

Are you  
worried about a  
young person?



wakefieldcouncil

Trigger warning –  
this booklet discusses  
suicidal feelings



# If you are worried someone is thinking about suicide, don't be afraid to ask them straight out. This will not put the thought in their head.

## **What makes someone think of suicide?**

We all feel overwhelmed at different times in our lives, this is a normal experience. We all deal with life's challenges in our own unique way. Having suicidal thoughts is common, and can occur for many reasons and sometimes for no reason at all.

It's important to remind ourselves that thoughts and feelings about suicide or self harm do not have to be acted out.

These feelings have been described as experiencing a sort of tunnel vision and when in the middle of a crisis someone can believe that suicide is the only way out.

Research shows that many suicide attempts are done on impulse, during moments of crisis. Recognising early warning signs is important, and asking someone about suicide will not put the idea in their head. Providing support can help them realise and consider alternative options.

*'you don't seem your usual self... tell me about your pain'*

*'You've had a lot going on recently... how are you feeling?'*

*'You look like something's worrying you, I want to help...'*

*'If you can't talk to me, who else could you talk to?'*



# What to look out for

Spotting some of the signs

- Talking about feeling useless or that people would be better off without them
- Not wanting to do the things they usually enjoy
- Not wanting to be around family and friends
- Increased alcohol or drugs use  
(including prescription drugs)
- Being more angry or distant than usual
- Changes in sleep patterns and eating habits
- Neglecting themselves and not caring about their appearance
- Saying 'goodbye' to friends and family as if they won't see them again
- Giving things away, especially items important to them
- Suddenly seem calm or happy after they've been really low
- Writing, drawing or talking about death or suicide  
(even in a joking way)
- Searching the internet about suicide or methods
- Having a suicide plan
- Saying they hear voices telling them to hurt themselves  
(in this case make a GP appointment, take them to the Emergency Department or contact emergency services).
- Ask someone you trust (family member, teacher etc) if they have noticed anything different about the person you are worried about. But be sensitive about what you share.



## What can increase the risk?

**Although anyone can have suicidal thoughts and at any time in their life, some things increase the risk of young people taking their own life, these include:**

- Previous suicide attempts
- Having a low mood that lasts for a long time
- Having an eating disorder where the control of how much food they eat is used to cope
- The loss of someone close (especially by suicide) or loss of a pet
- Being a victim of bullying or violence
- Having no real friends
- Being pressured or embarrassed on social media
- Struggling with their sexuality or gender identity
- Having feelings of guilt or under too much pressure to succeed
- Using alcohol or drugs (increases risk taking)
- Important life changes (such as break-ups, living situation)
- Experience of trauma and abuse
- Having a serious or physical illness
- Those who act on impulse

### **Self-harm with injury**

Self-harm with injury is mentioned as a possible warning sign, but self-harm is often a way of coping and does not in itself mean they have suicidal thoughts or intention.

Visit [www.selfharm.co.uk](http://www.selfharm.co.uk) for more information.



## How can I help?

### Talk to them

Supporting someone who's having suicidal thoughts is hard. It's both physically and emotionally exhausting.

You need to take care of yourself and know where to go for support and advice (**see pages 17-18**). Also make sure that you have someone to talk to. You may feel uncomfortable talking about suicidal feelings and may not know what to say or how to start the conversation, this is normal.

If you are supporting a friend, realise that most people who feel suicidal actually hope someone will help them talk to their family or carer.

*'You can talk to me about anything, I want to help'*

*'What if I were to help you have the conversation with your...?'*

*'Would you allow me to explain it to them?'*

*'I'm really sad to hear you're feeling like this, how can I help?'*

*'Did something happen to make you feel this way?'*

# Show you care

**Show you care:** Ask if you can give them a hug or hold their hand. See things from their point of view and believe in their pain.

**Have patience:** They may not tell you everything straight away.

**Don't fill the silence:** You may find yourself asking unimportant questions.

**Listen, listen, listen:** You don't need to have answers but listening shows that you care.

**Keep their hopes up:** Try to make them feel better about themselves. Share things you like about them, their qualities, their skills, and why they are important. Remind them of positive things to look forward to, especially in the near future. If they mention something they care about (a pet, sibling, sport, place) try to keep this positive connection going.

**Reassure them:** 1 in 4 people experience these thoughts and feelings so they are not alone, let them know it's ok to talk or cry. If they cry, just sit with them.

**Feelings will pass:** Try to agree what they can do to keep themselves safe right now (**pages 11 & 12**). This will put some time between harming thoughts and any actions, it will allow the feelings to pass. Once things are calmer, you can work together to find different solutions.





