# Mates in Mind

# World Suicide Prevention Day 2019

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This year, **World Suicide Prevention Day** will be taking place **Tuesday 10 September**.

World Suicide Prevention Day is an annual awareness day established to raise awareness of how to prevent suicide.

## Why is it important?

We know that in 2017, there were 5,821 suicides registered in the UK, with men accounting for three-quarters of this number[i].  We also know that workers in construction were at some of the highest risk of suicide in the country, with a risk more than 3 times higher than the national average.  But they are not alone- in many other occupations in the UK, professionals are also vulnerable.

As the Office of National Statistic report (2017) stated: attempting to explain suicide is complex as it is likely that a number of factors act together to increase risk, including some job-related features.
We believe employers can play a critical role in helping to prevent suicides.

There is a moral case, but also a growing awareness of a strong business case which demonstrates that prevention needs to be at the heart of changes to company culture which employers wish to make.

## World Suicide Prevention Day 2019 pack

This is why Mates in Mind is driving meaningful and long-lasting change across UK workplaces. We work with employers, supporting them to understand how they can take action and use a joined-up strategy to improve mental health within the wider business agenda.

We know it can be difficult to begin taking action. Where do you start? What do you say? Who do you talk to? How do you make it more than a one-off?

This pack is part of the growing suite of Mates in Mind resources which can be used by workplaces like yours to raise awareness and to begin to moving towards a more inclusive and engaged workforce, whether they are direct employees or contractors.

Wherever your organisation has begun its mental health conversation, Mates in Mind is here to support you.

## Together we are improving the way we work.

# Taking steps to prevent suicide

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# Start the conversation, start to prevent suicide

**Talking about mental health supports steps towards suicide prevention, because those important conversations have the power to:**

**Increase awareness**

Talking about the fact that we all have mental health and recognising that this is part of who we are, can help to normalise the conversation around the topic. This contributes to an environment where individuals have greater awareness and understanding of the challenge and how it can be tackle.

Creating awareness is an important step of a prevention strategy. It is important for individuals to be able to recognise when they may need support, for themselves or others, and what to do get help.

**Let people know they're not alone**

Building awareness and understanding means that colleagues are able to support each other. Just as with safety, we recognise that we have a responsibility not to ignore an issue.

If someone has been impacted by suicide, talking about it can empower them to seek more help - and not feel alone.

**Help bust the taboo**

Individuals may be put off talking about suicide because of the stigma and taboo around the subject. The feelings of being alone, coupled with the thought they might be judged, can stop them reaching out for the support they need at a difficult time.

## Knowing the facts helps start conversations

When talking about mental health and also suicide, it's important to know the facts.

The **statistics and trends resource** by Samaritans can support you in your conversations and help you understand the ins and outs of the topic.

**Suicide statistics and trends for the UK and Republic of Ireland**

# Busting the taboo also means busting the myths

Busting myths like these can help you to support someone who might be affected by suicide. Samaritans have listed a number of these common misconceptions in the helpful resource below, explaining the facts around the topic.

## For example:

**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.

It may well be that they want attention in the sense of calling out for help and helping them get support may save their life.

**Myth:** Talking about suicide is a bad idea as it may give someone the idea to try it.

**Fact:** Suicide can be a taboo topic. Often, people who are feeling suicidal don't want to worry or burden anyone with how they feel and so they don't discuss it.

But, by asking someone directly about suicide, you give them permission to tell you how they feel. People who have felt suicidal will often say what a huge relief it was to be able to talk about what they were experiencing.

Once someone starts talking they've got a better chance of discovering options that aren't suicide.

**Myths about suicide**

# Support for individuals

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# Are you struggling to cope?

## Remember, you are not alone and there is always someone to help you.

Below you can see the immediate actions you can take if you are struggling to cope.

