



# The Aim



- ❑ Many professionals support individuals with complicated personal circumstances and complex needs which means they can sometimes be the first point of contact for someone in a crisis.
- ❑ Occasionally professionals may receive calls or will meet with a person who is at a point of crisis and shares that they are thinking of, or going to take their own lives.
- ❑ The aim of this guidance is to give professionals direction on how to react to a person who is threatening suicide or expressing suicidal thoughts. This includes how to respond and support the person, signposting them, and how to record the incident.
- ❑ Professionals should note that service areas/organisations may have their own protocols for handling these calls and should ensure they are familiar with these.

# Impact & Local Context

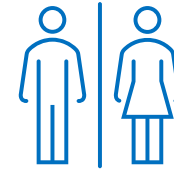


Office for National Statistics data shows 181 people were registered as having died by suicide in Oxfordshire between 2019 and 2021 – the latest available data.



## Common contribution factors 2018:

- Relationship issues
- Bereavement
- Alcohol
- Financial problems
- Chronic physical health conditions.



138 of the deaths by suicide were **male** and 43 were **female**.

*Deaths from suicide 2019-2021*

Suicide impacts not only immediate family and friends but also colleagues and wider society. Those bereaved by suicide are more at risk themselves and are more likely to experience poor mental health.

# Spotting the signs

## Signs

- Restlessness/agitation
- Tearful
- Tired/lacking energy
- Not talking to friends/family
- Using alcohol or drugs
- Not coping with everyday things
- Sleeping or eating more than usual
- Risky behaviour

## MYTH

People who talk about suicide aren't serious and won't go through with it.

## Situations

- Loss/bereavement
- Suicide/attempted suicide of friend or family member
- Relationship/family issues
- Housing issues
- Financial problems
- Bullying, abuse or neglect
- Loneliness/isolation
- Poor mental health

# Disclosures of Suicidal Ideation



- Sometimes people will tell staff they are feeling down or that they've been thinking about suicide
- The issue(s) may seem to be so over-whelming or that they can't see a solution to the problem, that the person may feel that suicide is their only option
- A client/customer might tell staff they have attempted to end their life, hurt themselves, or are about to do so

# What to do



Be non-judgemental and empathetic and confirm that there is a way forward



Ask if they have sought help before



Try to get the person to agree on what they will do next and encourage them to do this



Summarise what has been said and be clear about the next steps



Tell them if you are going to call the police with a concern for their welfare

# What to do



Breathe and take your time to answer



Listen

Ask questions

- Have they attempted this before?
- Why they want to take their own life?
- How long they've been feeling this way?



Validate the person's feelings and emphasise the fact that speaking to you is a positive thing









Alert a team member or manager that you are talking to a distressed caller



Emphasise there is help available

# What NOT to do



-  Invalidate the person's feelings (e.g., 'all you have to do is pull yourself together')
-  Panic if they say they are going to kill themselves. These feelings are common and talking about them is an important encouraging first step.
-  Worry that questions about suicide may instil the idea in the person's mind
-  Don't minimise or try to avoid their distress by offering solutions
-  Do not be afraid of asking about suicidal thoughts and about how far they have taken those thoughts; have they the means to do it have they a plan to end their life
-  Talk about your own experiences



# Samaritans SHUSH Tips

These tips were created by the Samaritans.

They encourage empathy and ensure the person feels listened to.



The graphic features the Samaritans logo in green, a lightbulb icon, and the text 'S.H.U.S.H listening tips' in purple. A central photograph shows a woman listening to another woman. A purple circle on the left lists the tips: 'Show you care', 'Have patience', 'Use open questions', 'Say it back', and 'Have courage'. A purple box on the right lists the tips with numbers: '#1 Show you care', '#2 Have patience', '#3 Use open questions', '#4 Say it back', and '#5 Have courage'. The Samaritans website 'samaritans.org/shush' and the Samaritans logo are at the bottom right.

**Samaritans**   
**S.H.U.S.H listening tips**

Show you care  
Have patience  
Use open questions  
Say it back  
Have courage

#1 Show you care  
#2 Have patience  
#3 Use open questions  
#4 Say it back  
#5 Have courage

 [samaritans.org/shush](https://www.samaritans.org/shush)

**SAMARITANS**  
A registered charity

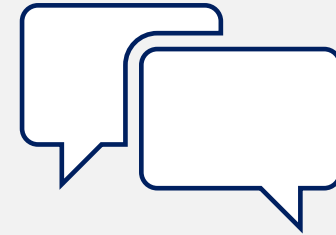
[Click here to watch Samaritans video explaining these tips in more detail!](https://www.samaritans.org/shush)

# Things to remember during the phone call

**Always alert a team member or manager that you are speaking to a distressed caller, they should remain near to give support.**

The member of staff speaking to the caller should always try to establish the following information:

- name
- the location of the caller
- the caller's address
- the circumstances the caller finds themselves in
- their telephone number
- if anyone is with the caller
- any support networks



Ask for details of any support already in place, support worker, social worker or carer and contact details. Ask permission to contact them.

**Staff should always follow any established team/organisational protocols .e.g. sending an assistance alert to a manager or having someone listen in**

# Working from home and home visits



If you are working remotely or completing a home visit by yourself there may be occasions where there is no one to pass the information on to. In these situations remember the [Do list](#).

- ✓ Ask them how long they've thought about suicide
- ✓ Don't be afraid to ask them if they have made a plan
- ✓ Offer to call the Samaritans for them or friend to come over and support them.
- ✓ Tell the person that you need to get some advice yourself
- ✓ **Always** call or send a message to a colleague or manager from your location
- ✓ If you need to, tell the person you will call them back

# Colleagues



Anyone can experience suicidal thoughts, this includes your colleagues. If you feel that someone you work with is struggling and be concerned that you do not know what to say. This is normal.

