



## **Plymouth CAST Multi Academy Trust**

### **Suicide Prevention and Response Policy**

**March 2022**

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## **Introduction**

Plymouth CAST schools recognise that suicide is the leading cause of death for young people, and we all play a vital role in helping to prevent young suicide.

Suicide prevention is everyone's business, just as it is with Safeguarding. Everyone has a role to play; Governors, Senior Leadership Team, parents/carers, teachers, all school staff and young people.

Children spend the majority of their waking hours at school therefore, teachers and school staff are well placed to recognise the signs that a child might be at risk of suicide.

## **Our beliefs about suicide and contributory factors**

Plymouth CAST schools acknowledge that:

### **Suicidal thoughts are common**

We acknowledge that thoughts of suicide are common among young people

### **Suicide is complex**

We believe that every suicide is a tragedy. There are a number of contributory factors surrounding a suicide and the reasons are often complex and individual to that person. However, we believe that there are lessons that may be learned from each death that may help prevent future deaths.

### **Stigma inhibits learning – stigma can kill**

We recognise that the stigma surrounding suicide and mental illness can be both a barrier to help seeking and a barrier to offering help. This school is committed to tackling suicide stigma. In our language and in our working relationships, we will promote open, sensitive talk that does not stigmatise and perpetuate taboos. This will include avoiding the use of language which perpetuates unhelpful notions that suicide is criminal, sinful or selfish. We know that unhelpful myths and misconceptions surrounding suicide can inhibit young people in seeking and finding appropriate help when it is most needed.

### **Suicide is our business, too**

As a school community, we recognise that pupils may seek out someone whom they trust with their concerns and worries. We want to play our part in supporting any pupil who may have thoughts of suicide.

### **Safety is very important**

We know that pupils who are having thoughts of suicide may or may not also be behaving in a way that puts their life in danger (suicide behaviours). Schoolchildren experiencing suicidal thoughts are potentially at risk of acting on these thoughts. Those who are already engaging in suicide behaviours are also clearly at risk of death or harm. This school wants to work with our pupils who may be thinking about suicide or acting on their thoughts of suicide. We want to support them, sometimes working in partnership with family, carers, and other professionals where this may enhance suicide safety.

### **Suicide is a difficult thing to talk about**

We know that a child or young person who is suicidal may find it very difficult to make their feelings known and speak openly about suicide. We will equip adults with the skills to identify when a pupil may be struggling with thoughts of suicide.

### **Talking about suicide does not create or worsen risk**

We will provide our pupils with opportunities to speak openly about their worries with people who are ready, willing, and able to support them. We want to make it possible for schoolchildren and young people, and those who support them at this school, to do so safely. This will be in a way that leads to support and help where this is needed. We will do all we can to refrain from acting in a way that stops a pupil seeking the help they need when they are struggling with thoughts of suicide.

### **Our Team and its Responsibilities**

Our Governors and Senior Leadership Team will be clear about how we will respond in the event of a suicide. Each member of our named response team will have a defined responsibility within our plan including leadership, family liaison and any communications with external agencies, including the media.

We will have a clear picture of who has undertaken appropriate training, such as <https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/resources/free-online-training-for-staff-on-suicide-prevention/> or <https://www.stormskillstraining.com> and commit to this being refreshed periodically (at least every three years).

We will have clear procedures about how staff should work together where thoughts of suicide or suicide behaviours are known among our young people. We will manage the sharing of information in a way that enhances safety.

### **How we can help to ensure a child-centred prevention and intervention policy**

The school's DSL will be responsible for the implementation and maintenance of this policy and keep confidential records on CPOMS of pupils at risk of suicide.

We will endeavour to ensure that all staff are suicide aware, meaning all staff inductions will include suicide awareness, i.e. how to spot signs, what to do and how to escalate any concerns to the relevant staff members. (Appendix A)

We will endeavour to ensure that all pupils are suicide aware in an age-appropriate manner by events and campaigns that equip our pupils to know how to spot signs, what to do and how to escalate any concerns to the DSL. We want to create a community where suicide is no longer taboo and young people feel able to tell someone if they feel suicidal and ask for help.

The Health and Safety Policy and Risk Assessments will consider the physical safety of our environment.

We recognise that pupils may experience periods of poor mental health while attending our school. We will endeavour to put in place mechanisms which allow staff (that have regular interaction with the pupil) to be able to flag or review any concerns about individual pupils including suicidal thoughts. Ideally this will be flagged immediately using CPOMS. Pupils that are flagged on CPOMS will be reviewed regularly and routinely by School Leaders and the SENDCo, so that patterns of concerning behaviour can be spotted and the necessary steps put in place to keep them safe, including meeting them face to face.

### **How we help ensure a sensitive and safe suicide postvention provision**

In the event of a suicide, we will have a Suicide Postvention Team whose role it is to respond in the event of a suicide. Each member of the team will have a defined responsibility including leadership, family liaison and any communication with external agencies.

Communication with the press will be by the Trust through [t.parkes@plymouthcast.org.uk](mailto:t.parkes@plymouthcast.org.uk) supported by the Director of Education. The school's Education and Standards Manager will provide help and advice.