**Coping right now**

- Try not to think about the future – just focus on getting through today
- Stay away from drugs and alcohol
- Get yourself to a safe place, like a friend's house
- Be around other people
- Do something you usually enjoy, such as spending time with a pet[ii]

**Start the conversation**

If you find it difficult to talk to someone you know, you could:

- **call your GP** – ask for an emergency appointment
- **call 111 out of hours** – they will help you find the support and help you need
- **contact your mental health crisis team** – if you have one
- **call a confidential helpline** – there is a list on page 11

# Spotting the signs that someone needs support

## Signs that someone may need support

- Feeling restless and agitated

- Feeling tearful

- Not wanting to talk to or be with people

- Not wanting to do things you usually enjoy

- Using alcohol or drugs to cope with feelings

- Finding it hard to cope with everyday things

- Not replying to messages or being distant

- Their work just doesn't appear to be at the same standard

- New pattern of unexplained lateness or absences

- Recent inability to concentrate on their work or in meetings

- Recent inability to complete any of their work

You might not always be able to spot these signs, and these emotions show up differently in everyone.[iii]

# Taking action when you spot the signs

## Encourage them to talk about their struggle and actively listen

Enabling individuals to speak about what they are struggling with can be the best way of supporting them in what they're going through.

Don't' be afraid to start a conversation with someone if you are worried about them.

For tips on how to be an active listener when you start the conversation you can use **Samaritans SHUSH tips**.

## Encourage them to seek help for what they are struggling with

Remind the person, there is always someone to listen and support you with whatever you are struggling with.

If the person you are worried about is struggling to cope right now, see the immediate actions that they can take on page 11.

If you are supporting someone in the workplace you can suggest they talk with their Employee Assistance Programme, HR representative, occupational health and department, or another health professional, such as their GP.

You can also signpost the person to **confidential helplines** if they are not comfortable talking to someone they know. Our confidential helplines resource has a range of services which support individuals to cope with their difficulties.

## Follow up

When you are supporting someone always follow up with other people where possible to ensure that action has been taken.

## Take care of yourself

Supporting someone in distress can be distressing in itself. If you're helping someone who's struggling, make sure you take care of yourself as well.[iv]

- **SHUSH tips**
- **Supporting someone who feels suicidal**
- **Talking to someone who feels suicidal**
- **Samaritans Supporting Someone Online**

- **MIND How to support staff who are experiencing a mental health problem**
- **If you are worried about someone else, Samaritans**
- **Reducing the risk of suicide: toolkit for employers**

# Supporting those impacted by suicide

When taking action and raising awareness about mental wellbeing, with an aim of preventing suicide, it's important to remember that suicide bereavement is thought to affect around half the general population and that 'grief doesn't stop, it changes.' [v]

Therefore, it's important to consider that doesn't matter how long ago somebody may have been touched by suicide, they may still need support – and your words and actions will mean something to them. However, it has been reported that '25% of people bereaved by suicide said they received no support after their loss. Only 1% said they preferred to cope without support.' [vi]

The resource below can help you to find the words to reach out to someone who may need it

*"We all need a little help from time to time but for some who find it hard to communicate or understand their problems the world can feel a very dark and lonely place. I want to help by encouraging people to talk and for others to listen. Sometimes all it takes to make a difference is a kind understanding ear."*

**SHEQ Co-ordinator and Mates in Mind Supporter**

"When I first worked as a site manager, I never felt I could talk to anyone about any difficulties I faced, I didn't want to show any weakness as I thought people would think I couldn't do my job. I have had to work hard to get better at talking to others and keeping my mental health 'healthy'"

**Project Executive and Mates in Mind Supporter**

## Finding the words

# Confidential helplines

## Contact the services below for free, confidential support.

## Remember, you are not alone.

- **Samaritans: 116 123**

The Samaritans offer a safe place for you to talk any time you like, in your own way – about whatever's getting to you. 24/7 support for people who are in despair or suicidal.

- **Construction Industry Helpline: 0345 605 1956**

Provided by the Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity and supported by the Considerate Constructors Scheme, the helpline advises on a range of matters including occupational health and wellbeing, support and advice for people with stress, and home worries such as divorce, tax and financial concerns. The services can also provide emergency financial aid to the construction community in times of crisis.

- **Mind Infoline: 0300 123 3393 (or text 86463)**

The team at the leading mental health charity Mind can provide information on a range of topics including types of mental health problem, where to get help, medication and alternative treatments.

