say it works? Is it a sticking plaster?

10,000 helped by pilot schemes

STREET triage pilot schemes have resulted in almost 10,000 people receiving emergency attention from mental health nurses working alongside police officers, according to Government figures.

The Department of Health says the project has seen a 55 per cent reduction in England in the use of police cells as a place of safety for people detained under the Mental Health Act since 2011/12.

More than 9,350 people have been helped in 12 months in the nine areas where pilots have been running – a further 17 areas now have street triage schemes.

But almost 4,000

people detained under the Mental Health Act are still being forced to stay in police cells rather than a hospital.

NHS England says it is investing £30million this year to help the one million people who attend A&E every year with mental ill health receive better care.

Minister for Community and Social Care Alistair Burt said: “Having a mental illness is not a crime. Anyone experiencing a mental health crisis should be treated with the same urgency and compassion as someone with a broken leg, rather than ending up in a police cell.

“Too often this has not been the case but every

part of the country is working hard to change that.

“I’m proud of these results and I’m determined to build on this further so that everyone in crisis gets the care they need in the right place at the right time.”

The Government has announced an extra £15 million next year to provide more places of safety for those detained under the Mental Health Act, while the Care Quality Commission has also begun to inspect local health services to assess the quality of care they provide for patients in crisis.



STREET TRIAGE: first year figures

FIRST 12 months of street triage pilot in Devon and Plymouth:

- Police logs passed through system: 892
- Individuals already known to mental health services: 78 per cent
- Instances of street triage directly preventing suicide: 9
- People prevented from being sectioned: 76
- Missing people located: 18

SECURE: Left and below: views of the custody suite at Charles cross Police Station



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Mental health spend figures are challenged

by **SAM BLACKLEDGE**

Chief Reporter @samblackledge

FIGURES which suggest Plymouth has the lowest level of mental health funding in the country have been rejected by an NHS commissioning group.

Last week the Labour Party released data showing the Northern, Eastern and Western Devon Clinical Commissioning Group allocated just six per cent of its total budget to mental health in 2014-15, the lowest of the 130 UK-wide CCGs which responded.

But the CCG's own figures, released to The Herald, show a spend of 13.3 per cent on mental health – almost double what Labour claims.

A CCG spokesman said Labour's numbers are not accurate, adding that a "significant percentage" of the budget is spent on mental health services which fall under a different spending category.

"The CCG spends a significant percentage of its budget on mental health services that primarily fall under a different spending area," he said.

"For example, mental health related prescriptions are counted under the CCG's prescribing budget.

"Another example of this is in continuing healthcare. The CCG spends around £40 million on continuing healthcare packages for people with mental health related conditions. These are counted under the continuing healthcare budget.

"The CCG also commissions a wide range of community mental health

MP raises issue of resources

A **PLYMOUTH MP** who made mental health one of his key election priorities says he is concerned the city is losing out when it comes to Government funding.

Johnny Mercer, MP for Plymouth Moor View, has this week written to the Department of Health to raise the issue. In a letter to Jane Ellison, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health, he says the city is facing a "very real problem" in its ability to



finance public healthcare with an allocation of just £47 per head. Mr Mercer says the financial position of the NEW Devon CCG is "a real cause for concern", highlighting "inefficiencies" which mean Plymouth is losing money before it reaches its target.

"It also my belief that Plymouth is underfunded within the western locality of the CCG and loses out when compared with other arts and localities under NEW Devon CCG," he adds.

services, and for this reason much of the CCG's overall spend on mental health is counted within the community services budget."

He added: "NHS NEW Devon CCG is not an outlier in terms of its mental health spend.

"When the overall mental health spend is taken into account, NHS NEW Devon CCG spends more than the national average on mental health services."

Labour's figures suggest that 50 of the 130 CCGs who responded plan to reduce the proportion of the budget they allocate to mental health for this financial year.

On average the figures suggest that in 2015/16 CCGs are planning to allocate 10 per cent of their budgets to mental health, compared with 11 per cent in 2014/15.

Brian Dow, director of external affairs at Rethink Mental Illness, said: "There is reasonable variation and unwarranted variation.

"Having one CCG appar-

ently spend six per cent of its budget on mental health, while another spends 20 per cent, can't possibly be down to differences in local need, and does suggest that someone needs to take a grip."

A Department of Health spokesperson said: "We do not recognise these figures – NHS England has shown mental health spending has increased by £0.4bn this year. Mental health is a priority for this Government and to say otherwise ignores the fact we have given mental and physical health conditions equal priority in law, we've increased central funding by millions of pounds, and introduced the first ever treatment targets which will make sure funding goes to where it's needed."