If a pupil is bereaved by suicide, we will endeavour to support her/him in school and use external agencies. See Appendix C for details.

We will support authorities if there is an inquest after someone has died by suicide in our school but will be mindful of the distress an inquest causes to the bereaved people. Will also be mindful of the impact supporting an inquest can have on staff. Further details are available:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-death-review-statutory-and-operational-guidance-england>

We will record and monitor deaths by suicide, the impact on the community, suspected suicides and self-harm. Monitoring of self-harm is done through a collection of information from CPOMS, external services and information disclosed by pupils.

We will also:

Provide information about services/sources of bereavement support to pupils after a suicide. Surveying pupils regarding how supported they feel.

Assessing the impact of interventions on staff.

Reviewing lessons learned and any suggested changes to procedures and provisions of wellbeing services.

Identification of multiple events, such as two suicides in a relatively short period of term (e.g. one term) which may indicate a possible suicide cluster, including investigating possible connections between individuals, their circumstances and their suicidal behaviour. Multiple suspected suicides may not be connected, but may contribute, in some vulnerable individuals, to thoughts of suicide as a way of dealing with problems. Where concerns arise regarding a possible suicide cluster, we will immediately communicate with the local authority Public Health Suicide Prevention Lead and collaborate closely with them to develop a response plan.

### **Ongoing support and development of our policy and practice**

The DSL and Deputy DSL will ensure that ongoing reviews take place and that processes are updated in line with best practice and that on-going training is undertaken when necessary. See Appendix B for more information.

## **Appendix A – Papyrus advice for staff**

As staff we will do our best to support pupils but we are not experts. Our aim as a school is to keep pupils “safe for now” while that young person, their parents/carers and school work to secure specialist help for them.

### **What do I do when I have concern about a school child?**

#### **Q: What do I do when I have a concern about a young person?**

A: A concern is just that. It is not a judgement or an outcome; it's a concern. Whatever it is that makes you worried or questioning about the young person, may well be worth exploring. This may include a conversation with other adults (staff/parents/carers) but it is very important that the young person is your central focus. Check out how the young person is by communicating directly with them. Let the young person know what you are concerned about. What have you seen (do they seem sad or not their usual self?) What have you heard them say that makes you concerned? Is your instinct telling you that something is concerning?

#### **Q: How will I know if a young person is suicidal?**

A: If young people are having thoughts of suicide, they will usually find a way to communicate this. This is unlikely to be an explicit verbal communication about suicide. Few young people feel that they can be open about suicidal thinking or tell someone when they are struggling with their emotional health and wellbeing. When suicide is part of a young person's thinking, they usually show this in their behaviour, in how they interact and in how they communicate. It is not possible to provide a definitive checklist of things to look out for to help to identify a young person who is thinking about suicide. Every young person is different. However, when you notice changes in the way a young person is behaving or communicating, and it is causing you concern, you must explore your concern with them.

In order to find out if a young person is suicidal the most effective way is to ask the pupil directly if they have thoughts of suicide and if they do, you should ask if they have any specific or firm plans to take their own life. If you do not feel able to ask this question, or you know that there is already concern/knowledge about the pupil, then please liaise with/seek assistance from the DSL.

### **What things can I look out for?**

The first step in talking about suicide is recognising that a young person may be at risk. There is no definitive guide on how to know if somebody is thinking about suicide because anybody can be at risk – however there are some things you can look out for.

Often young people thinking about suicide will have experienced a stressful event associated with a feeling of loss. This might be something others might consider to be small but holds great meaning for them, for example the loss of a family pet, or they might have experienced a life event such as parent separation, bullying or domestic abuse.

People who are experiencing thoughts of suicide give out ‘invitations’ to ask for help. Invitations are signs of distress that invite help. Anything the person at risk says, does or makes you feel might be an invitation. Accept invitations: follow your intuition; explore the meaning of things you see and hear. Invitations could be:

Actions:

- Giving away possessions;
- Withdrawal (family, friends, school);
- Loss of interest in sports and leisure;
- Misuse of alcohol, drugs;

- Impulsive/reckless behaviour;
- Self-harm;
- Extreme behaviour changes.

Physical:

- Lack of interest in appearance;
- Disturbed sleep;
- Change/loss of appetite, weight;
- Physical health complaints .

Words:

- “All of my problems will end soon.”
- “No one can do anything to help me now.”
- “Now I know what they were going through.”
- “I just can’t take it anymore.”
- “I am a burden to everyone.”
- “I can’t do anything right.”
- “I just can’t think straight anymore.”

Feelings:

- Desperate;
- Angry;
- Guilty;
- Worthless;
- Lonely;
- Sad;
- Hopeless;
- Helpless.

Almost anything could be an indicator and often the key is that if something feels not quite right it is worth trusting your intuition and exploring what might be happening for the young person.

**How do I ask about suicide?**

Ask them directly, “Are you thinking about suicide?” By using the word suicide, you are telling them that it’s OK to talk openly about their thoughts of suicide with you. You could also say:

- “Are you telling me you want to kill yourself/end your life/die/die by suicide?”
- “It sounds like you’re thinking about suicide is that right?”
- “Sometimes, when people are feeling the way you are they think about suicide. Is that what you’re thinking about?”
- “It sounds like life feels too hard for you right now and you want to kill yourself, is that right?”

