

Reducing the risk of suicide

WHAT YOU AND YOUR
ORGANISATION CAN DO

Created to mark
World Suicide Prevention Day

CHAMPION
HEALTH

Guide contributors



HARRY BLISS

Co-founder and CEO
Champion Health



DR STEPHANIE FITZGERALD

Former Senior Business Partner – Mental Health
Rolls-Royce



STEVE PHILLIP

Founder
The Jordan Legacy CIC



DR RICHARD HERON

Former Vice-President Health
BP



ALICE HENDY

Founder & Director
Ripple Suicide Prevention



ARTI KASHYAP-AYNSLEY

Global Head of Health & Wellbeing
Ocado Group



MIKE MCCARTHY

Campaigner for mental health awareness,
journalist and media consultant

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When I started Champion Health, we had a strong team of health professionals behind us. But we lacked the know-how to grow the business.

I approached a friend for support. He was a director of a global organisation. We caught up regularly at the pub and he became my mentor.

But six months into Champion Health's journey everything changed. I received a phone call. My friend had taken his life due to a short bout of stress. This really shook me. He had no history of mental ill health. He had a wife, two children, and a successful career.

After this tragedy, we set out on a mission to change and save lives.

Fast forward to now: bills are rising and recession is looming. Things are getting tougher and this will affect our mental health. Now more than ever, we must do more to support ourselves and those around us.

To create this guide we've brought together workplace health leaders, suicide prevention experts and those bereaved by suicide. I hope it can help, if only a little.

This guide contains real stories that some people may find distressing. If you need support, please reach out to the services detailed on the next page. [↗](#)



Harry Bliss

Co-founder and CEO, Champion Health

Let's talk about suicide

The World Health Organization estimates that over 700,000 people take their own life each year – that's one person every 40 seconds. In the UK alone, there are on average 109 deaths by suicide per week.

Despite the progress we've made around normalising mental health, suicide remains a misunderstood and taboo topic. This stigma persists throughout our communities and wider society, despite many of us being touched by suicide in some way.

It's time this changed.

109 people die by suicide each week in the UK (ONS, 2020)

Champion Health have published this free guide to help dispel the myths around suicide and provide actionable steps that everybody - including organisations - can take to support those who may be struggling.

The theme of World Suicide Prevention Day this year continues to be "Creating Hope Through Action". This reinforces that our actions, no matter how big or small, can provide hope to those who are struggling. It's also a reminder that we are all key players in suicide prevention, as a member of society, as a parent, as a colleague or as a friend. Through action, we can all make a difference.

We can all play a role in supporting those experiencing a suicidal crisis or those bereaved by suicide.

Remember, you are not facing this alone. There are people who will listen and support you.

It's not weak to speak

Need help now?

If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts or feel you can't keep yourself safe, try the following steps:

1 Speak to someone you trust about how you are feeling

2 Contact your GP, dial 111 or contact the helplines below

3 Call 999 if you are in immediate danger

QUICKEST WAY TO GET HELP

Additional UK support is also available



0800 068 4141
Helpline for under 35s
www.papyrus-uk.org



0800 58 58 58
Helpline for men
www.thecalmzone.net



116 123
24/7 helpline
www.samaritans.org



Text 85258
24/7 text service
www.giveushout.org

1 in 5 adults in the UK have experienced suicidal thoughts.

(McManus et al., 2016)

75% of people who die by suicide in the UK are male

(ONS, 2020)

Men aged 45 to 49 have the highest suicide rate in the UK

(ONS, 2020)

Understanding Suicide

Suicide is complex. There is no one reason why an individual may die by suicide, or experience suicidal thoughts and behaviours.

For example, a person may feel suicidal due to intense feelings of isolation, hopelessness and the belief the world would be better without them. They may not want to die, but are instead finding it impossible to live.

This complexity makes it difficult to predict who may be affected by suicide and what warning signs to look out for. There are, however, common experiences you might notice in the way a person is communicating or behaving.

Communication:

- **Talking about dying or ending their life:**
"I'd be better off dead" "I wish I hadn't been born"
- **Talking about feeling hopeless or lacking purpose:**
"There's no way out" "What's the point?"
- **Talking about being a burden to others:**
"Everyone would be better off without me"

Behaviour:

- **Excessive alcohol or drug use**
- **Unusual changes in behaviour**
- **Severe shortage of sleep**
- **Organising personal affairs**
- **Sudden social withdrawal**
- **Saying goodbye to loved ones**



I lost my only sibling, my brother Josh, on 25th November 2020, to suicide at 21 years old. After examining Josh's phone, I found that he had been researching techniques to take his own life via harmful internet searches.

Mental health is a serious and urgent issue. Online searches for suicide methods have increased by 50% in the last 2 years, with searches for suicide support lines also up by 150% since January 2019 (Semrush).

To ensure more help and support is given to individuals searching for harmful content online, I set up R;pple; a digital interceptive tool. With Ripple if a user searches for harmful content online, they will first be guided through a filter of breathing exercises. They will then be guided through very simple, uncluttered and calmly-presented strategies and forums, alongside helplines and mental health services they can access both now and in the long term. These are accompanied by messages of hope and encouragement to keep safe.

800,000
downloads

4,500
harmful
online
searches
intercepted

24 individuals
say R;pple
saved their life

[Learn more about R;pple](#)

I hope you can support me in my mission to get people the mental health support they need at a time when they are most vulnerable. My aim is to stop any other sisters waking up and feeling how I feel each morning.



Alice Hendy

Founder & Director, R;pple Suicide Prevention

Myths about Suicide

Myth

"Asking if someone is suicidal will put the idea into their head"

Truth

It may seem counterintuitive, but asking someone directly about suicidal thoughts can be protective. It gives them permission to talk about how they are feeling, ensuring they feel listened to, validated and like somebody cares for them. Asking about suicide saves lives.

