

## Guidance for frontline workers and volunteers

This guidance is for anyone supporting people in Kirklees to help them feel more confident to talk to someone about suicide. It has been produced by the Public Mental Health team along with members from the Kirklees Suicide Prevention Action Group. This guidance was produced in December 2020, with thanks to Leeds Public Health team from where this was developed.

### Key principles

Avoid using the phrase 'committed suicide' as this suggests suicide is a criminal offence. Instead use 'the person has taken their own life' or 'has died by suicide.'

Avoid talking about people 'threatening' suicide as this assumes they are attention-seeking.

People who are suicidal genuinely feel as though they have no other option and often just need space to talk about how they feel.

Seek reassurance and advice if you need it, it is important to address any feelings of guilt or self-reflections

Asking someone about suicide does not 'plant a seed' or cause them to take their own life; ask the question "Are you feeling suicidal?"

Avoid use of the term: "unsuccessful suicide attempt"

\*Examples of questions and things you should be asking are detailed further in this document.

### What is my role?

We all have a role to play in preventing suicide not just in our work but in any aspect of our lives.

If you are supporting someone within your professional role, the advice in this guidance should be applied alongside organisational and professional guidelines. Different staff groups will have different levels of responsibility in terms of understanding and responding to risk. If in doubt, always seek advice from a manager or safeguarding lead.

If you are a volunteer, you may feel unsure about your role in supporting someone who is talking about suicide. It is important to talk this through with your manager, volunteer co-ordinator or support worker from the organisation you are working with.

### Recognising the signs

Feelings and thoughts can be very different and it is not always easy to recognise the signs that someone might be having thoughts of suicide. However, evidence suggests someone may be feeling suicidal if they:

- express feelings of hopelessness
- talk about wanting to 'end it all'
- talk about their death or wanting to die
- talk about settling their affairs
- talk about being a burden to their loved ones
- talk about their self-harming

It may be helpful to look at a feelings checklist; to better understand how the person may be feeling and whether these feelings are leading to suicidal thoughts.

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mood-self-assessment/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mood-self-assessment/)

### Listen!

Active listening uses skills which help to build trust and connection with the person you are supporting. It will also help you to give them your full attention and help create a safe space to talk about how they feel.

To listen actively:

- focus on the other person.
- try not to talk about yourself and your own experiences.
- have patience. Give the other person time to talk about how they feel. Try to make sure they don't feel rushed.
- ask open questions to explore the other person's feelings. Open questions need more than a yes/no answer, such as: "What happened next?" or "How did that make you feel?"
- say it back to check you've understood what is being said. Try and use the words they have used.

## Is the person you're supporting feeling helpless, hopeless and maybe feeling like they may want to take their own life?

If you feel concerned about the person you're supporting, start a conversation about suicide to explore whether the person has a plan to harm themselves. It is a good idea to use direct questions to do this, so that there is no confusion and the person understands you are asking them about suicide and nothing else.

It is completely understandable to feel anxious about asking someone about suicide. However, there is no evidence to suggest that bringing it up in conversation will encourage them to act on their thoughts.

Use questions such as:

- how are you coping with what's been happening in your life?
- are you having suicidal thoughts?
- have you made a plan?
- have you thought about how you would end your life?
- establish protective factors; family, employment, friends
- have you previously attempted to take your own life? What helped you at that time?
- where are you on a scale of 0-10 (0 being they do not want to carry on living, 10 being they have not had any thoughts about taking their own life).

If the person is under 18 refer to appendix A for guidance on supporting young people with their mental health, how to start a difficult conversation and specific support available.

## Supporting someone who is suicidal

Many people who have attempted to take their own life or died by suicide have talked to someone about feeling suicidal or hopeless before acting on these thoughts. If someone talks about taking their own life, always take it seriously:

- allow the person to express their feelings first
- reassure them that they are not alone and that you can look for support together
- avoid making promises and be realistic about what you can and can't do
- don't worry too much about saying the 'wrong' thing; what's most important is that you are listening and showing that you care.

It is unlikely that you will be able to make their feelings go away, but you can help by encouraging them to see that there are some things worth living for. Talk to them about anything that might cause their suicidal feelings, and explore ideas of things that could help in these situations.