NHS England said: "The planning guidance set out a clear expectation for CCGs in terms of increasing spend on mental health.

"Around 90 per cent of CCGs demonstrated this."

HEALTH: spending

THE LABOUR PARTY'S FIGURES:

■ Percentage of NEW Devon CCG budget spent on mental health in 2014-15: 6.49 per cent

■ Percentage of budget spent on mental health in 2015-16: 6.45 per cent

■ UK average percentage of budget spent on mental health in 2014-15: 11 per cent

■ UK average percentage of budget spent on mental health in 2015-16: 10 per cent

THE CCG'S FIGURES:

■ Spending on mental health in 2014/15: 13.3 per cent

■ Spending on mental health in 2015/16: 13.3 per cent

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Mental health of young ‘the challenge of our generation’

MENTAL health issues among Plymouth’s young people are on the increase and the authorities are struggling to cope, The Herald has been told.

Children and teenagers are dealing with a wide range of pressures, from trauma, anxiety and depression to fears over body image and the impact of alcohol, drugs and social media.

The number of youngsters referred to the city’s Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) rose by more than 400 in 2015 to 2,239, the highest level for five years.

City GP Ben Jameson says many young people are facing a “scandalous” six-month wait for therapy through the NHS.

“The important thing when it comes to mental health is what you have to protect you,” he says.

“Young people don’t have those protective factors in the same way older people do. They are trying to manage at the same time as trying to establish themselves securely in the world.

“That is why so many of them fail, become homeless, use drugs or start drinking.

“It’s a massive problem. If you have got a young person with mental health issues which are not resolved, you will have a middle-aged person and then an older person with the same issues.

“They are probably going to have kids along the way, how will they raise them, will it go down through the generations?”

There is still too much stigma and too much black and white thinking.”

Sources within the sector have told The Herald CAMHS is struggling to cope with increased demand, leading to growing waiting lists and vulnerable young people not getting the support they need.

A spokeswoman for Livewell South West said: “Demand for mental health services for children and young people in Plymouth has increased significantly and our CAMHS team works hard within the resource that we have to ensure

■ As Children’s Mental Health Week gets under way today, Chief Reporter **SAM BLACKLEDGE** examines the rising demand for services among young people in Plymouth



PRIORITY
Johnny Mercer MP

primary school how to express my emotions, I wouldn’t have spent most of my adult life in a constant haze of anxiety and depression because I couldn’t manage what I was feeling.”

Abi Gee, learning support manager at City College Plymouth, says educators are becoming more aware of the problem.

“We have students who disclose anything from body dysmorphia to depression; some students have a lot more anxiety than other students and we signpost them to services in the community as well as offering counselling and one-to-one help,” she says.

“I think there has definitely been an increase, there is still quite a bit of stigma and discrimination that people feel in the community at large.

“It’s our place to be able to build up their confidence and make sure they go into other services.”

Clinical psychologist Dr Mary Welford, who works with Marine Academy Plymouth, says: “Estimates suggest between one in ten to one in five children and young people between the age of 5 and 16 experience mental health difficulties – this is extremely concerning.

“Rates increase with age. Reports between 1974 and 1999 show significant increases, but such studies have not been repeated in recent times.

“That said, many working within child and adolescent mental health services and schools believe the upward trend continues. This appears to be true for Plymouth.”

Dr Welford says it is “essential” to address such issues at school age in order to improve educational achievement, physical health, relationships and life chances.

“Good psychological, social and emotional wellbeing has been shown to decrease the

TRAGIC LOSS: young sufferers

NEARLY 100 children aged 10 to 14 killed themselves in the UK in the past decade, according to figures from the Office for National Statistics.

Records show 98 children under 15 killed themselves in the UK from 2005 to 2014, 59 boys and 39 girls.

The figures also show suicide rates among women in England rose in 2014 to their highest in a decade, despite a drop in the overall number of UK suicides.

Plymouth MP Johnny Mercer said: “The overall figures are down, but there is a worrying increase in female suicide rates. We must continue to raise awareness.”

The Samaritans can be contacted by calling 116 123.



“I became more of a carer and less of a mum

LONG ROAD TO RECOVERY:
Debbie Roche's son battled anorexia for years

Recognising son's anorexia took time

A SINGLE mum whose son fought a brave battle with anorexia is calling for more understanding of the condition as a mental illness.