## Sometimes you just have to ask...

**'How are you coping since...?'**

**'If you could change anything right now, what would it be?'**

**'Things sound tough...can you tell me more?'**

**'Are you thinking about suicide?'**

**'What has stopped you giving in to these thoughts?'**

**'Do you have a suicide plan?'**

By using the word suicide, you are showing the young person that it's okay to talk to you about their feelings no matter how difficult they are. You will not be giving them ideas.

### **What if they say 'yes'?**

Do not judge or dismiss them and try to stay calm.

Sometimes it may be easier for them to write down or draw how they are feeling, so use whatever works best for them.

Even having a hot drink to hold can be a good distraction while talking.

**'Do you have what you need to carry out your plan?'  
(items to use, place to go)**

**'Do you know when you would do it?' (time)**

**'Do you plan on taking your own life?'**

**If they are at immediate risk or need  
urgent medical treatment go to your nearest  
Emergency Department or call 999**

If you feel they are in crisis and have a suicide plan they are going to act on, talk to someone straight away and seek help (see pages 17 - 18).

## Reassure them ★



*'You are not alone in this.  
I'm here for you.'*

*'Things must be so painful for you to feel  
like there's no other way out.  
But I care for you and want to help'*

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

*'I need extra help, someone who can help  
you keep safe'*

*"You may not believe it now,  
but these feelings will change."*



# Try to avoid . . .

## **Changing the subject**

(they may feel unheard)

## **Saying 'man up' 'you'll get over it'**

(they may feel dismissed)

## **Getting too emotional**

(they may feel guilty for upsetting you)

## **Saying 'don't be doing anything silly' etc**

(they could feel criticised)

## **Fixing the problem**

(they may feel they have no control)

## **Dismissing their emotional pain**

(they may feel more alone)

## **Blaming yourself!**

# What to do in an emergency

**“I really want you to stay with us, we need some help”**

If they are at immediate risk or need urgent medical treatment go to your nearest **Emergency Department (A&E) or call 999**

If you feel the situation is at crisis or the young person has a suicide plan, and they are going to act on it, talk to someone straight away and seek help.

**Contact the CAMHS ReACH team (crisis team).**

A parent/carer or professional can ring for advice and support in a crisis, the young person can do it themselves if they are over 16.

**This is available between 9am – 8pm, seven days a week.  
Tel: 01977 735865**

If the young person is over 18yrs they can ring the Adult Mental Health Team on **01924 316900**

**Contact your GP** (there is an out-of-hours service) or **NHS 111**

Be clear and tell them what is happening and why you are worried. The people answering these calls are friendly and are used to helping people talk about difficult things.

- Stay with them until support arrives or the situation is calmer
- Remove any obvious means of suicide or harm (rope, belts, tablets, sharp objects etc)
- Try to stay calm and re-assure them you are staying with them and that you care
- Keep them talking
- Keep yourself safe



# Practical help

## Ways to help them stay safe for now and in the future

If they are not at immediate risk, **ring your GP** or contact the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) single point of access (SPA) for advice as soon as possible.

**This is available 9am – 5pm Monday – Friday**

**Tel: 01977 735865**

If the young person is over 18 they can ring the Adult Mental Health Team on **01924 316900**

**Re-assure them**, stay with them, and keep them talking

- Agree with them **how they can keep safe** right now (such as remove any items that may be used for harm and staying away from unsafe or isolated places)
- Agree what can be put in place to help now and in the future
- Support them to identify people who they would talk to. This could be a family member, a trusted person in school, college, university or at work, a GP or helpline. Make a list of these contact numbers and websites so the young person can access support 24/7 (see pages 17-18) and encourage them to keep a copy in their room and numbers in their phone, so they know what to do if the strong feelings return
- Try out some of the **coping techniques** with them

Different techniques can be found on the websites at the back of the booklet.

All the above can be used as part of the safety net (safety plan) found on page 14.

When they are calmer, encourage them to create a comfort kit or feel good box.

They can add items like pens, a sketch or puzzle book, an uplifting music playlist, a fidget board, nail varnish, something nice to smell and a favourite chocolate bar. Encourage them to make it their own.

This can help them get through a difficult day or night.

Offer to support any initial contact with services whether they are face-to-face or online. You can also request for the Samaritans to ring the young person, but you will need their permission first.

*“If we make an appointment with the GP and I take you, would you tell them how you’re feeling?”*



## Creating a safety net

A safety net (or plan) is there to help 'catch' the young person if they start to struggle, it will help put things in place so they can get the right support at the right time.

It is easier to put together a safety net when they are not in crisis, but it's never too late to start one. You may need to guide them, but the young person needs to make it their own and feel in control of what is in it.

### **This may include:**

- **Not being alone**
- **Listing people and helplines they will talk to (maybe explore how to start those conversations)**
- **Using specific distractions or coping strategies**
- **Removing certain items from their room or house**
- **Using the 'feel good box'**







# Look after yourself

## Supporting someone who is having suicidal thoughts is hard!

If you are supporting a friend talk to their parent or a trusted adult. Do not try to support them by yourself.

