



Practice Brief: Suicide Awareness, Prevention and Local Resources.

16/05/22: Developed by SSP BSU in consultation with Dr Michelle Sharma, Named GP for Safeguarding.

About this document

- There have been a number of deaths in Swindon where adults have sadly taken their own lives, sometimes following a period of suicidal ideation and sometimes after one or more previous suicide attempts.
- Within this document there is some useful information about topics such as suicidal thoughts and ideation, myths and facts, warning signs and tips on how to start a conversation if you have concerns.
- At the end of this document there are a number of resources including signposting to a wide range of available help and support for adults who are experiencing suicidal ideation in Swindon.
- It is advised that any staff working with individuals in these complex situations should ensure that they seek timely advice and support from their own organisation's safeguarding leads.
- If you believe a person to be in immediate danger and/or someone has hurt themselves and you think their injuries are life-threatening, call an ambulance on 999.
- You can do this whether you are with them in person or not.
- You will need to be able to give a location.

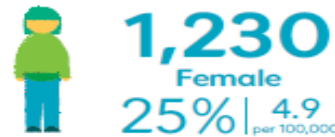
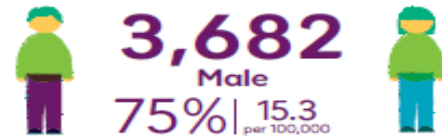
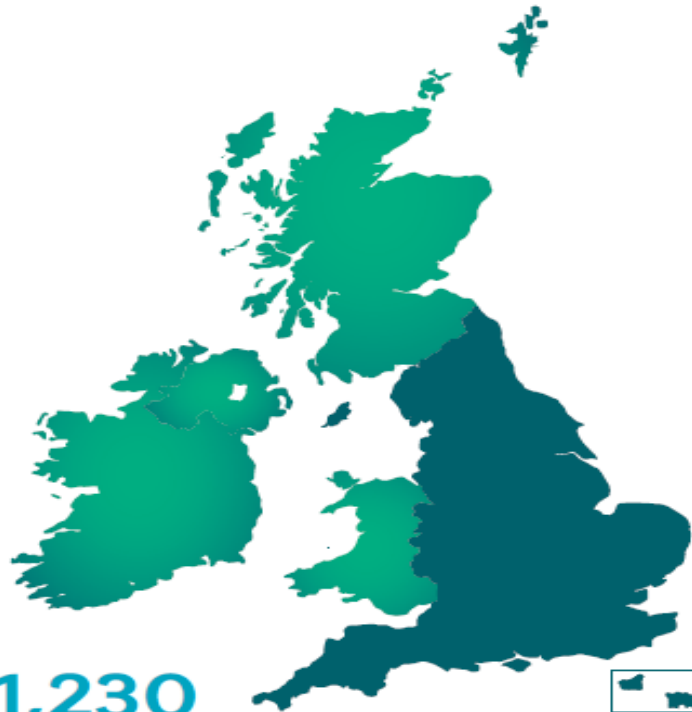
What do these terms mean?

What is suicide? Suicide is when someone intentionally ends their own life.

What are suicidal thoughts/ideation? Suicidal thoughts or suicidal ideation means thinking about or planning suicide. Thoughts can range from a detailed plan to a fleeting consideration.

Source: [Supporting someone with suicidal thoughts - Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust \(tewv.nhs.uk\)](https://www.tewv.nhs.uk/supporting-someone-with-suicidal-thoughts)

Suicides in England

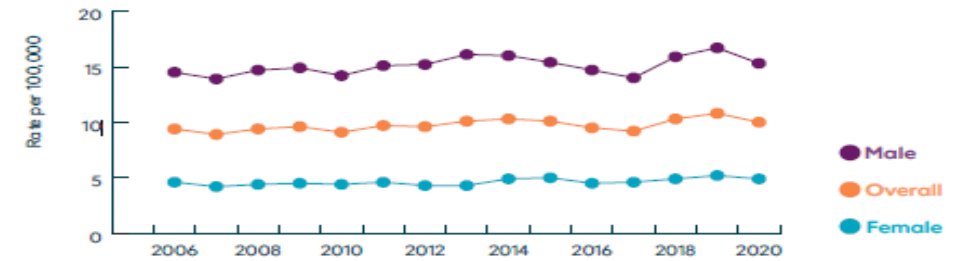


Age groups with highest suicide rate per 100,000



The suicide rate among people aged 35-39 (13.1 per 100,000) has increased 3.1% compared to 2019 (12.7 per 100,000)

Suicide rate per 100,000 in England 2006-2020



Overall, the **suicide rate in England** has decreased by **7.4%** compared to 2019.