Debbie Roche (pictured right), from Devonport, nursed son Ollie for three years before he was admitted to a psychiatric unit at the age of 15.

Debbie, former events coordinator with the charity Mind, says at first she believed Ollie’s erratic behaviour was just due to typical teenage growing pains.

“It was not until we started piecing together the physical and behavioural changes that things started coming to light,” she says.

“He had been misusing food for a long time, and the secretive nature of anorexia allowed him to hold back information.

“He was going to school with me thinking ‘He’s had his breakfast’, but he had been setting the scene so I would not make further enquiries.

“He was very good at hiding things, hiding his body, going out at the weekends so he didn’t have to spend time with the family.

“He started becoming lethargic, his hands started turning purple like he was feeling the cold.

“His body was at the stage where he needed a lot of support and help.”

Doctors at Derriford Hospital told Ollie his heart was “eating itself”, and he was placed in a psychiatric ward where his health began to improve.

Now aged 23, he is on the road to recovery.

“It’s a long process and they say it can take about seven years from diagnosis,” Debbie says.

“He has had a couple of relapses, and while he’s grabbing hold of life and doing all the things he should be doing, we worry about his resilience to pressure and how he would respond.”

Debbie says her own identity changed while she was looking after Ollie, becoming “more of a carer and less of a mum”.

“As he has become more independent I have been able to find mum again,” she says.

“It’s now about me

picking up on what I might see as his triggers or pressure points.”

Debbie formed a campaign group called No To Eating Disorders UK, and has written a book about her experiences called Anorexia: A Son’s Battle, A Mother’s War.

She has no doubt the condition was sparked by psychological triggers.

“I do feel Ollie could have had issues from when me and his father separated,” she says. “How does a little lad cope with that?”

“People who develop eating disorders must have low self-esteem, they must be really vulnerable for the body to be pushed.

“He has left that behind now. He knows it was a stage of his life where his emotions and feelings were all working against each other. Now he can see that and he is working really hard to get where he is today.”

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New city place of safety proving a haven for young

A NEW 'place of safety' for youngsters with mental health problems has seen 20 people come through its doors in the last five months.

The centre at Plym Bridge House in Crownhill opened in April, providing a specially-designed haven for under-18s suffering an acute mental health crisis to be assessed.

The facility takes under-18s from Plymouth, Devon and Torbay, filling a gap from Taunton to Redruth in which there were previously no places of safety specifically designed for young people.

It is hoped this will help to end the widely-criticised practice of keeping patients in police cells until they are released or admitted to hospital.

A 16-year-old named Joe, who

by **SAM BLACKLEDGE**

Chief Reporter [@samblackledge](#) was assessed at Plym Bridge House after being detained by police because he was being violent, has spoken about his experience.

"My mum just couldn't handle my violence so she called the police," he told the BBC.

"Police cells would be quite impacting on a young child like me. It's quite a scary experience."

"In a cell there are not trained professionals who know how to deal with mental health issues, but here they have a lot of people who are trained."

Joe's mum, Hannah, said the new place of safety is "fantastic".

"The support was overwhelming, as a parent it's very frightening to see your own child in a place like this but he was well cared for with the right people looking after him."

The centre is designed around the same model as the city's adult place of safety, at the Glenbourne unit in Derriford, but has specially-trained experts who can deal with the particular needs of young people.

According to a report by the Home Affairs select committee, 30 youngsters were held in police cells in Devon and Cornwall in 2013-14, the highest number in the country.

When The Herald was given an exclusive tour of Plym Bridge House back in April, CAMHS modern matron Sarah Fish said the centre represented a "major breakthrough".

"I think it will make a huge difference for young people experiencing distress, whether that be mental health or for social reasons - police cells are just not an appropriate place," she said.

"That experience of being looked after will be completely different, and I think this is the beginning of it being developed further."



PLACE OF SAFETY: Consultant Psychiatrist Dr Fernanda Garcia-Costas and Modern Matron for CAMHS Sarah Fish in the safe space

Ukulele group at Navy Day

MEMBERS of the Queens Dock Ukulele Group played to their strengths at a remembrance service raising money for charity.

The group, made up of retirees, attended the Plymouth Merchant Navy Day service at the Barbican where veterans and their families lined the streets to remember those who died while serving in the Merchant Navy.

The players, who hope to take part in more paid gigs and donate any earnings to charity, raised £80 which will benefit disabled swimmers in Plymouth.

