

Preventing Suicide:

Guidance for organisations supporting young people in Glasgow City

This document was developed in response to a recognised need following a series of suicides in South Glasgow. It forms part of a city-wide effort to address this issue and provides clear guidance and practical support for organisations working with young people across Glasgow.



Looking after yourself

This document contains information about suicide prevention and responding to concerns.

Please prioritise your own wellbeing and come back to this later, if now does not feel like the appropriate time to read this material.

If you're experiencing suicidal thoughts, or if people around you have expressed concern about your wellbeing, arrange an appointment with your GP or phone NHS 24 on 111.

If it would help you to talk with someone, freephone:

- Samaritans – Call: 116 123 (24 hours a day, 365 days a year)
- Breathing Space – Call: 0800 83 85 87 (Monday to Friday, 6pm to 2am and 24 hours at weekends) or you can speak to an advisor using the Breathing Space webchat (Monday to Friday – 6pm to 2am, Saturday and Sunday – 4pm to midnight)
- HOPELINE 247 – Call: 0800 068 4141, Text: 88247 or, Email: pat@papyrus-uk.org (please note the HopeLine offer support to children and young people under the age of 35 with thoughts of suicide or for anyone supporting someone with thoughts of suicide)

If you, or someone you know, needs URGENT HELP please phone the emergency services on 999.



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Introduction and Background

Suicide is a significant public health issue in Scotland. Every life lost to suicide is an enormous tragedy and leaves long lasting impacts on families, friends and communities. Up to 135 people can be affected in some way by every suicide.



792 probable suicides in Scotland in 2023



Men x3 more likely to die by suicide than women



1 in 5 suicide deaths were someone under the age of 30



83 deaths by suicide in Glasgow in 2023

This document supports youth organisations in Glasgow City to implement national suicide prevention strategies and practice and is part of a wider suite of resources from the Glasgow City Suicide Prevention Partnership. The aim of this resource is to help workers feel more confident and less overwhelmed when faced with such emotionally challenging situations. By being equipped in advance with the right knowledge and information staff can provide more effective and compassionate support during times of crisis.

Youth organisations should use this document to support and complement their work around suicide prevention. It does not cover every issue or scenario that may arise and it is not a substitute for organisations developing their own policies, systems, and staff supports. Each organisation should ensure tailored approaches that align with their specific responsibilities and workforce needs.

Additional supporting resources for developing a mental health policy are available via health improvement. More information [here](#).

Definitions

Suicide

the act of intentionally ending one's own life.

Attempted Suicide

a non-fatal incident in which a person intends to end their own life.

Suicidal ideation

thoughts, ideas or plans about ending one's own life

Self-harm

refers to an act which is intended to cause harm to one-self, but which is usually not intended to result in death.

Self Harm is a coping strategy. Although self-harm is a risk factor for suicide, the majority of people who self-harm will not go on to have a suicide attempt.

Find out more about self-harm via [Self Harm Network Scotland](#) and the [NHSGGC Website](#).

Suicide contagion*

refers to the situation where one person's suicide, due to its circumstances and the publicity around it, triggers the risk of suicidal ideation, suicide attempts and/or deaths by suicide in others who are already vulnerable to suicidal thoughts or behaviours. When contagion occurs, this can sometimes lead to suicide clusters.

Suicide cluster*

describes a situation in which more deaths by suicide occur than is normally expected in terms of time, place or both.

Public Health Scotland have developed [National guidance for identifying and responding to a suicide cluster](#). It contains case studies as examples of how to respond to suicide clusters and activity.

*** Note on language:** The terms 'suicide contagion' and 'suicide cluster' are generally used by those working in the field of suicide prevention. They may be considered emotive or insensitive to those bereaved by suicide. It is important to be mindful of this and to agree consistent language used in your field.

Section 1 – Awareness Raising and Prevention

Common Myths about Suicide

Samaritans UK (2023) have outlined common myths and facts about suicide on their [website](#). Supportive conversations can help raise awareness of myths around suicide and seeking support.

MYTH:	You can't ask someone if they're suicidal	FACT:	Asking someone if they're having suicidal thoughts can give them permission to tell you how they feel and let them know they are not a burden
MYTH:	You have to be mentally ill to think about suicide	FACT:	Not all people who die by suicide have mental health problems at the time they die
MYTH:	People who are suicidal want to die	FACT:	Most people who feel suicidal don't want to die; they just want the situation they're in or the way they're feeling to stop
MYTH:	People who say they are going to take their own life are just attention seeking and shouldn't be taken seriously	FACT:	People who say they want to end their lives should always be taken seriously. People may communicate their distress in different ways and need attention and support
MYTH:	You can't tell when someone is feeling suicidal	FACT:	Suicide is complex and how people act when they're struggling to cope is different for everyone

Section 1 – Awareness Raising and Prevention

Risk and Protective Factors

The reasons behind suicide can be complex and multifaceted, involving a range of circumstances and life events. Suicide risk and protective factors exist across societal, community, and individual levels, highlighting the need for multi-level approaches to prevention.

