

Talking really helps campaign evaluation

On 17 November 2025, the Public Health Agency (PHA) launched the 'Talking really helps' mass media campaign. The campaign ran over 19 weeks and was a rerun of an existing campaign that was positively evaluated.

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. Targeted audiences were those people at greater risk of suicide – males and those who live in areas of deprivation. Family and friends of those most at risk of suicide were a secondary audience.

Reach: 73% of those surveyed reported that they saw or heard at least one element of the campaign.

Positive action: 73% 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 the campaign.

Mental health in Northern Ireland: Strategies and suicide statistics

The campaign delivered on action 1 of the **Mental Health Strategy** and supported **Protect Life 2**. 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 includes 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.

The most recent Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) data is for 2024, but it is important to look at the trend over a longer period of time. This is because a death can only be registered as a suicide following a coroner's investigation and it can take years in some cases for this to happen. The data shows the three year average for registered suicides rose from 205 in 2017 to 238 in 2024.

Of the suicides registered in 2024, the age-standardised* rate of death was four times higher for males (28 per 100,000 people) than females (7 per 100,000 people). Northern Ireland's most deprived areas had a suicide rate that was almost four times (28%) that of the least deprived areas in 2024 (8%). More information on suicide statistics is available from **NISRA**.

*Age-standardised mortality rates adjust for differences in the age structure of populations and therefore allow valid comparisons to be made between the sexes. Age-standardised rates for deprivation could not be calculated and so % is reported.

Campaign advertising

Campaign advertising ran from 17 November 2025 until 29 March 2026 across TV, radio, outdoor and digital, including social media advertising. The campaign was supported by PR and engagement with partners and stakeholders. A toolkit of resources and printed materials were developed and distributed widely to community setting organisations.

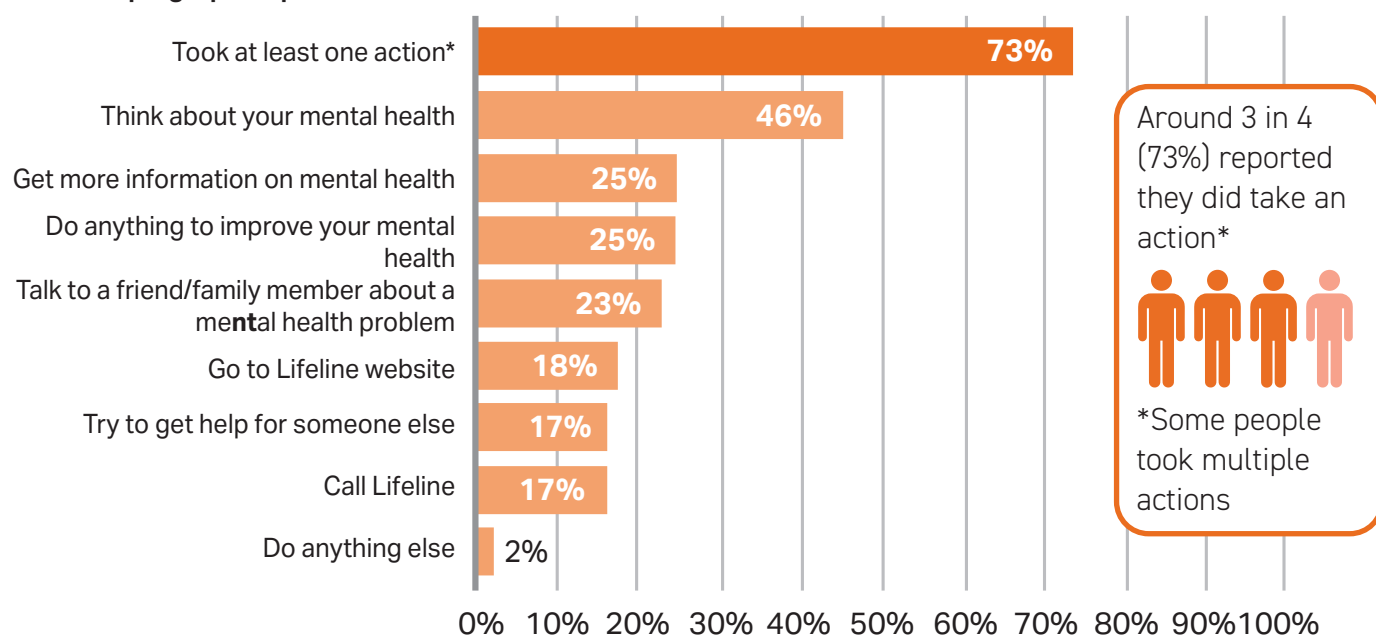
Evaluation and results

A bespoke online survey (988 respondents) of the general population of Northern Ireland aged 18 years and over was undertaken to measure the awareness of the campaign and learn more about action taken as a result of campaign exposure. Quota sampling based on the 2021 census was applied to ensure a diverse response across a range of demographic groupings. Data were analysed by the PHA's Health Intelligence team.

Recognition of the campaign was very high

Almost three quarters (73%) of respondents recognised at least one element of the campaign. The video advertisement (featured on TV, YouTube, Twitch and social media advertising) was most recognised at 58%, followed by campaign imagery (47%), which was most likely to be seen on outdoor advertising (26%). The same proportion (18%) of respondents stated that they had seen the imagery in a healthcare setting, online or on social media. A similar proportion (17%) had seen the imagery on TV. Two radio advertisements were played out – the 'at risk' ad was recalled by 43% and 38% recognised the 'intervener' ad.

The campaign prompted action



Lifeline service impact

Calls to Lifeline increased during the campaign period with average weekly call volumes increasing by 15%. There was also an increase in unique active callers and new callers. Increases in calls, unique active callers and new callers continued post-campaign.

Weekly average	Active calls	Unique active callers	New callers
19 weeks pre-campaign	818	272	42
19 weeks campaign	939	290	46

Lifeline website traffic

Traffic to the Lifeline website shows the campaign generated interest in finding out more about the service.

Total	Page views	Total users
19 weeks pre-campaign	9,736	4,483
19 weeks campaign	18,175	9,061

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



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