If they are not having thoughts of suicide, that’s OK. They will tell you so. If you are still concerned, then keep exploring why your concerns remain until you are clear that suicide is not part of their thinking. If they are not having thoughts of suicide, nothing is lost by having the conversation; you will have developed suicide-safety for and with that pupil now and for the future. You may have other actions to follow up on which help them with other issues arising from the conversation.

If a young person indicates that they have been thinking about suicide, listen and allow them to express their feelings. They will likely feel a huge sense of relief that someone is willing to hear their darkest thoughts without judgement. Reassure them that they are not alone, and

you can look for support together. Let the young person know that there is help and hope. NOTE not everyone is ready to open up straightaway.

Don't ask about a suicide plan until you have explored their thinking. Be patient. Don't suggest "what about..." Be persistent but wait for their turning point. You will feel it.

### **How do I talk about suicide safely?**

Here are some ways you can continue a conversation about suicide in a reassuring, safe way:

- "It's not uncommon to have thoughts of suicide. With help and support many people can work through these thoughts and stay safe."
- "There are organisations that offer support like POPYRUS HOPELineUK. I can give you their contact details."
- "You've shown a lot of strength in telling me this. I want to help you find support."
- "There is hope. There is help available and we can find it together."
- "It sounds as though things are really hard at the moment... Can you tell me a bit more?"
- "Things must be so painful for you to feel like there is no way out. I want to listen and help."
- "Take your time and tell me what's happening for you at the moment."
- "It's hard and scary to talk about suicide but take your time and I will listen."
- "Can you tell me more about why you want to die?"
- "I am so sorry you're feeling this way. Can you tell me more about how you are feeling?"
- Think about the tone of voice you use and allow plenty of time for the young person to answer and also for there to be periods of silence.
- Be led by the young person and the pace that they want to have the conversation.
- Ask if they have any active plans to take their own life.
- Ask if they want to die or whether they just want whatever is happening in their life to stop/feel better. A positive answer to the latter can be very reassuring for staff and parents alike.

### **How are self-harm and suicide related?**

#### **Q: "I know that a young person has self-harmed but how do I know whether it is suicide-related?"**

A: Self-harm is often a precursor to suicide but usually isn't. Those who engage in self-harm do not all go on to take their own life. Those who die by suicide do not always have a history of self-harm. If you have a concern about a young person because of self-harm, you should treat it like any other concern. You may need to explore with the pupil what is happening for them and if you think that suicide may be part of their thinking, ask them directly about suicide.

#### **Q: "I know that a young person is having thoughts of suicide – what do I do?"**

A: So, the person has told you they are thinking about suicide. You may have asked them or they may have told you. This can be a challenging space for you and you may feel ill-equipped here. Be assured that you cannot make things worse by asking the suicide question.

Sometimes pupils will tell you or others that they are thinking about suicide during a class. If this happens you should respond in a calm and sensitive way. Don't dismiss what they are saying. The pupil is asking for help, and you need to respond. You might be feeling unprepared for the disclosure, but your calm and sensitive response will let the young person and others in the class know that they can talk about suicide openly and non-judgementally with you. As soon as possible encourage the pupil to move to a more private

place, where you can have an open conversation about their disclosure. You should also check in with the class and let them know where they can find sources of support.

Once you have had a conversation with a pupil who has said they are having thoughts of suicide, you will need to accompany them to the DSL who will notify the headteacher, Senior Designated Mental Health Lead, ESM and the relevant local authority agency. However, don't underestimate the importance of what has been established by your asking the question or receiving the information that a young person has been thinking about suicide. That they have shared this with you means there is an increased level of trust. You need to tell the pupil that you must share information with others in order to help keep them safe. You have to share with others that a young person is at risk of suicide and why they are having suicidal thoughts.

### **What do I do if there is imminent risk of death or harm?**

#### **Q: "I know that a young person has engaged in suicide behaviour – what do I do?"**

A: If you determine that a young person has acted in a way that puts their life in danger, act quickly to keep them safe and ensure that there is no imminent risk. If they have taken an overdose you need to contact the school's First Aider and Senior Mental Health Leader immediately providing as much information as possible. The First Aider will decide whether to contact the emergency services and will inform the DSL, Headteacher and the pupil's parents/carers. If the parent/carer is unable to attend school immediately, an appropriate member of staff will accompany the child to A&E and wait there with them until their parent/carer arrives.

If the young person has taken steps to end their life it is important that the young person does not feel judged or shamed for their suicide behaviour. Try to remain calm, even though you might be feeling scared, confused, upset or frustrated. It is helpful to ask the young person whether they are having thoughts of suicide. It may seem obvious in light of their behaviour but asking clearly about suicide allows you to have an open and non-judgemental conversation about suicide. Ensure that you can have a conversation confidentially and that other pupils are not around. You may have called for help, but in the meantime, you might be best placed to stay with the young person and to talk about how they are feeling. Once you have determined that suicide is their focus – just listen. Ask them to tell you about how they are feeling. They might not want to talk, but you can let them know that you will remain with them in supportive silence, and if they do want to talk you are there to listen. Your reassurance will help the young person to feel understood and supported.

