

Suicide Postvention

Suicide Prevention is everyone's business and whilst we must all retain a focus on prevention, we know that when someone dies by suicide the impact of those affected can be devastating.

**Suicide Postvention** refers to the support provided to those affected by the death of someone by suicide. While bereavement itself isn't a mental health condition, it significantly impacts on mental well-being, and bereavement by suicide is known to have a particularly profound and complex effect.

**Scotland’s National Suicide Prevention Strategy** states that “Everyone affected by suicide is able to access high quality, compassionate, appropriate and timely support – which promotes wellbeing and recovery. This applies to all children, young people and adults who experience suicidal thoughts and behaviour, anyone who cares for them, and anyone affected by suicide in other ways.”

This resource provides useful **Postvention** information and resources for staff supporting people who have lost someone to suicide.

Whilst this resource is targeted at staff supporting those who have lost someone to suicide, it recognises that staff themselves are affected by suicide within their circle of family, friends and colleagues. In these circumstances self-care approaches are vital and information on the National Wellbeing Hub has been included, which also hosts a Suicide Postvention page.

Keeping Safe

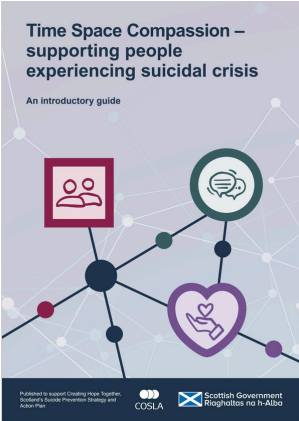
**\*REMEMBER** if you are concerned about an individual’s mental health and wellbeing and feel they may be in distress, their doctor should be the first point of contact or contact **NHS 24** on **111**. If you feel the individual is in immediate danger please call **999**.\*

Key Messages

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**Time Space Compassion** three simple words, but can make a difference. Giving people time, space and compassion is an approach that emphasises understanding, empathy and support, particularly in challenging situations.

Research tells us that those bereaved by suicide are at an increased risk of suicide themselves. Using the **Time Space Compassion** principles can be useful to provide the support needed to help survivors cope with a suicide death, facilitate healthy grieving and reduce the risk of the negative effects of exposure to suicide.



1.Time

Losing someone to suicide has been described as experiencing “grief with the volume turned up”. Grief is a unique and individual experience and it is important the person is given the time to be heard, listened to and have their feelings validated and understood rather than judged.

There is no timeline for grief and people may experience recurring poor mental health or crisis over time, and it is important to be able to offer continuity of support over time and offer ways back in.

2. Space

It is important to create a safe and non-judgmental space where individuals feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and feelings without fear of criticism or shame. This includes both emotional and psychological spaces.

3. Compassion

Showing genuine empathy and understanding for what someone is going through, can make a significant difference. By offering kind words and actions can help individuals feel supported and cared for during difficult times.

4. Self-care

When someone has experienced such a traumatic and distressing loss like suicide, self-care can be difficult to imagine, however it is important to help facilitate healthy grieving and reduce the risk of the negative effects of exposure to suicide.

Self-care looks different for everyone, but firstly it is important to try and look after our basic needs such as eating and sleeping. Sleep significantly impacts our ability to cope with various challenges, including stress and emotional situations, so it’s important to try and sleep when you can to recharge the body and mind. Visit **NHS Inform**, for a self-help guide that uses cognitive behavioural therapy and expert advice to manage sleep problems and/or use the **Sleepio App** to help you try and sleep better.

Remind them that they don’t have to go through this alone, some days will be tougher than others. Whether they are looking for a listening ear, advice or someone to share their thoughts with, encourage them reach out to family, friends, colleagues or a support service.

Mental health supports vary significantly from person to person, and what works for one individual may not be effective or appropriate for another.

Supports can range from talking to someone on the phone, joining an online forum, accessing a service or using an App. Here is a selection of the different types of support available.

## Helplines

Helplines offer a safe space to help you talk about how you are feeling, receive some emotional support and information about available resources and services. Here are some suggested helplines if you are struggling and need to talk to someone.

**Breathing Space:** free helpline for individuals experiencing symptoms of low mood, depression, or anxiety, and offers free and confidential advice for individuals over the age of 16. Can be contacted on **0800 83 85 87**, 6pm to 2am Monday to Thursday; and from 6pm Friday throughout the weekend to 6am Monday.

**NHS24 Mental Health Hub:** Telephone advice and support on healthcare can be obtained from NHS24 by phoning **111**; the Mental Health Hub is open 24/7.