Membership has tripled since the group was founded 10 months ago, and with a repertoire of 40 songs, they meet every Wednesday afternoon at The Queens Dock pub in Devonport.

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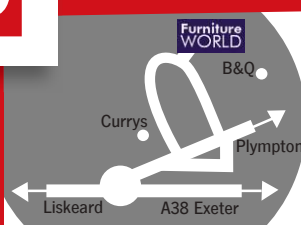


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Patients at centre of 'turf war'

by SAM BLACKLEDGE

Chief Reporter

POLICE and health bosses are engaged in a "turf war" over who should detain and treat vulnerable mental health patients, according to the head of the city's A&E department.

The number of mentally ill people detained in Devon and Cornwall's police cells has fallen by 73 per cent over the last year, news which has been welcomed by those who backed a long-awaited change in the law.

But now Derriford A&E consultant Dr Anne Hicks has spoken out in frustration, saying the hospital is struggling to cope with the fallout.

"Last year the Chief Constable said 'We are not doing this anymore, it's up to health to fund it', but they did that so quickly there was no time for somewhere else to be set up to take people in mental health crisis," Dr Hicks told *The Herald* last night.

"The police are trying to reduce the numbers because they are under pressure not to take them, so they are coming to us. All of the hospitals in the Peninsula, all of the emergency departments, are struggling with capacity.

"If you are at your most distressed, coming to the ED when it is at capacity is probably not the best place. It should not be a turf war between us, the police, mental health services and social services. We should be joined up."

Last year police officers were told to avoid detaining mentally ill people in custody. But Dr Hicks says the policy has

Mental health review call

PRIME Minister David Cameron has called for the nation to focus on mental health after a review revealed inadequate and underfunded care leads to "thousands of tragic and unnecessary deaths".

The report, by a task force set up by NHS England, says around three quarters of people with mental health problems received no help at all.

Ministers agreed more needs to be done, committing £1 billion extra a year by 2020. The Government says this will help treat a million more people a year.

The funds are to come out of the

£8.4bn the Government has promised the health service during this Parliament and comes on top of extra money already announced for children's services.

Mr Cameron said: "We should be frank. We have not done enough to end the stigma of mental health.

"We have focused a lot on physical health and we haven't as a country focused enough on mental health."

Plymouth MP Johnny Mercer welcomed the report, saying: "Early intervention, 24-hour support and reducing suicide rates are all vital for our most vulnerable."

coincided with an overall rise in mental health admissions after normal working hours, which she estimates to be around 20 per cent, causing tension between health and police chiefs.

"Everybody gets on, we have a really good relationship with the police, they are our control and restraint team," Dr Hicks said. "The shame is that it is causing tension because the police have a very hard line they have to take."

Last month Derriford was packed to

capacity, with extra beds set up in the hospital gym in order to treat patients in need of urgent care.

"We do not have the appropriate environment or restraint to look after them," she said. "They are being left in often crowded wards, often they are at their most distressed. If accessing mental health services was easier, it may well be the case that lots of these people would never enter into crisis."

Cath Farrin, chief inspector for Ply-

“It should not be a turf war between us, the police, mental health services and social services”

Robber stole drugs

A SCISSORS-wielding robber who stole a friend's drugs stash has been branded a bully by a judge.

Christopher Barnes was so desperate for valium he held a pair of scissors to the throat of victim Lee Tippet when he saw him with a bag of the pills.

The homeless heroin addict from Plymouth was spared an immediate jail sentence after he promised to work with counsellors at the city's Harbour Centre to tackle his drug problem.

Barnes was invited back to Mr Tippet's flat in Devonport last July for a cup of coffee but grabbed the scissors after he saw his host with a bag containing 12 valium tablets.

The drug, which used to be a standard medication for depression, is highly valued by drug users because it relieves the withdrawal symptoms of heroin.

Barnes, 33, of no fixed abode in Plymouth, admitted robbery at Plymouth Crown Court in December and his case was moved to Exeter Crown Court for sentence because Judge Geoffrey Mercer, QC, has been appointed as the Recorder of Exeter in the meantime.

The judge jailed Barnes for 20 months, suspended for 18 months, and ordered him to undertake rehabilitation and supervision.

He told him the only reason he was not imposing an immediate sentence was that Barnes has been in custody since his arrest in July, the equivalent of a 14-month term.

He said: "Your victim, who has known you for 20 years, described you as a bully. My impression is that is exactly what you are.

"This offence clearly warrants a prison sentence but I have taken into account that you have already been in custody since July."

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