The **male suicide rate** has decreased by **8.4%** compared to 2019.

The **female suicide rate** has decreased by **5.8%** compared to 2019.

Males are **3.1x more likely** to die by suicide in England than females.

Notes about data: Data source – Office for National Statistics (ONS). Suicide refers to deaths where the underlying cause is **intentional self-harm** and **events of undetermined intent**. Data represents suicide registrations. Increases/decreases are based on one year of data. These may not indicate longer term trends and may not be statistically significant. Overall rates for male, female and all persons are age standardised. Rates broken down by age group are crude.

Myth

People who talk about suicide aren't serious and won't go through with it.

Fact

People who kill themselves have often told someone that they do not feel life is worth living or that they have no future. Some may have actually said they want to die. It's possible that someone might talk about suicide as a way of getting attention, in the sense of calling out for help.

It's important to always take someone seriously if they talk about feeling suicidal. Helping them get the support they need could save their life.

The majority of people who feel suicidal do not actually want to die - they do not want to live the life they have.

If a person is serious about killing themselves then there's nothing you can do.

Often, feeling actively suicidal is temporary, even if someone has been feeling low, anxious or struggling to cope for a long period of time. This is why getting the right kind of support at the right time is so important.

You have to be mentally ill to think about suicide.

1 in 5 people have thought about suicide at some time in their life. And not all people who die by suicide have mental health problems at the time they die.

However, many people who kill themselves do suffer with their mental health, typically to a serious degree. Sometimes it's known about before the person's death and sometimes not.

People who are suicidal want to die.

The majority of people who feel suicidal do not actually want to die; they do not want to live the life they have. The distinction may seem small but is very important. It's why talking through other options at the right time is so vital.

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

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.

Most suicides happen in the winter months.

Suicide is complex, and it's not just related to the seasons and the climate being hotter or colder, and having more or less light. In general, suicide is more common in the spring, and there's a noticeable peak in risk on New Year's Day.

People who say they are going to take their own life are just attention seeking and shouldn't be taken seriously.

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.

**Evidence shows asking someone if they're suicidal can protect them.
They feel listened to, and hopefully less trapped.
Their feelings are validated, and they know that somebody cares about them.**

Reaching out can save a life.

Rory O'Connor, Professor of Health Psychology at Glasgow University.

Source: [Myths about suicide \(samaritans.org\)](https://www.samaritans.org/mental-health/myths-about-suicide/)

What does it mean to be suicidal?

Suicidal feelings can be confusing, frightening and complicated. They can range from having general thoughts about not wanting to be here to making a plan about how and when you could end your life. Individuals might feel less like they want to die, and more that they want the pain to stop. They may experience feelings of

- hopelessness or being trapped,
- tearful,
- anxious or overwhelmed by negative thoughts,
- desperate,
- tempted to do risky or reckless things because they don't care what happens to them,
- wanting to avoid other people.

Source [Suicide | Mental Health Foundation](#)

What can make someone want to end their life?

Suicide is complex and there is no single explanation of why people die by suicide. There are many different risk factors, including: previous suicide attempts, or previous [self-harm](#).

Many people who self-harm don't want to die. However, research shows that;

- people who self harm are at higher risk of attempting or dying by suicide,
- being unemployed,
- having a [physical health problem](#), including chronic pain,
- living alone,
- being dependent on [alcohol](#) or [drugs](#), having mental health problems.

There may not be an obvious reason why someone feels suicidal. But whatever the cause, there is help available.