Remember that simply talking and listening to somebody can be powerful enough to help someone in distress.

## Ask open questions:

**When?** – “When did you realise?”

**Where?**- “Where did this happen?”

**Why?**- “What were you thinking about at the time?”

**What?** “what else happened?”

**How?** “How did that feel?”

## Do say:



I am very concerned about you



I would like to speak to XX in confidence to make sure I give you the best support I can



I can support you to tell your manager

# Colleagues



- Similarly to any concern for someone's life, you cannot promise confidentiality.
- If your colleague does not want you to share their feelings, then you will have to say you cannot keep this to yourself.
- Most people who disclose suicidal thoughts do so because they want support and help and tend to agree to the disclosure.
- We do not have to say we will speak to their manager at this point but do share it with a safeguarding lead or a trusted manager.

The most important thing is to get the person the right support and hopefully then they will feel happier having their manager involved. You can signpost your colleague to your organisations employee assistance programme or a mental health first aider

# Contacting Emergency Services



**If it is an immediate threat to life – Call 999**

- The individual may be in distress and threatening to hurt themselves immediately
- They may be stating what they intend to do and how they are going to do it, they may also be using phrases like 'I can't go on'

In these situations, the police should be called immediately.

# Contacting Emergency Services



## For a Police welfare check – call 101

- All suicide threats should be treated with urgency, where there is NOT an immediate threat to life contact police on 101 and request a welfare check.
- If you are unsure if a welfare check is required, discuss with your line manager/safeguarding lead.
- Police will confirm that the person is safe and well, if required they will contact emergency services/crisis team service for an assessment.

Professionals should tell the person they are contacting the police or that they intend to once the call is over – this may elicit a strong reaction from the caller from anger to fear, explain this is for their safety and the police are there to help.

# Young People



Life changes and hormones can mean that young people are more vulnerable to suicide.

## The risks can be higher if a young person:

- Has a serious mental problems and or is depressed
- Uses drugs and alcohol when upset
- Has previously tried to kill themselves before
- Has planned to commit suicide
- Knows of a family or friend who has tried to commit suicide

## Helplines for young people:

[Papyrus UK Suicide Prevention | Prevention of Young Suicide \(papyrus-uk.org\)](https://www.papyrus-uk.org/)

[Contact Us | Samaritans](https://www.samaritans.org/)

[Mental health helpline | Oxford Health](https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/mental-health-helpline)  
[CAMHSOxford Health](https://www.camhs.oxford.nhs.uk/)  
[CAMHS](https://www.camhs.org.uk/)



# Young People



**If it is an immediate threat to life – Call 999**

Any child or young person who self-harms or expresses thoughts about self-harm or suicide must be taken seriously and appropriate help and intervention should be offered at the earliest point.

If you're concerned about a young person *you* should speak to **LCSS Central** on 0345 2412705 or **MASH Oxfordshire** on 0345 050 7666 (if urgent)

# Signposting to other services



**This is a list of support services staff can offer service users:**

- **GP** – This is the route into adult mental health services. Encourage the caller to see their doctor.
- You (or they) can call [the duty GP or NHS 111](#) if someone needs urgent care but it's not life-threatening. This includes if someone has self-harmed but it does not appear to be life-threatening, or they're talking about wanting to self-harm
- [Amparo](#)- Free and confidential advice for people affected by suicide.
- [The Samaritans](#) - 24 hr helpline or call back request on 116123
- The [Oxfordshire Mind](#) Information Line open Mondays to Thursday, 9.30am to 4.30pm Friday 9.30am to 4.00pm(closed Bank Holidays) 01865 247788
- [The Silver Line](#) – for older people 08004708090
- [Thames Valley Police](#) 101 if they've been a victim of crime

# Looking after yourself



Supporting and working with individuals who feel suicidal can be emotionally draining.

You might feel powerless, angry, shocked or another range of emotions. It is important not to blame yourself for what has happened.

Once we have done everything necessary to ensure the safety those who are experiencing suicidal thoughts, it is important to take care of ourselves.

## Find support for yourself:

- Speak to a Mental Health First Aider
- Talk to your manager/peer support group
- Talk to a family member or friend
- [Samaritans- Our Frontline](#)
- [MIND- Support Someone else](#)

Get enough sleep, do things you enjoy and eat well

Make time for yourself

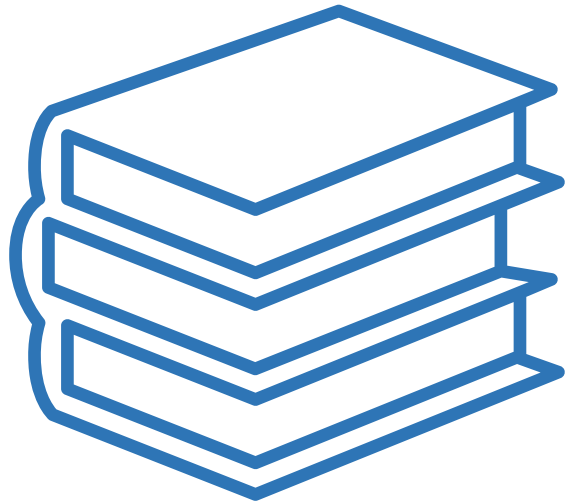
Create a wellbeing plan

Calm-Mindfulness  
Meditation

[Daily Calm | 10 Minute Mindfulness Meditation | Self Soothing - YouTube](#)

# Further Reading & Resources

---



[Developing listening skills | DEAL | Samaritans](#)

[Suicide Awareness Training | Help For Heroes](#)

[Disclosure of suicidal thoughts - Papyrus UK | Suicide Prevention Charity \(papyrus-uk.org\)](#)