- **Workplace mental health support service: 0300 4568114**

Provided by Remploy, in partnership with Access to Work, WMHSS offers a free and confidential support service to help you remain in your job when it is being affected by stress, anxiety, depression or other mental health issue (whether diagnosed or not). If you are finding work difficult or you are absent from work their advisors will help you make a wellbeing plan and support you with workplace adjustments, including how to get support from your employer.

- **Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM): 0800 58 58 58**

CALM provide a helpline for men in the UK who are down or have hit a wall, who need to talk or find information and support. The helpline is open 5pm–midnight, 365 days a year. They also offer a webchat service between the same hours.

- **Prevention of Young Suicide (Papyrus) 0800 068 41 41**

Papyrus provide confidential help and advice to young people and anyone worried about a young person. Their HOPELineUK service is staffed by trained professionals who give non-judgemental support, practical advice and information to; children, teenagers and people up to the age of 35. They can be contacted on 0800 068 41 41, by email: pat@papyrus-uk.org or SMS 07786 209697

- **The Silver Line 0800 4 70 80 90**

The Silver Line is the only free confidential helpline providing information, friendship and advice to older people, open 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

# Employers guide to building a culture of prevention

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# An employer's role in suicide prevention

**Employers and workplaces are part of a community's social fabric and therefore play a part in addressing this wider public health issue.**

It doesn't matter when or why your organisations is taking action to prevent suicide, we are here to support you with the tools and resources you need to make a change.

At Mates in Mind, we enable organisations to improve their workforces' mental health by providing the skills, clarity and confidence to employers on how to raise awareness, improve understanding and address the stigma that surrounds mental health.

We recognise that mental ill-health does not always necessarily cause suicide, and that 'most people who choose to end their lives do so for complex reasons'. However, we also understand that mental illness can play a part with research showing that 'many people who die by suicide have a mental illness'[vii]

The tools and resources here have been collated to support you in looking after the mental health and wellbeing of your workforce, in order to support suicide prevention more widely.

# The impacts of building a culture of prevention

## What is a culture of prevention?

When an organisation has integrated strategies, tools and support across its workforce, which support their employee's mental health and wellbeing within work, they have the foundations of a culture of prevention.

These actions, combined with improved awareness and understanding of the topics, opportunities for further education around both suicide prevention and mental health, and a commitment to improvement of these from across an organisation, all produce a workplace culture geared towards ongoing prevention.

## How can a prevention culture support your workforce?

By creating an open and inclusive culture, employers can empower their workforces to have difficult but important conversations about mental health and suicide.

If a workforce is supported with the awareness and understanding of how and where they can get support, in an environment where they do not feel judged or restricted by stigma, they will feel more able to get the support they need.

A workplace culture where conversations are encouraged, and mental health and wellbeing are being proactively support by employers can be crucial in tackling the complex challenges of mental ill-health and suicide prevention.

We have witnessed this through the work we have done with our Supporters. Conversations like Patrick's can be critical to the lives of individuals throughout workforces.

*"When I was asked to share my story and read it across sites and the company…it opened up a lot of conversations. I found a lot of people coming to me with their own stories and telling me how they were relieved that they had someone to talk to who understands.*

*"When you talk about organisations developing cultures… I found that it was about giving them the information and having the conversation…Let them talk and listen to what they say, because sometimes it just comes flowing out - and it's an ease to their mind."*

**Patrick, Site manager and Mates in Mind Supporter**

It doesn't matter where your organisation is in its mental health journey – whether you have never thought about it, have done some training or don't know if there's more you should be doing – Mates in Mind is here to help.

# A 3Ts approach to supporting your workforce

When addressing suicide and mental ill-health in your workforce it is important to take a joined-up approach. Both mental ill-health and suicide are highly complex issues, impacted by a number of factors from across individuals lives.