If you determine that the young person's behaviour has not put their life in danger, but there has been an injury, you must seek support from a First Aider, either by taking the pupil immediately there, or asking him/her to meet you where you are with the pupil. You must also log on CPOMS as 'self-harm' and 'safeguarding'. This will be picked up automatically by the DSLs. If the behaviour in question is historical behaviour, then the focus will be on what the young person has learned from this behaviour and using that learning to keep them safe. All information and conversation logs need to be logged onto CPOMS immediately.

### **How do I support a young person with their return to school?**

#### **Q: "How do I support a pupil back to school after they have engaged in suicidal behaviour?"**

A: Before the young person who attempted to take their own life returns to school, the SENDCo, Senior Mental Health Lead and/or DSL will meet with them and their parents/carers. When they meet, they will explore what support is in place, and also what further support the school can provide including what the young person thinks they need.



The young person who attempted to take their life may not currently be suicidal, however suicide may still be an option for them, or become an option again in the future. It is important that the young person has a Suicide-Safety Plan (Appendix F): a plan that they have created with support that details how they want to stay safe from suicide. The plan will be created immediately on the return to school with the young person – with them at its centre. The SENDCo/DSL will create the plan with them, not for them, but it must be created before the pupil returns to lessons to safeguard staff and pupils. The plan must be something that the pupil feels they are able to agree to.

The Suicide-Safety Plan will include the following:

- Helpline numbers that are available and appropriate - including 24-hour helplines.
- Safety Contacts: people and organisations that the pupil can contact when they feel they can't keep themselves safe, including a safety contact for when they are at school.

The SENDCo/DSL will arrange for regular 'check-ins' with the young person once they have returned to school to see how they are doing and to check the plan is ok for them. The SENDCo/DSL will be prepared to amend the Suicide-Safety Plan based on the pupil's needs. It is a live document and may change over time. The Suicide-Safety Plan might also include professional support from a counsellor or therapist during school time, which will be agreed in liaison with the DSL/Deputy DSL.

### **Can I share information with others?**

#### **Q: "What should I do next to keep me and the young person suicide safe?"**

A: The focus here is on hearing the pupil and ensuring that you do what you can to reassure and support them. If you can, give the pupil space to tell their own story. Avoid questioning them or interrupting their story. They will feel a sense of relief having been able to say that suicide is part of their thinking. They may still need some further reassurance throughout. Be supportive as they share their story. Part of them will be uncertain about suicide. Some of that uncertainty will be clear to you; some of it will be less clear. Be patient in hearing them and when they are ready to receive your support to keep them safe, work with them to work on a plan to keep them safe. This may include slowly building up their ability to see who else they can have in their support network and what else they can do or not do to keep suicide-safe. A good Suicide-Safety Plan (Appendix F) will always include a medical practitioner and another resource such as a helpline (Appendix B).

#### **Q: "Do I have to share everything the young person told me? Do I need to share the reasons why they are thinking about suicide?"**

A: Confidentiality is not boundless. Make no promises to keep what they say a secret or 'just between us'. Be clear from the outset that you may need to get some help in keeping them suicide-safe. Make sure you keep informing the young person you are supporting that you may need to share some information with other people in order to keep them suicide-safe. The young person's parents/carers need to be informed of any concerns relating to the young person's thoughts of suicide or suicidal behaviour; the reason for suicidal thoughts (if known by the pupil) does not, however, need to be explicitly shared with an adult at this point. We will also keep them informed of what happens after a disclosure has been made to us, e.g. we will tell the pupils when we will be telling parents/carers and talk them through what will happen next. The school's Senior Mental Health Lead should be informed so that appropriate support can be provided. Where other agencies are already involved in supporting the young person, a considered decision should be taken about informing them of the concerns. If the young person is at risk of significant harm, the appropriate local authority agency should be contacted

## **Helpful and unhelpful language when talking about suicide with young people**

Be kind and supportive but also be direct. Do not leave room for misunderstanding. PAPYRUS recognises that language helps as well as harms. Using sensitive and appropriate language can help build awareness and understanding to increase empathy and support. You could say:

- “Ended their life.”
- “Took their own life.”
- “Died by suicide.”
- “Killed themselves.”

### **Unhelpful Language when talking about suicide:**

- **“Successful suicide.”** Talking about suicide in terms of success is not helpful. If a pupil dies by suicide it cannot ever be a success. We don’t talk about any other death in terms of success: we would never talk about a ‘successful heart attack’.
- **“Commit suicide.”** Suicide hasn’t been a crime since 1961. Using the word ‘commit’ suggests that it is still a crime (we ‘commit’ crimes), which perpetuates stigma. Pupils will be less likely to talk about their suicidal feelings if they feel judged.