Source [Suicide | Mental Health Foundation](#)

Warning Signs

When someone is contemplating suicide, their words and actions can give you clues that they are at risk for hurting themselves.

High-risk warning signs

A person may be at high risk of attempting suicide if they:

- threaten to hurt or take their own life
- talk or write about death, dying or suicide
- actively look for ways to take their own life, such as stockpiling tablets
- If showing high risk warning signs - further information is available [Mental health services - In crisis? call 0800 953 1919 \(bswccg.nhs.uk\)](https://www.bswccg.nhs.uk).

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

If you notice any of these warning signs encourage them to talk about how they are feeling.

Useful advice on how to do this on [talking about suicide webpage](#). See also resources at the end.

It is recommended that you share your concerns with your GP or a member of their care team, if the person is being treated for a mental health condition.

Other signs that someone may not be okay

When someone is thinking about suicide, their words and actions can give you clues that they are at risk of hurting themselves.

The following can be suicide warning signs:

- **Talking about suicide** – Any talk about suicide, dying, or self-harm, such as “I wish I hadn’t been born,” “If I see you again...” and “I’d be better off dead.”
- **Looking for a way to end their life** – Searching for a method or seeking access to medicines/ other objects that could be used in a suicide attempt.
- **Preoccupation with death** – Unusual focus on death, dying, or violence.
- **No hope for the future** – Feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and being trapped. Belief that things will never get better or change.
- **Self-loathing, self-hatred** – Feelings of worthlessness, guilt, shame, and self-hatred. Feeling like a burden.
- **Getting affairs in order** – Making out a will. Giving away prized possessions. Making arrangements for family members.
- **Saying goodbye** – Unusual or unexpected visits or calls to family and friends. Saying goodbye to people as if they won’t be seen again.
- **Withdrawing from others** – Withdrawing from friends and family. Increasing social isolation. Desire to be left alone.
- **Self-destructive behaviour** – Increased alcohol or drug use, reckless driving, unsafe sex. Taking unnecessary risks.
- **Sudden sense of calm** – A sudden sense of calm and happiness after being extremely depressed can mean that the person has made a decision to attempt suicide.

Situations to look out for

It can also be useful to identify these situations that can trigger suicidal thoughts or make it hard for someone to cope.

- relationship and family problems
- loss, including loss of a friend or a family member through bereavement
- financial worries
- job-related stress
- college or study-related stress
- loneliness and isolation
- depression
- painful and/or disabling physical illness
- heavy use of or dependency on alcohol or other drugs
- thoughts of suicide

These may not apply to everyone who is struggling, but they can be useful to look out for.