## Create a safe plan

Create a safe plan with the person clarifying what you have talked about, the things that have been identified from the conversation that the person feels may help and where they can go in a crisis situation. The following questions may help you to develop the safe plan:

- what have they been doing that helps?
- do they have a friend or family member they can talk to about how they feel?
- what are they doing that stops the suicidal feelings from getting worse?
- what doesn't help?
- what do they feel would help right now?

## Stay in touch

- If you can, stay in touch with the person you're supporting. Make a plan to check in with them the following week or in the next few days.
- Don't be put off by a negative response. The other person might not feel ready to talk about how they are feeling, and this is okay. The person may not feel comfortable talking about this with someone who is supporting them with other aspects of their life. Reassure the person support is on offer if and when they're ready and other support contacts are available for them to talk anonymously (refer to signposting section).
- Try and provide the person with some helpful telephone numbers that they can take away with them. Make a contingency plan for emergencies such as a mental health crisis; focusing on the provision of related telephone numbers to be stored in 'contacts' on the person's mobile phone or provision of a printed/written copy of the information and agreed strategy too.

## Offer help from the NHS

Suggest the person talk to their GP. GP practices can offer appointments by phone or video call (if they are unable to offer face-to-face appointments).

- If the person needs urgent care but their situation is not life threatening, they can ring NHS 111 (open 24 hours every day).
- If the person has seriously injured themselves or has already tried to end their life (for example they tell you they have recently taken an overdose), encourage them to call 999 and ask for an ambulance, or do this on their behalf.

If the person you are supporting has a plan to attempt suicide or they tell you they have attempted suicide in the past, and they can't or won't call NHS 111 by themselves, tell your manager, volunteer co-ordinator or clinical lead.

## Intent to harm and removing potentially lethal items from an individual's possession

If the person you are speaking with is verbalising intent to use a known lethal means to take their own life and has possession of such means, staff may have the opportunity to remove items from the person's possession. However they may be apprehensive about doing so due to a lack of clarity in respect of what they can do legally in such situations.

In order to help you navigate these difficult decisions and feel confident in defending your actions afterwards. The Statement of Principle states:

### It is lawful:

1. To remove, with the individual's agreement, items the person may use to self-injure or risk death at some point.
2. To remove (without the individual's agreement) items staff reasonably believe the individual may use to self-injure or risk death; where staff believe there is an immediate risk of serious self-injury, death or risk death to others and it is necessary and proportionate to remove the items to avoid potential catastrophic outcome.

## Safeguarding

### Adults

Safeguarding adults refers to the plans for protecting adults at risk from abuse or neglect. If the person you are concerned about is over the age of 18, has care and support needs (for example, they need extra help to live independently, through having support at home or with educational or social needs), and you feel they are being abused or are at risk of abuse from another person, you can seek help.

Wherever possible, involve the person at risk in decisions about reporting a safeguarding concern. If this is not possible, you may need to act in their 'best interests' because they do not have the mental capacity to decide this for themselves. There are also occasions when you may need to report the concern without their permission, for example, it is in their vital interests, other people are also at risk, or the person is unable to consent because of coercion or duress.

To report abuse or seek advice, call Gateway to Care Adult Social Care on 01484 414933. For further information, see the Kirklees Safeguarding Adults Board website: [www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/adult-social-care-providers/kirklees-safeguarding-adults-board.aspx](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/adult-social-care-providers/kirklees-safeguarding-adults-board.aspx). If an **adult** is in danger first ensure the individual is safe and call the emergency services if immediate help is needed.

## Children and young people

If you have concerns about a child's wellbeing you should call and speak to someone at one of the following numbers:

**Duty & Advice team** 01484 456848

**Kirklees Emergency Duty Service** 01484 414933 (outside office hours)

If you have an immediate concern for a child's safety, call the police on 999

## Mental Health Support

You can signpost to the following useful services for further support:

- **Well Bean Café:** provides a range of innovative services that improve health and wellbeing. The Well Bean Café provides a safe and confidential space to refer to in a crisis out of hours. They provide one to one support in a non-clinical environment, in a cafe style setting. Anyone wishing to attend the cafes can self-refer or ask a professional health or social care worker to refer them. The Well Bean Café offers out of hours support with phone lines for referrals open from 6pm at both cafes. For the **Huddersfield** cafe please ring 07741 900395. For the **Dewsbury** cafe please ring 07867 028755.
- **Single Point of Access Kirklees:** first point of contact for access to secondary care mental health services, Adults (aged 18-65) – 01924 316830
- **Samaritans** provides space to talk, 116 123 (free phone, open 24 hours every day).
- **West Yorkshire and Harrogate Suicide Bereavement service** provides support to anyone affected by the loss of someone to suicide, 0113 305 5800
- **The Kirklees Mental Health Support Card** provides information about local support services to help people who are feeling low and distressed: [www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/health-and-well-being/pdf/mental-health-support-card.pdf](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/health-and-well-being/pdf/mental-health-support-card.pdf)
- **NHS 24 hour Mental Health Helpline**, available to anyone in Kirklees with a registered GP, 0800 183 0558
- **NHS Grief and Loss Service** – for anyone impacted by loss at this time 0808 1963833.
- **Thriving Kirklees** – single point of contact for any child between 0-19 in Kirklees, 0300 304 5555
- **Huddersfield Royal Infirmary** has a 24/7 Mental Health Liaison Team presence

## Relationship and Financial Support

There are other forms of support available based around relationship or financial support.

### Relationship Support

#### Pennine Domestic Abuse Partnership (PDAP)

**PDAP** – Support, advice, information and access to refuge/safe accommodation including information about all PDAP services. 24hr helpline: 0800 052 7222

**PDAP Refuge/Safe Accommodation** - Phone: 01484 308300  
Phone: 0800 0527222 E-mail: [accommodation@pdap.co.uk](mailto:accommodation@pdap.co.uk)

**PDAP Outreach Services** - Phone: 01484 308307 or 308306  
E-mail: [outreach@pdap.co.uk](mailto:outreach@pdap.co.uk)

**All other enquiries** telephone: 01484 308302 Email: [admin@pdap.co.uk](mailto:admin@pdap.co.uk)

#### Yorkshire Children's Centre Perpetrator Support

The Domestic Abuse Prevention Programme (DAPP) is a 17 week programme which aims to increase the safety of women and children, and the quality of life of everyone in the family, by working with men who recognise that they have been abusive towards an intimate female partner and who want to stop that behaviour. Domestic abuse includes physical violence, emotional abuse or any other form of coercive control. The programme runs alongside one-to-one support sessions to ensure men are offered a robust intervention.

Application is by referral from statutory and non-statutory agencies (eg. CAFCASS family court advisor, or Social Services in the voluntary or non-voluntary sector), or men can make a self-referral using the downloadable referral form:

Download a professional agency referral form here: [Professional Referral Form](#)

Download a self-referral form here: [Self Referral Form](#)

If you have an enquiry please mail [dappenquiries@yccuk.org.uk](mailto:dappenquiries@yccuk.org.uk)

#### Huddersfield Relate

Phone: 01484 425 843

Email: [kirkleesoffice@relatepkc.org.uk](mailto:kirkleesoffice@relatepkc.org.uk)

Website: [www.relatepkc.org.uk](http://www.relatepkc.org.uk)

Relate can provide relationship support for individuals and couples as well as friendly and informal workshops.

## Financial Support

The following web page provides a directory of financial support: [www.kirklees.gov.uk/covid19finance](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/covid19finance)

Below are some other key places to signpost to, depending on the financial problem.

**Local Welfare Provision** – For families who are struggling financially, the Local Welfare Provision helps vulnerable families in short term crisis. [www.kirklees.gov.uk/lwp](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/lwp)

**Citizens Advice** – The following link will give you access to free online advice on a range of issues from Citizens Advice and the other organisations with which they work closely [www.kcalc.org.uk/self-help/](http://www.kcalc.org.uk/self-help/)

**Step Change** – Offer free debt advice that is based on a comprehensive assessment of a persons situation. They also provide practical help and support. [www.stepchange.org](http://www.stepchange.org)

## Looking after yourself

- Supporting someone who is suicidal can be difficult and may affect how you feel and cope. Remember to look after yourself and your own mental health too.
- Check in with your manager, volunteer co-ordinator or supervisor as well as other people you volunteer or work with, or professional support such as any counselling/health services you are accessing.
- Talk to your organisation about getting additional support, especially if you feel this is getting too much for you and affecting your own mental health. If you are finding a case too difficult it is important you raise this with a manager/supervisor/volunteer co-ordinator. It is ok for you to ask to be taken off the case.

Finally – we recommend that everyone should complete the Zero Suicide Alliance, free e-learning training course. This can be accessed here: [www.zerosuicidealliance.com/training](http://www.zerosuicidealliance.com/training)