### **Unhelpful language when asking about suicide:**

- **“You’re not thinking of doing anything stupid/silly are you?”** This judgemental language suggests that the person’s thoughts of suicide are stupid or silly, and furthermore, that the young person is stupid or silly. When faced with this question, most pupils will deny their thoughts of suicide, for fear of being viewed negatively. This is dangerous. You become someone it is not safe to talk to about suicide.
- **“Unsuccessful or failed suicide”** Pupils who have attempted suicide often tell us, “I couldn’t even do that right... I was unsuccessful, I failed”. In part this comes from unhelpful language around their suicide behaviour. Any attempt at suicide is serious. Young people should not be further burdened by whether their attempt was a failure, which in turn suggests they are a failure.
- **“It’s not that serious.”** Every suicide attempt is serious. By definition: they wanted to take their own life. All suicide attempts must be taken seriously as there is a risk to life. An attempt tells us that the young person is in so much pain they no longer want to live. This is serious.
- **“Attention seeking.”** This phrase assumes that the pupil’s behaviour is not serious, and that they are being dramatic to gain attention from others. However, suicide behaviour is serious. Pupils who attempt suicide need attention, support, understanding and help.
- **“It was just a cry for help.”** This dismissive phrase belittles the young person’s need for help. They do indeed need you to help: they are in pain and their life is in danger. They may feel they are not being taken seriously, which can be dangerous.

## **Appendix B – Local/national services that can help support someone who is actively suicidal:**

**PAPYRUS HOPELine UK** (Support and advice to young people under 35 having thoughts of suicide or for anyone who is concerned about a young person.)

Call 0800 068 41 41 (this does not show up on the telephone bill). Monday-Friday 10.00am-10.00pm. Weekends 2.00pm-10.00pm. Bank Holidays 2.00pm-5.00pm.)

Text 07786 209 697. All texts and emails are automatically anonymised so that advisors do not have any details.

Email [pat@papyrus-uk.org](mailto:pat@papyrus-uk.org)

### **Samaritans**

Call 116123

Email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) (response within 24 hours)

### **Rape and/or sexual assault**

#### **Rape crisis**

<https://rapecrisis.org.uk/>

### **Womens Centre Cornwall (WRSAC)**

<http://www.womenscentrecornwall.org.uk/>

Call 01208 77099, Mon-Fri 10am to 1pm, Thurs 7pm to 10pm

### **Devon Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Services**

Call 01392 204174, Monday, Wednesday, Friday 6pm to 9pm

<http://www.devonrapecrisis.org.uk/>

## **Schools to add contact details for local NGOs, charities in their area**

### **Domestic violence hotline**

National Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 2000 247 (24/7 service)

Men's Advice Line 0808 801 0327

Women's Aid <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/>

Refuge <https://www.refuge.org.uk/>

### **Child abuse hotline**

'If you're worried that a child or young person is at risk or is being abused contact the children's social care team at their local council.' <https://www.gov.uk/report-child-abuse-to-local-council>

### **NSPCC**

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>

Child abuse hotline for adults 0808 800 5000 (Monday to Friday 8am – 10pm or 9am – 6pm at the weekends)

Email [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

Report child abuse online <https://forms.nspcc.org.uk/content/nspcc---report-abuse-form/>

### **ChildLine**

Hotline for children and young people 0800 1111

Chat online <https://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/1-2-1-counsellor-chat/>

### **Police/ambulance/fire services**

Call 999 if you or someone else is in immediate danger, or if you need urgent help

Call 101 for the police if it is not an emergency

### **24 hour medical advice**

Call 111 (NHS non-emergency line)

<https://111.nhs.uk/>

### **Homelessness emergency**

<https://www.gov.uk/emergency-housing-if-homeless>

### **Shelter**

[https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing\\_advice/homelessness](https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/homelessness)

Helpline 0808 800 4444 (8am - 8pm on weekdays and 9am - 5pm on weekends)

Webchat [https://england.shelter.org.uk/get\\_help/webchat](https://england.shelter.org.uk/get_help/webchat) (9am-5pm on weekdays)

### **Mental health outreach clinic**

Cornwall

<https://www.cornwallft.nhs.uk/mental-health-crisis-cornwall>

Call 0800 038 5300 available 24 hours a day, seven days a week

Devon

<https://www.dpt.nhs.uk/i-need-help-now>

24/7 Urgent Mental Health Helpline

Call 0808 196 8708

Call 0800 923 9323 if you are in Plymouth

### **Child and adolescent mental health service**

#### **Young Minds**

<https://youngminds.org.uk/>

Young Minds Crisis Messenger – text YM to 85258

### **Sexuality support**

#### **Childline**

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/sexual-identity/sexual-orientation/>

ChildLine hotline for children and young people 0800 1111

Chat online <https://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/1-2-1-counsellor-chat/>

### **Mind – LGBTQ mental health support**

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/lgbtg-mentalhealth/useful-contacts>

### **Family support services**

#### **Family action**

<https://www.family-action.org.uk/>

#### **Family Line**

Call 0808 802 6666, text 07537 404 282 or email [familyline@family-action.org.uk](mailto:familyline@family-action.org.uk) (Monday to Friday, 10am to 2pm and 6pm to 10pm, Saturday and Sunday, 10am to 1pm)

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/educationandfamilies/family-support>

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/childrens-services/>

### **NHS counselling support**

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/counselling/>

<https://beta.nhs.uk/find-a-psychological-therapies-service/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/self-help-therapies/>

### **Alcohol and substance misuse**

#### **Frank**

<https://www.talktofrank.com/>

Call 0300 123 6600 (24/7), text 82111, email frank@talktofrank.com, live chat

<https://www.talktofrank.com/contact-frank>

#### **Legal assistance/victim-witness assistance**

<https://www.gov.uk/legal-aid>

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>

<https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/> call 08 08 16 89 111

#### **Debt advice**

<https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/tools/debt-advice-locator>

## **Appendix C – How adults can support young people bereaved by suicide**

Cruse.org.uk/for-schools/suicide

- If a child or young person has been bereaved through suicide this can place them under enormous emotional pressure. They may become entrenched in the belief that the person who has died ended their life as a result of something they perceive they did or not do.