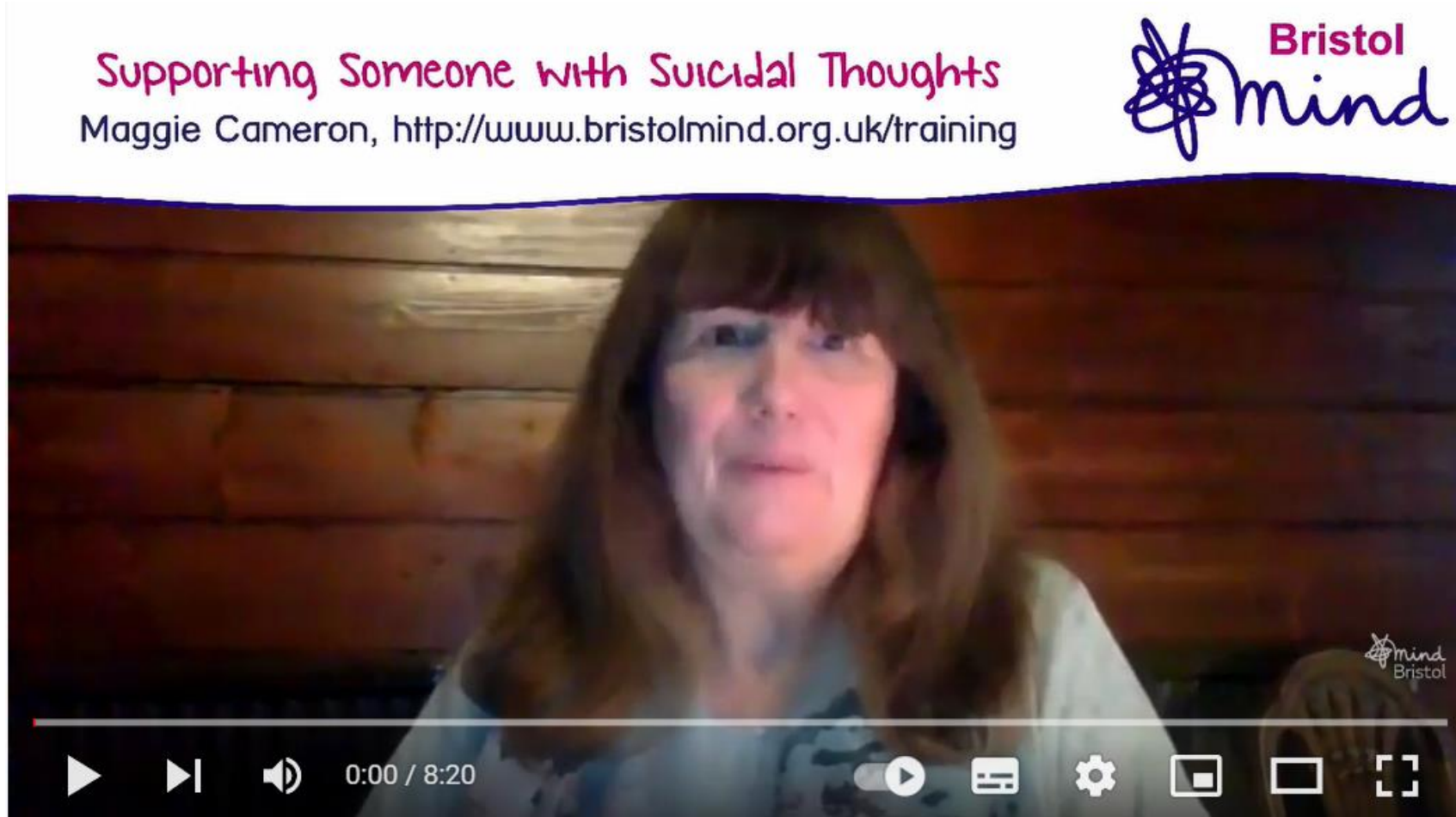
Supporting someone you know online

Some phrases or themes to watch out for in social media updates and online messages include:

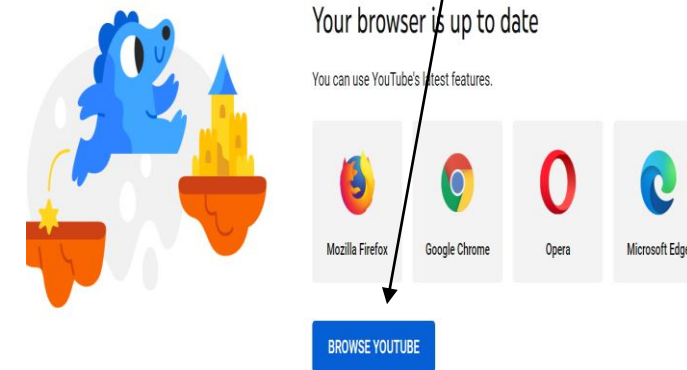
- I want to give up
- No-one would notice if I wasn't here
- I hate myself

We all experience not being okay differently. Not everyone who is struggling to cope will use these phrases, in fact some people might not be posting or messaging at all.

Video clip



If you click on the hyperlink to view the video clip and see the following slide. Click the blue box **'Browse YouTube'** and you will be directed to the relevant clip.



This clip provides some useful information and guidance.

Source: Bristol Mind (2020) duration 8.20 minutes.

If you have difficulties playing click on this hyperlink [Supporting Someone with Suicidal Thoughts with Maggie Cameron – YouTube](#)

SUICIDE PREVENTION ADVICE

WAIT!