Therefore, we have developed an **Employer's action plan** to enable employers to change the way they **think, talk and tackle** mental health within their organisation. By taking this joined-up approach employers can support the positive mental wellbeing of their employees at work.
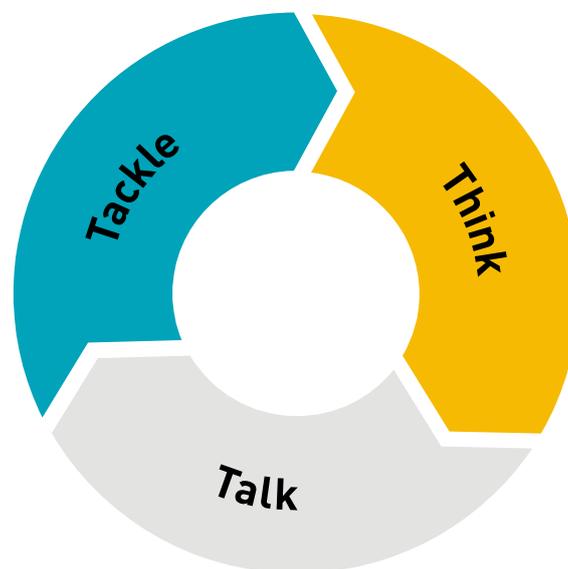


Our **Employers action plan** explores how you can use our 3Ts approach to develop a preventative culture, taking action to improve mental health and preventing suicide.

The link to our **mental health toolkit** below can also be used to support this approach, with a wide range of guidance and support which can assist you in delivering a comprehensive plan for your workplace.

## Tools for employers

**Mental health toolkit for employers**

# Employers action plan: creating a culture of prevention

## Think

**General awareness**

By improving general awareness about mental ill-health and suicide, organisations can begin to challenge the stigma around the topics. How can you help?

- Displaying awareness posters
- Making your workforce aware of the facts around mental ill-health and suicide
- Making your workforce aware that there is always support available to those who need it

## Talk

**Start the conversation**

Depending on the context of your discussion, there are many ways the conversation can be started in work. How can you help?

- Team meetings
- Toolbox talks
- Presentations or briefs
- Conversations with line-managers

**Discuss the topic using sensitive and inclusive language**

- Ensure communications are inclusive of those across your workforce, regardless of: gender, culture, religion, race, sexuality etc
- Ensure that the language you use is considerate of those who might be impacted by the topic, including: those who have been bereaved buy suicide, or individuals who may need support themselves

**Lead by example**

When seeking to drive a meaningful change, it is crucial that those at a director/ manager level within an organisation show that they are actively supporting good mental wellbeing in the context of work. How can you help?

- Discuss mental health and suicide prevention with others within management and leadership roles
- Attend briefings and talks organised to discuss and tackle the issue
- Attend managers' training to equip yourself with the tools and understanding necessary to support individuals within your workforce

## Tackle

**Access to, and signposting available services**

By making sure you are clear what benefits and support are available directly to staff or workers in your organisation or elsewhere. How can you help?

• Signposting to internal support: making people aware of your businesses workplace mental health policy; access to Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and individuals within the organisation that are championing this issue
• Signposting to external support services such as: confidential helplines, resources and organisations

**Training**

By attending training, individuals can develop the necessary understanding and skills to help support how they think, talk and promote better mental health. Individuals from across all roles within an organisation can benefit from training such as:

• General awareness training
• Manage the conversation training
• Mental Health First Aid training

## How can we support you with your plan?

**Mates in Mind can support your organisation to build a mental health plan and to create a culture of prevention.**

Our dedicated team of Support Managers work with organisations of any size to develop a tailored action plan, evaluating your organisations priorities and gaps and providing the tools and support you need. This plan will not only include ongoing support with communication and delivery of your plan, but also training opportunities, promotional materials and a suite of tools (including packs like this one) to enable you to drive long-lasting and meaningful change.

Find out more about how Mates in Mind can help your organisation build a culture of prevention when you become a Supporter by contacting us.

If you are already a Supporter and want to speak to someone about this pack or any other queries, please contact your Support Manager or the team.

📞 **020 3510 5018**

✉ **support@matesinmind.org**

# References

[i] The Office for National Statistics, Suicide by occupation, England: 2011 to 2015

[ii] NHS, Help for Suicidal Thoughts

[iii] Samaritans, If you are worried about someone else

[iv] The Prince's Responsible Business Trust, Reducing the risk of suicide: toolkit for employers

[v] Support After Suicide Partnership, Finding the words

[vi] Support After Suicide Partnership, Finding the words

[vii] NHS Inform, Suicide: why people attempt suicide

## Contact us

📞 020 3510 5018

✉ support@matesinmind.org

➤ matesinmind.org

🐦 @matesinmind

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📷 @matesinmind