- **Ensure you have someone you trust who you can talk to**
- **Talk to your GP about talking therapies for yourself**
- **Take time out**
- **Join a local or national support group**
- **Access websites and services that can support you as well**

**Samaritans:** Tel: 116 123 free from any phone, any time.  
Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org).

**Young Minds Parent's Helpline:** Tel: 0808 802 5544 (free for mobiles and landlines). Open Monday to Friday (offering advice and support to any adult who is concerned about a child/young person's mental health up to the age of 25).

**The Papyrus Hopeline:** [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)  
Tel: 080 068 4141 Text: 07786 209 697

or email: [pat@papyrus-uk.org](mailto:pat@papyrus-uk.org) who offer support if you are worried about someone and need to talk or want to find out how best to support them.

**Growing Healthy Wakefield 0-19 service:** search 'Children's Health Service HDFT' to download the app and access videos and advice on wide a range of topics including the health and wellbeing of children and young people.

# Where to get help and support

**GP or NHS Direct** call free on 111:

Offer a 24-hour helpline providing health advice and access to out of hours GP.

**Samaritans:** free, any time, from any phone Tel: 116 123 Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

**Compass:**

Wakefield children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing service.

Text BUZZ to 85258 for text messaging support or Call 01924 665 093

**Shout:** Text: Shout to 85258

A free, confidential, 24/7 text messaging support for anyone who is struggling to cope.

**Childline:** [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) are online (1-2-1 counsellor chat) and on the phone anytime for those under 19. Tel: 0800 1111

**Papyrus Hopeline:** [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org) Tel: 0800 068 41 41

Text: 07786 209697 Email: [pat@papyrus-uk.org](mailto:pat@papyrus-uk.org) Offer online text or phone support to young people.

**YoungMinds:** [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

Website full of resources for children and young people, parents, and professionals.

**Night Owls:** Tel: 0300 200 3900 Text: 07984 392 700

A confidential support line for children, young people, their parents and carers. Available Mon-Fri 8pm -8am.

**CALM:** (Campaign Against Living Miserably) [www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net)

Tel: 0800 58 58 58 Offers website support and daily helpline aimed at males.

**Heads Above the Waves:** [www.hatw.co.uk](http://www.hatw.co.uk)

Online advice, support and coping strategies for young people suffering from depression and self-harm.

**Alumina:** [www.selfharm.co.uk](http://www.selfharm.co.uk)

A free, online 7-week course for young people struggling with self-harm (10-17yrs old).

**The Mix:** [www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk) Tel: 0808 808 4994 or Text: THEMIX to 85258 for

crisis support. Offers advice and support on a range of issues including 1-2-1 chat (for under 25's).

**Inspiring Futures:** Tel: 0300 123 1912

A local drugs and alcohol service offering confidential advice and support for young people (under 25) and their families.

**Mindout:** [www.mindout.org.uk](http://www.mindout.org.uk)

Online instant message service that is confidential and anonymous to support and improve the mental health and wellbeing of LGBTQ communities.

**Doc Ready:** [www.docready.org](http://www.docready.org)

Helps to prepare people to talk about mental health to a GP.

**Well Women Centre:** Tel: 01924 211114

Offers face-to-face counselling and groups for 16 year +.

**Stay Alive App:** [www.prevent-suicide.org.uk](http://www.prevent-suicide.org.uk)

An App to download from the Grassroots Suicide Prevention website.

**Victim Support:** Tel: 0300 303 1971 Out of hours Support line 0808 16 89 111

Provides emotional and practical support to anyone under 18 who has been affected by a crime.

**BEAT:** [www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk](http://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk)

Support and advice around eating disorders.

**Hope Again:** [www.Hopeagain.org.uk](http://www.Hopeagain.org.uk) for bereavement support.

**Star Bereavement:** [www.starbereavement.org.uk](http://www.starbereavement.org.uk)

Local bereavement support for children and young people including those affected by suicide.

**Youth Hubs:** [www.wakefieldfamiliesaltogether.co.uk](http://www.wakefieldfamiliesaltogether.co.uk)

Provide support around health and wellbeing, and access to activities and groups for young people delivered by Youth workers.

**West Yorkshire Suicide Prevention:**

[www.suicidepreventionwestyorkshire.co.uk](http://www.suicidepreventionwestyorkshire.co.uk)

**WF-I-CAN:** [www.wf-i-can.co.uk](http://www.wf-i-can.co.uk)

Offers information, support, and self-care tips on a range of topics

Thank You



Thank you to the young adults, parents and colleagues who helped develop the suicide prevention material.