Public health Scotland highlight a range of risk and protective factors on their website summarised below.

Risk Factors

- Social factors: Living in poverty, experiencing childhood trauma, exposure to violence, dealing with addiction, or feeling isolated
- Life events: Big changes like a relationship breakdown, going through a transition stage in life such as moving on from school education, or a bereavement can raise the risk
- Groups at higher risk: Some individuals may be at higher risk, due to factors such as discrimination and stigma. For example, people from minority ethnic groups or LGBTQ+

Protective Factors

- Feeling connected to others (family, friends, community)
- Feeling a sense of purpose in life
- Having life skills like resilience, problem-solving, and coping strategies
- Having good self-esteem

This page has been adapted from Public Health Scotland's Overview of Suicide Prevention Risk and Protective Factors with [more info available here](#)

Section 1 – Awareness Raising and Prevention

Risk and Protective Factors continued.

Youth organisations can contribute to minimising risk factors and enhancing protective factors. They can support children, young people and their families in building resilience and creating opportunities for more positive life outcomes. The Resilience Toolkit provides a visual aid and practical guidance for promoting the resilience of children and young people.

One Good Adult

We know that the presence of ‘One Good Adult’ in the life of a child/ young person has a positive influence on their mental health. Children and young people with the support of ‘one good adult’ are more connected to others, more self-confident, future looking and better able to cope with difficulties.

How to be a ‘One Good Adult’

DO

- Listen
- Ask direct questions
- Comment on what you see
- Be aware of body language
- Look for windows of opportunity
- Ask how you can be of help
- Encourage help seeking

DON'T

- Judge
- Overreact
- Avoid the issue
- Dismiss their concerns
- Talk just about problems
- Rush to solve the problem
- Say that they're wrong to feel a certain way
- Use clichés

Watch a short video clip on One Good Adult [here](#).

For more info on One Good Adult visit the NHSGGC Mental Health Improvement Team website [here](#).

Section 1 – Awareness Raising and Prevention

Supporting people to look after their Mental Health and Wellbeing

We can all take small steps each day to support our mental health and wellbeing. What works may be different for everyone and can change over time. Encourage young people to try activities that help them feel good and stay well

Listen to Music or a Podcast

Music and podcasts can boost mood, focus, or help you to relax. You can create playlists for study, relaxation, or energy. Explore podcasts together, from comedy to mental health or sport. You can share music with friends as a way to connect. Music can be a tool for self-care when they feel low.

Find a playlist to match how you feel on
[Feels FM](#)

Connect with others

Relationships are key to wellbeing. Checking in with a friend you haven't spoken to recently, sharing memes, playlists, or podcasts is an easy way to start conversations. Suggest planning a group activity, movie night, gaming session, or just hanging out.

Be Active

Regular exercise and getting outdoors can improve our mood. It's important to move in ways you enjoy. Kick a ball about, go to the park, or join a casual sports club, try a dance challenge or a fun YouTube workout.

Get Enough Sleep

Getting good sleep, and enough of it, can help us have more energy, feel more positive, and feel less stressed. Young people should aim for 8-10 hours sleep each night.

Do Things You Enjoy

Make time for activities that bring joy and a sense of achievement. Encourage hobbies, or trying new activities. Video games, TV, and social media can be positive if balanced with breaks. Volunteering or youth groups can build skills and be fun.

Section 1 – Awareness Raising and Prevention

Training, Information and Resources to support your practice

It is important to recognise the value of prevention and early intervention when supporting young people. It can be helpful for staff and volunteers to be aware of training and supporting resources for their work and for themselves.

Supporting someone with thoughts of suicide can be difficult personally and professionally, before, during and after any intervention.

It's important to look after yourself and access support if you need it. It can be useful to think about what support your organisation has in place for staff and volunteers. This page has some ideas which may help.



Free Mental Health and
Suicide Prevention
Training



Support Services,
Websites and
Telephone Support



Glasgow City Suicide
Prevention Partnership:
Information, Training &
Resources



Mental Health
Improvement
Resources



Looking after yourself
while supporting
others



Suicide Prevention
Scotland:
National campaign,
resources and support

Section 2 – Talking about suicide

Helpful tips for talking about suicide

Research shows that talking about suicide does not increase suicidal thoughts or intention among young people. While it is good to have conversations with young people, it is important to consider the following points:

Suicide is complex, involving a range of factors and is rarely the result of a single event or problem.

