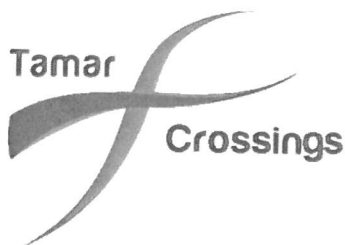


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PRESS RELEASE

23 October 2019

Members of Plymouth Youth Parliament visit Tamar Bridge to learn about suicide prevention programme

Staff at Tamar Crossings welcomed five members of the Plymouth Youth Parliament to the Tamar Bridge to learn more about the support being provided for people who come to the Bridge and raise concerns about their welfare, including the possibility of attempted suicide.

The invite to the Bridge followed a presentation to members of the Plymouth Suicide Prevention Strategic Partnership (PSPSP) by youth leader Jenny Way, who supports the Youth Parliament, about the work the young people are doing to support mental health and suicide prevention.

During their visit the group met Bridge Operations Manager Mike Houghton and Davood Kalantar, Health, Safety and Environmental Manager, and took part in a workshop which explored how the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry deal with concerns for welfare, the scale of the issue, both locally and nationally, and the mitigation measures which are in place for suicide prevention.

They also discussed the suicide prevention guidance issued by Public Health England, the work which has been done to engage with stakeholders, the existing arrangements at the Bridge and the ferry to support vulnerable people, and the proposals that have been put forward to increase the height of the existing parapets.

Over the last two decades Tamar Crossings have developed a range of measures to improve the detection and handling of vulnerable people presenting themselves at the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry. Three years ago they introduced some specific awareness training. Today more than 100 staff and contractors have received specialist mental health training to enable them to reach out to these individuals and we are being invited to share information about our wider public safety programme with other organisations across the country.

The team worked closely with mental health professionals, the emergency services and specialist groups, including the Samaritans, to develop the intervention programme. As well as providing staff with specialist training to support them to positively engage with vulnerable people while keeping

themselves safe, the Bridge also has dedicated CCTV coverage monitored in a 24/7 control room as well as physical barriers on both sides.

Following the workshop the group were invited for a tour of the Bridge Control room and the newly opened Learning and Education Centre.

"Meeting the young people was a very valuable experience " said Davood Kalantar. **"The group were extremely interested in what we are doing at the Bridge and were keen to ask questions and understand the challenges we face in managing this sensitive issue".**

"It was very helpful to hear the views of the young people " added Mike Houghton. **"We had a very interesting discussion about the Samaritans signs , the expressed stigma around the Samaritans felt by some younger people and the possibility of providing additional signs highlighting other helpline contacts for young people. We will be investigating all these issues in the future".**

"Sometimes adults forget when running consultations to include the voices of young people" said Jenny Way. **"This piece of joint work has highlighted gaps that young people think are important and worth considering for the safety and wellbeing for everyone regardless of the barriers being raised or not.**

"It's great to see that Tamar Bridge have invested a lot in staff training and welfare to try and ensure as many people as possible receives help and support to stop them taking their own lives, we realise it's only a small minority of people that consider this spot but still every life saved is an important one."

16 year old Tia Carmichael is a Deputy Member of Youth Parliament. **"Going to the Tamar Bridge was an amazing experience, which opened my eyes to the great work they do around suicide prevention"**. she said.

15 year old Niamh Mills is an elected member of the youth parliament for her campaign on suicide prevention and awareness. **"Every life matters, everyone should receive access to mental health services and support when they need it most, sadly funding cuts have left people on edge "**she said.

"It's great to see the mitigating factors Tamar Bridge have been putting in place to help the community when they are a business first and foremost. I know moving forward they intend to take on some of our suggestions".

David List
General Manager