W **Watch out** for signs of distress and changes in behaviour

A **Ask** "are you having suicidal thoughts?"

I **It will pass** – assure your loved one that, with help, their suicidal feelings will pass with time

T **Talk to others** – encourage your loved one to seek help from a GP or health professional

Call Samaritans
116 123



 Registered with
FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR
Registered Charity No.
England 801130, Scotland SC039714.
Company Registration No. 2350844.

How to Help: Suicide Prevention

Prevention is something that we can all individually help with.

A short conversation with another person can sometimes be enough to make the difference between life and death for them.

The advice 'WAIT' is one good way to remember how you can support another person who may be suicidal. It stands for:

Watch out for signs of distress and uncharacteristic behaviour e.g. social withdrawal, excessive quietness, irritability, uncharacteristic outburst, talking about death or suicide

Ask "are you having suicidal thoughts?" Asking about suicide does not encourage it, nor does it lead a person to start thinking about it; in fact it may help prevent it, and can start a potentially life-saving conversation

It will pass – assure your loved one that, with help, their suicidal feelings will pass with time

Talk to others – encourage your loved one to seek help from a GP or health professional.

It can feel difficult to start these conversations.

For further information on **WAIT** [click here](#).

Other resources include:

Samaritans [tips on how to be a good listener](#) and [What to do if you think someone is struggling | Samaritans](#)

How to start a conversation

It is important to ask the person directly if they are feeling suicidal or if they have been thinking about suicide.

It is a myth that talking directly about suicide will put the idea in their head. Instead, discussing suicide openly and honestly about what you've noticed and genuinely asking how they are feeling can give the person the opportunity to take the first steps towards getting the help they need. Listed below are some ideas to help you start the conversation:

- “I’ve noticed that you haven’t been yourself lately, is everything ok with you?”
- “I’m worried about you. I’m wondering if we can talk about what’s troubling you?”
- “You’ve seemed really (down/sad/angry/unhappy) lately. I’m worried that you might be thinking of hurting yourself or suicide. Can we talk about this?”

Mind has some information on [supporting someone who feels suicidal](#).

Free Helplines Available

- ✓ [Samaritans](#) offers a 24 hour a day, 7 days a week support service. Call them free on 116 123. You can also email jo@samaritans.org
- ✓ [CALM](#) (Campaign Against Living Miserably) has a helpline (5pm – midnight) and webchat for anyone who's having a tough time and needs to talk.
- ✓ [Papyrus](#) supports people under 35 who have thoughts of suicide and others who are concerned about them. You can call their HOPELINEUK on 0800 068 4141, text 07860 039967 or email pat@papyrus-uk.org. They're open every day from 9am to midnight

Useful Resources

Swindon Safeguarding Partnership Resources:

Information about services available to support adults experiencing suicidal ideation in Swindon:

- ✓ [Support for adults in Swindon experiencing suicidal ideation - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)

Free ELearning from external providers:

- ✓ [FREE, online 20 minute training from the ZSA](#) to help build your confidence and skills.
- ✓ [Suicide prevention awareness - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)

Other services, information and resources available:

- ✓ [Mental Health Support from Swindon & Gloucestershire Mind \(sgmind.org.uk\)](#)
- ✓ [Mental health services - In crisis? call 0800 953 1919 \(bswccg.nhs.uk\)](#)
- ✓ [Suicidal thoughts - How to support someone \(rethink.org\)](#)
- ✓ [Suicide prevention: WAIT | Mental Health Foundation](#)
- ✓ [Suicidal Thoughts | Suicidal Ideation Signs & Symptoms | YoungMinds](#)
- ✓ <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/s/suicide>
- ✓ <https://www.dcfp.org.uk/health-and-wellbeing/suicide-awareness/suicide-awareness-information-for-professionals/>
- ✓ [Supporting someone who feels suicidal - Mind PDF to download](#)
- ✓ [Practical ways to help yourself cope | Facebook \(samaritans.org\)](#)
- ✓ <https://www.papyrus-uk.org/>
- ✓ [Practical tips on dealing with suicidal feelings. \(Samaritans\)](#)