Do not talk about methods of suicide or talk about suicide in a way that glamorises or romanticises suicide.

Appreciate these can be difficult and emotive conversations for some people – use simple language

Talking about suicide statistics can be overwhelming.

Take time to ensure the young person understands what you have said and clarify what you have heard from them to ensure mutual understanding.

Ask about suicidal thoughts if you are concerned about someone.

Encourage help seeking behaviour and open and honest talk.

In responding to someone in distress, who may be suicidal, you should express genuine concern.

Ask them directly about suicide. Listen to them and allow them to express their feelings and reassure them that they are not alone.

The [Ask, Tell, Respond video](#) contains further advice on talking to young people about their mental health.

Section 2 – Talking about suicide

Conversation Prompts

Papyrus have developed a range of conversation prompts to help you start the conversation with a young person. Here are some examples. More information on the Papyrus website [here](#).

I'm worried because I've noticed you said(...)
Can we talk about this?

It's hard and scary to talk about suicide
but take your time and I will listen.

You've shown a lot of
strength in telling me this. I
want to help you find
support.

It's not uncommon to have thoughts of
suicide. With help and support many
people can work through these thoughts
and stay safe.

Sometimes, when people are feeling
the way you are they think about
suicide. Is that what you're thinking
about?

Things must be so painful for
you to feel like there is no way
out. I want to listen and help.

How are you really
feeling?

There are organisations that offer
support like (...). I can help you find their
contact details.

It sounds like life feels too
hard for you right now and you
want to kill yourself, is that right?

Debriefing or accessing support as a staff member or
volunteer is important after difficult conversations. More
info [here](#).

Section 2 – Talking about suicide

Responding to Digital Concerns

All messages or comments indicating distress or suicidal ideation require a response.

Organisations may receive digital concerns from individuals indicating distress or suicidal ideation. This could be in various forms such as public comments on organisational social media platforms, private inbox messages on organisational social media or via work-based email inboxes.

How your service responds to comments or messages may depend on your type of service, the nature of the message, the platform used, the level of concern, if the comment is safe for other people to see and if the person is already known to your service.

National Suicide Prevention Alliance Guidelines: 'Responding to suicidal content online'

The National Suicide Prevention Alliance have developed best practice guidelines that can help generate an appropriate response. These include useful information on deciding how to respond, writing your response, and what to do after you have responded to concerns online.

The #chatsafe guidelines provide tools and tips for young people to help them communicate safely online about suicide.

Samaritans Online Safety Resources provide guidance on staying safe online.

Section 2 – Talking about suicide

How to Talk about Suicide Safely Online

The way we talk about suicide online is important. Whether you are trying to raise awareness, you've seen something in the media or you're sharing personal experiences, posting safely and responsibly can reduce risks and encourage people to seek help.

Ask yourself why you are posting

Use a trigger warning

Use sensitive language

Signpost to support

Don't speculate about suicide

Be mindful of how you talk about people who have died by suicide

Never post details about methods of suicide

Think about how often you post

Be careful what you repost or share

Share messages of hope and recovery

Section 3 – Responding to Concerns

Responding to concerns about suicide with young people

This ALERT Pathway is about keeping young people safe. It encourages adults to take concerns seriously, act quickly, and support young people with care and respect.

It outlines how to support someone experiencing varying levels of suicidal thoughts or behaviour – from no current risk, to having thoughts without a plan, to having a plan but no intent or means, and those at immediate risk to themselves or others. It provides clear guidance for recognising concerns and responding appropriately at each stage.

A

Ask Directly Don't be afraid to ask someone if they're thinking about suicide. It shows you care and gives them a chance to talk.

L

Listen Carefully Let the person speak without interrupting. Be calm, kind, and non-judgmental.

E

Evaluate Risk Try to understand how serious the situation is. Ask if they have a plan, the means to carry it out, and if they're in immediate danger.

R

Respond If the risk is high, don't leave them alone. Get help from emergency services or mental health professionals.

T

Take Action Follow up. Make sure the young person gets the support they need, whether that's from school, family, or health services.

Section 3 – Responding to Concerns

Tips on How to Respond to a suicide attempt

It can be distressing and overwhelming to come across someone in the midst of a suicide attempt, and it's completely natural to feel unsure of how to respond.