### **Feelings following a suicide**

- Feelings of intense anger directed towards the person who has died for abandoning the child or young person can also be common when the death resulted from suicide.
- Some young people who have been bereaved through suicide might be struggling with questions pertaining to why the person took the decision to end their own life. It is essential that the school liaises closely with the bereaved young person's family to ensure that the known facts relating to the death are clearly understood by the school staff.

### **Questions and guilt**

- It is also vital that staff members are aware of how much the young person knows regarding the circumstances of the death. The bereaved young person may spend time contemplating "What if" and "If only" in an attempt to try and understand what caused the person close to them to take their own life. It is essential that school staff reassure the bereaved pupil that the death was in no way their fault or as a result of arguments or inaction.
- For example, a young person might believe that their mother ended her life because they argued about cleaning her bedroom. Try not to underestimate the bereaved young person's feelings of guilt and try not to dismiss them. Rather, explore with the young person why they feel guilty and what is it that they believed they said/didn't say, did/didn't do, that they feel caused the death. If you know why the bereaved young person feels guilty then you can begin to gently challenge this and reassure the young person that they were not responsible for the death.

### **Stigma and bullying**

- Death through suicide can result in social stigma and many families can feel isolated within their communities. Similarly, young people who have been bereaved through suicide can also feel excluded from school life and may also feel shame over the suicide of someone close. It is difficult for children and families left behind to try and understand why the person they were close to ended their life and this can fuel conjecture within social circles, communities and schools.
- Young people bereaved through suicide can sometimes be bullied by classmates as a reaction to the death and school staff should be mindful of this happening. A death through suicide can unnerve a community and can often be wrongly viewed as unnatural or a selfish act. There will be individuals who will view suicide as a moral transgression depending on their faith and cultural beliefs.
- It is therefore essential that the bereaved young person is not burdened with the opinions of others as this is unhelpful and potentially damaging.
- Similarly, if the person who has died had a history of mental illness, the bereaved young person might become subject to comments about the person they were close to being "mad" or "deranged" by their peers. It is important that teaching staff reassure the bereaved pupil that the person they were close to was not deranged and if the young person states that the person was depressed or very down before they died, use this opportunity to explain to the pupil that being depressed does not equate to being mad.

### **How can school staff help?**

- School staff should liaise closely with the bereaved young person and their family prior to the pupil's return to school and whilst they are at school.
- Allocate the young person a "go to adult" in school, preferably chosen by or with their consent.

- Reassure the bereaved young person that the suicide was not their fault and wasn't a result of anything they said/didn't say or anything that they did / didn't do.
- If the bereaved young person talks about ending their life their family will need to be told. Encourage the bereaved young person to seek help from Cruse and introduce them to the Hope Again website which is Cruse Bereavement Care's specialist website designed for bereaved young people. The family of the bereaved young person may want to discuss matters with their GP.
- Let the bereaved young person know that you/your colleagues are there to support them and that you will be available to them if they need to talk or vent their feelings.
- Be alert to the possibility of bullying. Young people bereaved by suicide can be extremely vulnerable and often a target for bullying.

**Recommended support services:**

The Lullaby Trust: [www.lullabytrust.org.uk](http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk)

Grief Encounter: <https://www.griefencounter.org.uk/south-west/>

Cruse Bereavement Care: [www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)

Child Bereavement: [www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk) Telephone number 0800 02 888 40

## **Appendix D – What do staff do after the death of a young person by suicide? Papyrus advice**

Responding to a young suicide, often the term Postvention, is used to refer to care and support given after a suicide. The following statements may help staff identify their own situation and what they might do in response:

### **Q: “I know that a young person from our school has taken their own life, what do I do now?”**

A: This policy gives clear guidance about how to respond in the event of a suicide. The DSL, Senior Mental Health Lead and SENDCo have responsibility in the event of a suicide at school.

Hearing the tragic news that one of our pupils has taken their life will bring up many different emotions for staff, and this is likely to be a difficult time for the entire school community, and beyond. Staff might be feeling upset, shocked, angry, guilty or numb – all of these responses are normal reactions to a traumatic event such as suicide. The school will ensure that all colleagues are looked after. We may get support from professionals such as counsellors and therapists to talk about how staff are feeling. After liaising with the young person’s family, the DSL, Senior Mental Health Lead and SENDCo will meet with colleagues as soon as possible. They will ensure all of the adults working in school are invited: the death of a schoolchild can affect everyone in the school community. The Leadership Team will inform all colleagues of the young person’s apparent suicide. (It is only at an inquest that the coroner can conclude whether or not the death is a suicide. Before then, it might be helpful to say that the person **appears to have** died by suicide). If the facts are unclear, state that the cause of death is still being determined and will be shared at a later date. As soon as possible, the DSL, Senior Mental Health Lead and SENDCo will ensure that the school’s administrators stop any standard communications with the family, such as sending school trip information home, to reduce unnecessary additional stress to the family of the young person who has died.

