

By Jane Wharton

AN ANTI-SUICIDE squad is patrolling the streets of Bridgend in an attempt to stem the string of tragedies that have rocked Britain.

Volunteers from The Samaritans have been called in to take their "Don't do it" message to young and vulnerable people in the Welsh town.

The group believe that the 17 suspected suicides that have occurred could be "contagious" and said they were "reaching out to those who won't come to us".

Over the weekend up to 15 trained counsellors were on the streets of the town centre offering support.

Cluster

The Samaritans' Bridgend branch director Darren Matthews said: "Members of the public told me this week that they had seen emotionally distressed people on the streets of Bridgend."

"The only way I can think of to help these people is to be there for them. We believe that it may be a suicide cluster and there is a contagion effect."

"This can affect a young, vulnerable person who is feeling suicidal anyway. Bridgend has always had a higher suicide rate but it has been older people."

"The community is in shock. They can't believe this is happening."

Seventeen people between 15 and 27 have died in the area in little over

Samaritans patrol the streets in suicide town



TOWN IN SHOCK: Bridgend where 17 youngsters have killed themselves in just over year, the latest Jenna Parry, right

a year, all but one by hanging. In each of 2005 and 2006, there were just three suicides among young people in the area. But 2007 saw 11 - and another six in just the first two months of 2008.

Police think they are unconnect-

ed. They have ruled out an internet link and slated media coverage.

An inquest on the latest victim, Jenna Parry, 16, revealed she was reeling after splitting with her boyfriend Adam Jones, 18.

But yesterday his father Colin

denied that relationship problems were the cause. He said: "If anyone is going to point the finger of blame, then they can point it at the council."

"It needs to do more to provide facilities for teenagers, like youth clubs to keep them off the streets. I

don't want to speculate about Jenna's death, no one can be sure why she did what she did."

Last week a memorial website shut its internet pages dedicated to Bridgend suicide victims in order to prevent copycat deaths.

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