



Reflections

Need for better collaboration to improve care

I WAS saddened to read a couple of reports in last week's newspaper. A 23 year-old man from Ivybridge who was addicted to drugs threatened to kill his own mother by holding a knife to her throat just because she begged him to keep awake as he was veering around the road and falling asleep.

The other incident was a 17-year-old Tavistock teenager who took her own life; the report said she had seen a child

psychiatrist on the day she died.

Knife crime and suicide are two of the major issues that our society currently struggles to contain. According to the Office for National Statistics, the police recorded 41,000 cases of offences involving knife in England and Wales in the year ending March 2021, which is 27% higher than 2010/11. There were 5,691 deaths by suicide in 2019 equating to an average of 18 deaths per day.

Mental health issues are identified as a contributing factor

in the increase in knife crime and suicide. Although we have one of the best mental health care systems in the world, still we struggle to provide the care our people truly deserve. One of the major flaws is that we either underutilise or neglect the use of faith and spirituality in our mental health care. The standard diagnostic manual of the American Psychiatric Association advocates knowledge about faith and spirituality for proper diagnosis and effective therapy.

We are so fortunate in this country, especially around Okehampton and Chagford, to have a good network of churches. There is a wealth of opportunity for people to get involved in and actively engaged with their faith and spirituality. There are already some intermittent collaborations between faith groups and mental health providers in some parts of the country. I think it is important we think seriously about stronger and improved coordination between faith groups and

mental health care teams. Such a move would certainly help to bring down knife crime and suicide statistics while improving our overall mental and physical well-being. 'Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened and I will give you rest.' Matthew 11:28.

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