

# Talking really helps campaign evaluation

## Summary

On 3 February 2025, the Public Health Agency launched the 'Talking really helps' mass media campaign. The campaign ran over eight weeks and was a rerun of an existing campaign that evaluated positively.

The aim of the campaign was to encourage openness and talking about feelings of anxiety, distress or crisis, increase help-seeking behaviour, and reinforce the concept of recovery. The campaign promoted Lifeline, Northern Ireland's crisis response helpline. The primary audience for the campaign was all adults. Secondary targeted audiences were those people at greater risk of suicide (males and those who live in areas of deprivation), and family and friends of those most at risk of suicide.

**Reach:** 65% of those surveyed reported that they saw or heard at least one element of the campaign.

**Positive action:** 86% of respondents, who were exposed to the campaign prior to taking part in the survey, took at least one positive action as a result of seeing or hearing the campaign.



## Mental health in Northern Ireland: Strategies and suicide statistics

The 'Talking really helps' campaign delivered on action 1 of the Mental Health Strategy and supported Protect Life 2 – Suicide Prevention Strategy. Action 1 of the Mental Health Strategy is to increase public awareness of how life can impact upon mental wellbeing and increase public knowledge of the key measures that can be taken to look after mental wellbeing. The action also aims to increase understanding of mental ill health and reduce stigma by encouraging people to talk about their mental health. Protect Life 2 is a long-term strategy for reducing suicides and the incidence of self-harm. Population approaches in the strategy include increasing awareness of suicide prevention, reducing stigma associated with suicidal behaviour and mental illness, and promoting help-seeking behaviour.

Suicide is complex and often occurs as a result of a number of interacting factors, making it a major challenge for public health. Areas of higher socioeconomic disadvantage tend to have higher rates of suicide and the greater the level of deprivation experienced by an individual, the higher their risk of suicidal behaviour. There is also a gender aspect to suicide; more men die from suicide than women.

At the time of the campaign, the latest suicide statistics from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) were for 2022. There were 203 suicide deaths registered in 2022. The percentage of suicides from Northern Ireland's most deprived areas (31%) was over three times that of the least deprived areas (9%). In 2022, 77% of suicide deaths were male and 23% were female. More information on suicide statistics is available from NISRA.

## Campaign advertising

Campaign advertising ran from 3 February until 31 March 2025 across TV, radio, outdoor and digital, including social media advertising. Radio also ran 21-30 April 2025. The advertising was exposed over 29 million times and it is estimated that 95% of adults in Northern Ireland saw/heard the campaign. The campaign was supported by PR and engagement with partners and stakeholders. A toolkit of resources was developed to support the campaign.

## Evaluation method

An online survey was undertaken by a market research company in March 2025 to measure the awareness of the campaign and learn more about action taken as a result of campaign exposure. There were 1,000 respondents (aged 18 years and over). Quota sampling was applied to ensure a diverse response across a range of demographic groupings. Data were analysed by the PHA's Health Intelligence team.

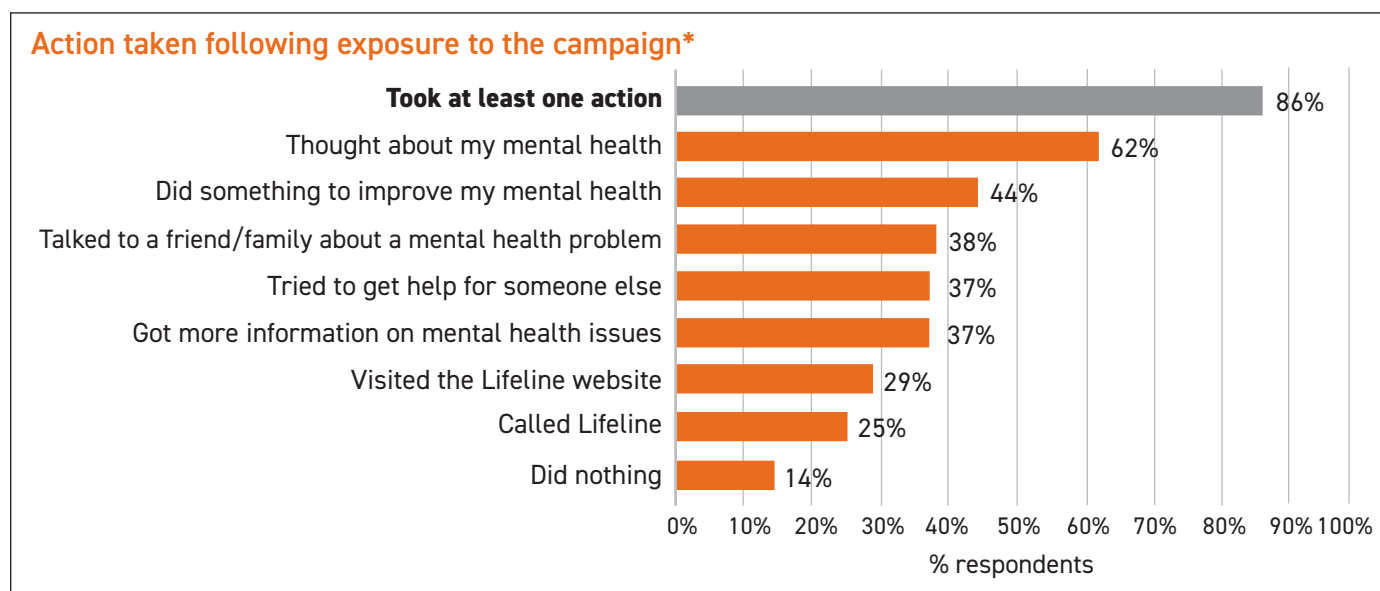
## Results

### Recognition of the campaign was high

Almost two thirds of all respondents (65%) were aware of at least one element of the campaign. The video advertisement (featured on TV, YouTube and social media advertising) was most recognised at 53%, followed by the outdoor advertising at 34%. A similar proportion (33%) recalled the radio advertisement, and over one fifth (22%) were aware of the digital/social media advertising.

### The campaign prompted action

Of the 65% who were exposed to the campaign prior to taking part in the survey, a large majority (86%) reported doing something as a result of seeing/hearing it.



\*Some people took multiple actions

## Lifeline service impact

Calls to Lifeline increased during the campaign period with average weekly call volumes increasing by 10% when comparing the pre-campaign period with the campaign period. There was also an increase in new and returning callers to Lifeline, along with increased referrals to the service during the campaign period. Increases in calls continued for a period post-campaign (when comparing to pre-campaign calls).

Weekly average	Active calls	Active callers	New callers	Returning callers	Referrals to Lifeline
8 weeks pre-campaign	746	256	38	41	26
8 weeks campaign	828	283	46	48	27
8 weeks post-campaign	814	272	41	42	28

All figures in this report have been rounded to the nearest whole number.



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