### **Q: “I know that a young person from our school has taken their own life, how do I tell the other schoolchildren?”**

A: When the Senior Leadership, DSL, Senior Mental Health Lead and SENDCo meet, agreement will be reached on the words to be used to tell pupils about the death. (It is only at an inquest that the coroner can conclude whether or not the death is a suicide.) If the facts are unclear, the DSL, Senior Mental Health Lead and SENDCo will state that the cause of death is still being determined and will be shared at a later date. It is essential that all staff communicate the same information to all pupils. We will try to tell all pupils at the same time to prevent some pupils receiving the news before others and then passing on the news to other pupils without support. We may decide to do this as small groups, year groups or classes.

It is essential that we do not talk about the method the young person used to end their life. This can be unhelpful, unnecessary and dangerous. Talking about method can be speculative, it can intrude into grief and it can lead other vulnerable people to imitate the behaviour. We can be open with the pupils about why we won’t engage in conversations about the method the young person used to end their life; letting them know that it is unhelpful and that we want to ensure their safety and wellbeing. The Headteacher may decide to give pupils and staff time off to be with their families.

The DSL, Senior Mental Health Lead and SENDCo will provide opportunities for pupils to express their emotions and identify strategies for managing them. Staff might not be the most appropriate people to facilitate this and therefore, we may engage professionals such



as counsellors and therapists to further support pupils through their responses to the suicide. They will be able to provide more specialist support.

The DSL, Senior Mental Health Lead and SENDCo can also access support from the organisations listed as members of the Support After Suicide Partnership:

<http://supportaftersuicide.org.uk/>

The DSL, Senior Mental Health Lead and SENDCo will debrief at the end of the day with colleagues and where necessary update the full SLT and Pastoral teams. Checking in with colleagues and talking about the experience of the day before going home may help staff to manage their feelings.

**Q: “How can I support my pupils after a suicide at our school?”**

A: Reassure pupils that grief is a normal response to death, and there is no wrong or right way to grieve. Remain calm and acknowledge how your pupils are feeling. They might be feeling lots of different emotions, such as sadness, fear, anxiety, shock, guilt, and anger. Their distress might also manifest in their behaviour; they might be tearful, distressed, ‘act out’, be withdrawn or hyperactive. They may become very aware, perhaps for the first time, of their mortality and be scared of death. You might also notice a decline in their performance at school, or they may demonstrate regressive behaviour (e.g. in eating/sleeping/personal hygiene). Pupils who didn’t know the person who suicided may also be distressed – this distress is sometimes referred to as ‘disenfranchised grief’ – a grief we feel we don’t have a right too. Regardless of whether they had a relationship with the young person who has died, their response is still real and painful for them. It is important to believe everyone’s expression of grief and offer support. If a pupil wants to talk, find a quiet place and listen whilst they talk or cry.

- “How are you feeling?”
- “This is so sad and awful. It is ok to be so upset/ confused/angry.”
- “We are all so sad and shocked. Would you like to tell me about how you’re feeling?”
- “It is hard to know what to say, isn’t it? I am here if you want to talk.”
- “I can’t imagine what you are going through, but I wanted to let you know that I’m here if you’d like to talk.”
- “I’m not sure what to say, but I’m here to listen.”
- “Would you like to go for a walk together?”
- “Is there anything I can do to help you?”
- “I miss (name of the child who died)... how are you feeling?”

**Q: “How can I support my pupils after a suicide at our school?”**

Here are some examples of what not to say:

Avoid clichés such as:

- “Life goes on.”
- “Time heals everything.”
- “They are at peace now.”

Avoid assuming the faith and beliefs of the young person and their family:

- “It was God’s will.”
- “They are in a better place.”
- “They are looking down on you.”

Avoid assuming you understand how they are feeling, they may not understand how they feel:

- “I know how you feel...”

Avoid using judgemental statements, such as:

- “They were selfish to do that.”
- “They took the easy way out.”

When it feels appropriate, try to maintain a routine as much as possible to provide a sense of stability whilst being mindful of pupils' specific needs. Staff will also need support and guidance during this time. Time and resources will be made available. We need to be aware of our own grief and feelings and to acknowledge that suicide can affect everyone throughout the school and beyond. We will ensure that there is support available for school staff and pupils and that everyone knows how to access it.

**Q: “How should I communicate with the press and media after a suicide at our school?”**

A: All media enquiries should be referred to the Trust via [t.parkes@plymouthcast.org.uk](mailto:t.parkes@plymouthcast.org.uk); and the school's ESM should be informed by the school. Staff and pupils must not respond to journalists. The Trust will have an approved prepared statement in order to control the way any response on behalf of the school is reported. The Headteacher/ DSL/Deputy DSL will liaise with the deceased pupil's family.