**Calm (Campaign Against Living Miserably):** provide free phone and WebChat support 5pm - Midnight daily: Call free **0800 58 58 58**. To access Whatsapp or WebChat support visit <https://www.thecalmzone.net/suicide-prevention-helpline>

**Samaritans:** Provide confidential non-judgemental emotional support 24 hours a day for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair. Contact Samaritans free by phoning **116 123** or via email on [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

**Childline:** for children and young people, for whenever they need support or advice. Open 24/7, and there are many ways to get support. You can call **0800 1111**. Other ways are set out on their website: [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

**SHOUT:** A free, confidential, 24/7 text messaging support service for anyone who is struggling to cope. Text **SHOUT to 85258**.

## Apps

Apps offer accessibility, convenience and provide a range of tools to help us look after our mental health and wellbeing.

**Stay Alive:** Provides useful information and tools to help you stay safe in a crisis.



**NHSGGC MyApp: My Mental Health:** Helps find trustworthy and reliable resources, offering not only info about common mental health symptoms and conditions but also materials to help manage them.



**Sleepio:** is a digital sleep improvement programme based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. Can help address the root causes of poor sleep and insomnia. To access the course, you need to provide the first half of your postcode and an email address.



**Daylight:** For people who are feeling worried or anxious. Learn proven tools and techniques to get out of your head, face difficult emotions, and be more present. Free for anyone aged 18+ who lives in Scotland. First part of postcode is required when you sign up.



## Peer Support

Peer Support can be a lifeline for people who have been bereaved by suicide, offering connection, understanding and hope.

**Mind the Men:** a suicide prevention peer support group where men (18+) can meet in a safe place to talk about their challenges be listened to and feel supported.

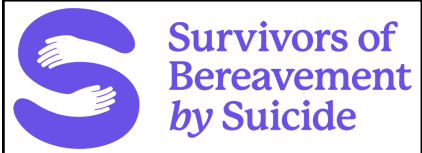


**Samaritans:** Facing the Future, is a free online peer support group for people bereaved by suicide.



**Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide:** an online community forum offering peer-to-peer support to those bereaved by suicide. You must be over 18 and complete the forum application. Also offer virtual national groups open to anyone living in the UK.

Helpline also available, offering support to adults impacted by suicide loss. Call **0300 111 5065**, open every day 9am-7pm.



Settings

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Research estimates that on average 135 people can be affected by any one death by suicide. The loss of someone to suicide touches family, friends and other people who the person may have worked or gone to school with. Support is available for workplaces and schools who have been affected by suicide.

**Cruse Scotland** provide free bereavement support for workplaces affected by suicide. This can be provided in-house or digitally.



**Step by Step** is a Samaritans service that provides practical support to help schools prepare for and recover from a suspected or attempted suicide.



Financial Support

Considering financial matters may be the last thing on people's mind after losing someone to suicide, but it is important to cancel bills, debts and subscriptions that are not yours. Likewise it is important to find out what, if any benefits and supports people are entitled to.

**Benefits and Financial Support When Someone Dies:** provides information on what benefits and supports you may be entitled to including help with funeral costs



**Citizens Advice Scotland:** offer practical advice at a time of bereavement and where to get support and advice. Call **0800 028 1456**.

**What to do after a death in Scotland:** practical advice for times of bereavement.



Resources

Finding information and practical help that offers advice on coping after a suicide and practical help can be daunting. Here is a selection of some useful child, youth and adult resources.

**Suicide Prevention Scotland:** national website hosting information and key links to a range of centralised resources to support people experiencing thoughts of suicide, those who are worried for someone else, or for those who have been bereaved by suicide.



**Child Bereavement UK:** Supporting your child when someone dies by suicide. Ideas for what to tell children and young people, how they might feel and respond, and what might help to support them.



**Scottish Action for Mental Health:** After a suicide booklet. Can 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.



**Support After Suicide Partnership:** hosts a range of resources that offer advice and guidance on coping after a suicide.



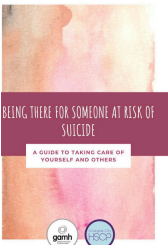
Supporting someone after a suicide attempt

It can be difficult to know what to say or do when someone has attempted suicide. Here are some resources to help.

**Mind:** provides helpful information on how to talk about the suicide attempt, tips to help them cope and looking after yourself.



**Being there for someone at risk of suicide:** A resource for people who care about someone who has tried to take their own life, or are worried that they might.



Staff Wellbeing

When we spend our time caring for others it can be difficult to care for ourselves. **The National Wellbeing Hub** acts as an evidence-led resource to promote, enhance and support the psychosocial wellbeing of everyone working in Health, Social Care, and Social Work. It acts as a single point of contact for health, social care, and social work practitioners and unpaid carers to obtain advice, information and support in relation to their wellbeing, and to signpost them to other resources and sources of help including locally and nationally delivered evidence-based and best practice psychological interventions.



Finally, remember as staff you are not invincible, you need to remind yourself that you too need time, space, compassion and self-care to help you through difficult times.