If you discover someone in the act of trying to take their own life, here are some actions to consider:

- Keep safe – do not endanger your own life
- If the person's life is in danger, phone 999 immediately or if possible take the person directly to the nearest A&E department
- Perform First Aid if it is necessary and if safe to do so
- Remove the means if possible and if safe to do so
- If the person is drinking alcohol or taking drugs, try to get them to stop
- Encourage the person to talk and listen non-judgementally
- Spend time listening to them and try to ensure they are safe
- Encourage them to call a helpline or contact someone they trust
- Follow up with the young person
- Parent/Carer may need to be contacted if appropriate
- Consider any individual support plans in place for the young person
- Ensure that you follow your organisation's child protection and safeguarding policy and any other relevant protocols

Section 4 – Bereavement by Suicide

The death of someone by suicide can bring a mixture of strong and sometimes overwhelming emotions. It is a devastating and traumatic event in anyone's life. Everyone grieves differently, and there is no right or wrong way to grieve. It is important to recognise that people do not need to manage alone. It can help, now or in time, to speak about the person they have lost and how they are feeling with those around them – whether this is family, friends, a doctor, or one of the support services listed below.

Glasgow City Bereavement website

A range of information around bereavement, including details on bereavement support services in Glasgow City and bereavement by suicide.

NHSGGC Loss & Bereavement

A range of information and resources related to bereavement.

Traumatic Bereavement Resource

Free, evidence-based resources to support schools, colleges and practitioners working with traumatically bereaved children and young people

Death, dying and bereavement leaflets

A range of leaflets that provide information relating to death, dying and bereavement.

After a suicide leaflet

This booklet will help you with the practical issues that need to be faced after a suicide. It also discusses some of the emotions you might be experiencing and suggests some places where you can get help

Mind: Losing someone to suicide

Information on coping after losing someone to suicide and support available.

Section 5 – Supporting conversations with Young People with Additional Support Needs

Children and young people with Additional Support Need, including those who are neurodivergent or have learning or communication differences, may face unique challenges in expressing, understanding and managing emotions. These needs can affect how they show distress and seek help.

Support should be person-centred, sensitive, and tailored to each young person's way of engaging with the world, in line with any existing support plans. By recognising and responding to these needs, youth and community partners can help create inclusive spaces where all young people feel seen, heard, and supported.

Use clear language: Avoid abstract phrases, use real words and simple explanations.

Check understanding: Ask them to repeat or show what they've understood in their own way.

Consider environment and positioning: Side by side may be preferable to face to face.

Allow extra processing time: Be patient and open to follow up questions.

Validate emotional responses: Accept feelings, even if expressed in unconventional ways.

Be aware of sensory needs: Minimise sensory distractions and support preferred communication methods.

Understand repetitive or intense thinking: Some individuals may experience repetitive thoughts or hyperfocus, which can include persistent thoughts about suicide. This may not always indicate intent but should be taken seriously and explored with care.

Collaborate with Parents Carers: to understand support needs.

Section 5 – Supporting conversations with Young People with Additional Support Needs

Resources on Suicide Prevention

Children and Young People with
Learning Disabilities and their
Mental Health Resource Pack

National Autistic Society:
Information on Mental Health and
Suicide Prevention

Autism Adapted Safety Planning

Shining A light on Suicide Toolkit for
Learning Disabilities

Resources on Bereavement and Loss

Whole School Approach to
Bereavement and Loss, with
specific information on supporting
ASN

Child Bereavement UK: Supporting
bereaved children and young
people with Autism Spectrum
Disorders

Winston's Wish: Bereavement
support for children with special
education needs and disabilities

Marie Curie: Easy Read Booklets

National Suicide Prevention Policy, Strategy & Action

There are a range of national policies listed below that support our work around suicide prevention and improving people's mental health in Scotland.

[Creating hope together Suicide Prevention Strategy 2022-2032](#)

[NHS Scotland and Scot Gov's Mental Health Improvement and Suicide Prevention framework](#)

[Scottish Government's Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027](#)

[Scottish Government's Mental health and wellbeing strategy \(2023\)](#)

To support implementation of these policies into practice, the NHSGGC Mental Health Improvement website offers a range of free mental health planning tools and resources that are available for use. These include, planning frameworks, monthly mental health snippets and a range of information to improve mental health and wellbeing across the life course.

[NHSGGC Mental Health Improvement Website](#)

[NHSGGC Child and Youth Mental Health Improvement Framework](#)

[Supporting Information and Resources](#)

Locally, the [Glasgow City Suicide Prevention Partnership](#) meets regularly to oversee and coordinate multi-agency suicide prevention work in the city to reduce deaths by suicide. Local action is crucial to reducing deaths by suicide.