**Q: “How can the school appropriately remember the young person who has apparently died by suicide?”**

A: It is important to remember someone who has died. In the first instance, the DSL, Senior Mental Health Lead and SENDCo will consult with the family regarding the young person's funeral. If the family so wishes, the DSL, Senior Mental Health Lead and SENDCo will then disseminate details of the funeral as appropriate. Consent will be given for staff and pupils to attend the funeral where appropriate. The DSL, Senior Mental Health Lead and SENDCo will ask the family what they are comfortable with in terms of remembering their son/daughter either immediately after the death or in due course.

**How can school manage social media coverage?**

Although the school cannot control what is said on social media the school will work with young people and families to ensure that social media use is appropriate.

We will try to discourage:

- Detail of suicide method used.
- Speculation about the location of the apparent suicide.
- Speculation about the reason for the suicide; there is never only one reason why a young person ends their life.
- Making the deceased appear heroic or brave or that the suicide was a solution to a problem.
- Endorsement of myths around suicide.

We will try to encourage:

- Sharing of helpline services and support organisations.
- Sensitivity to the grief and feelings of families and friends who have been touched personally by a suicide death. These people are often at higher risk of suicide themselves.

## **Appendix E – Signposting for Parents**

- Papyrus, Prevention of Young Suicide  
<https://www.papyrus-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Supporting-Your-Child-A-Guide-for-Parents.pdf>
- Young Minds  
<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/a-z-guide/suicidal-thoughts/>
- Charlie Waller, mental health charity  
<https://charliewaller.org/mental-health-resources/managing-difficult-feelings/coping-with-self-harm>
- Grass Roots, preventing suicide together  
<https://prevent-suicide.org.uk/find-help-now/stay-alive-app/>

## **Appendix F - Policy Drivers**

## GUIDANCE

- **Suicide prevention: developing a local action plan**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/suicide-prevention-developing-a-local-action-plan>

25 October 2016 Guidance

- **Preventing suicide: lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans young people**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-suicide-lesbian-gay-and-bisexual-young-people>

13 March 2015 Guidance

- **Suicide prevention: identifying and responding to suicide clusters**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/suicide-prevention-identifying-and-responding-to-suicide-clusters>

10 September 2015 Guidance

- **Suicide prevention: suicides in public places**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/suicide-prevention-suicides-in-public-places>

1 December 2015 Guidance

- **Support after a suicide: a guide to providing local services**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-after-a-suicide-a-guide-to-providing-local-services>

9 January 2017 Guidance

## POLICY

- **Suicide prevention strategy for England**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/suicide-prevention-strategy-for-england>

10 September 2012 Policy paper

- **Suicide prevention: third annual report**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/suicide-prevention-third-annual-report>

9 January 2017 Policy paper

APPENDIX F

CALL HOPELINE **UK 0800 0684141**

# SUICIDE SAFETY PLAN



**PAPYR**

PREVENTION  
OF YOUNG  
SUICIDE

# Suicide Safety Plan

When thoughts of suicide are overwhelming, staying safe for even 5-10 minutes takes a great deal of strength. This plan is to use during those times. It isn't a plan for how to rid yourself of thoughts of suicide, it looks at staying safe **right now** so that you still have the chance to fight another day and access support for whatever is impacting on those thoughts overall. These thoughts and feeling can change, it doesn't mean you will feel like this forever. Let's concentrate on what you can do **right now**.

## Why do I want to stay safe?

What are the reasons I don't want to die today? Are there people or animals that make me want to stay safe? Do I have hope that things might change?

Am I afraid of dying? Do I want to stay alive just for right now?



## Making my environment safer:

Whilst I am focusing on safety, how can I make it harder to act on any plans I might have for suicide? Where can I put things I could use to harm myself so they are harder to get to if I feel overwhelmed?



This doesn't mean having to get rid of them forever. It is because I am looking at staying safe right now. If these things make it harder for me to do this, I want to make it harder to use them. This will give me time to connect to that part of me that doesn't want to die.

What might make it harder for me to stay safe right now and what can I do about this?


Do I use any drugs, alcohol or medication to cope? These can make it harder to stay safe if they make me more impulsive or lower my mood. What can I do to make these safe?



If I have acted on thoughts of suicide before, what makes it harder to stay safe that I might need to consider while staying safe today?



Do I have any mental health concerns or symptoms that make it harder to stay safe? How can I help with these?



**What can I do right now that will keep me safe?**

What coping strategies can I use? What has worked in the past?

Is there anywhere I can go that will feel safe?

**What strengths do I have that I can use to keep myself safe?**







What strengths do I have as a person and how might this keep me safe?

What do people who care about me say about this? Am I creative?







## Who can I reach out to for help?

If I can't stay safe, who is available to help me?

-  101 or 999 for emergency
-  NHS 111 for medical
-  HOPELINEUK 0800 068 4141
- 
- 
- 

## Long-term support plan:

After staying safe-for-now from suicide, what longer term support do I want? How might I access this? What do I need to change for my thoughts of suicide to change? Where might I start to get help with this?

-  Talk to my
- 
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