Myth

"If someone is suicidal, they're not really going to do it - it's just a cry for help"

Truth

It's important to always take someone who's experiencing suicidal thoughts seriously. They may not want to die, but anyone experiencing suicidal thoughts is likely to be struggling and should be given access to the help and support they need.

Myth

"You can only experience suicidal thoughts if you have a mental health problem"

Truth

Anybody can experience suicidal thoughts. Figures show that 1 in 5 adults have contemplated suicide at one point in their life. This means that suicidal thoughts should always be considered, asked about and not dismissed based on someone's mental health history.

Here are some of the common myths and misconceptions we regularly hear about suicide. It's important to understand the truth, so we can better support someone who is struggling or in crisis.

Myth

"Everybody who is suicidal wants to die"

Truth

Not everybody who is suicidal wants to die, but rather they don't want to live the life they have. This is an incredibly important distinction to make, as it gives hope that there are alternatives to suicide and things can (and will) get better.

Myth

"There's nothing you can do to prevent someone from taking their own life"

Truth

Suicide can be preventable when the right support is offered. Knowing the warning signs and how to support someone will greatly reduce the risk of them taking their own life. You have the potential to make a difference, no matter how small.

Supporting Others in Crisis

Once we spot the warning signs, it can be daunting to know what to say or do next. That's why we have developed the CLASS approach: a 5-step guide to supporting someone who is experiencing suicidal thoughts.

Connect, Listen, Assess, Support, Signpost

Connect

Connect with the person you are concerned about. Make time to ask how they're doing and show empathy, care and concern. For ideas on what you could say, see the next page.

Listen

Allow them time to talk things through and listen to what's being said. Your job is not to solve the problem or offer advice, but to listen and show your care.

Facilitate the conversation rather than leading it, and try not to minimise their feelings by comparing their experiences to others.

Assess

When a person is feeling suicidal, we need to assess the situation carefully.

Establish if they have any intentions or have made any plans or preparations to end their life. Encourage them to think of the things that make life worth living (these are protective factors).

Support

Make it clear that you're there to help and they are not a burden to you. Explore what support they already have and ways they can keep themselves safe.

Remember, finding a way forward should always be collaborative.

Signpost

Connect them with services so they can access timely support. Main points of contact include their GP, NHS 111 (if out of hours) and confidential helplines (see "Need Help Now?").

Make a plan together about the actions they are going to take.

If they have made plans or preparations and feel they can't keep themselves safe:

- 1 Let them know you are concerned for their safety
- 2 Encourage them to call 999, or call 999 on their behalf
- 3 Continue talking to them until the ambulance arrives

Spotlight on: “Connect”

While every step in the CLASS approach is important, we want to draw specific attention to the “C”: Connect. Connecting with someone, whether they’re a colleague, friend or even a stranger, to discuss suicide will undoubtedly feel daunting.

And despite your best intentions, it can sometimes be challenging to find out how that person is really feeling. They may be unfamiliar with talking about their mental health, concerned about what might happen if they open up or even ashamed of their feelings.

To navigate this conversation, try the following:

The power of small talk

As Samaritans reminded us in a recent campaign, we all have the skills to start a conversation with a stranger or a friend that needs help.

If something doesn’t feel right, a little small talk and a simple question, like “Hello, what’s the time?”, can be all it takes to interrupt someone’s suicidal thoughts. If you feel something isn’t quite right and you think someone might need help, trust your instincts and start a conversation. You could save a life.

Learn more about Samaritans’
Small Talk Saves Lives campaign [↗](#)

What do I say?

Knowing what to say and how to say it can be the hardest part of talking to someone about suicide. Here are some phrases that might come in use.

I’ve noticed you’ve not been yourself. Is everything okay?

I’m glad you’ve told me – it must have been difficult going through it on your own.

These feelings are only temporary – we can get through this moment together.

Now might not be a good time to make a big decision. Let’s take a step back and consider the other options.

Have you thought about... (e.g. speaking to the Samaritans)? Should we make a plan together?

Asking twice

It’s not always obvious when people are feeling suicidal, so it’s important that you’re able to look beyond a “Yes, I’m fine” response.

If someone says they’re fine, they might not be.

If you’re given this response, simply try asking again.

Asking “How are you really?” can make all the difference.



Evidence suggests that most suicides are preventable if there is early identification of the danger signs, early intervention, prevention measures in place and support provided for those bereaved by suicide - who are often at greater risk.

One way we can all intervene early is by learning a few basic skills that will allow us to spot the signs and open up a conversation with someone who is struggling with their mental health or maybe in crisis.

When I founded The Jordan Legacy CIC, following my son's death by suicide in December 2019, I had little knowledge and understanding about mental health or suicide. I made it my mission to learn as much as I could, as quickly as possible, so that I knew how to directly help others and help others to support those in need of support.

The Jordan Legacy is also a key stakeholder of the BatonOfHopeUK's four nations' suicide awareness and prevention initiative - summer 2023.

The reason why someone chooses to end their life is often complex. However, suicide is a practical act and if we can all learn how to prevent that practical act then we will save lives.

[Learn more about The Jordan Legacy](#)

[Learn more about The Baton of Hope](#)



Steve Phillip

Founder of The Jordan Legacy CIC

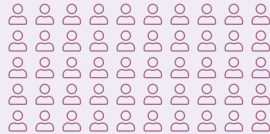
Suicide risk at work: our data

Many of us spend more time working with colleagues than we do with our own friends and family. Because of this, organisations play an integral role in reducing suicide. This support is urgently needed, with our data showing that 1 in 12 employees experience thoughts of suicide or self-harm. **To put that in context:**

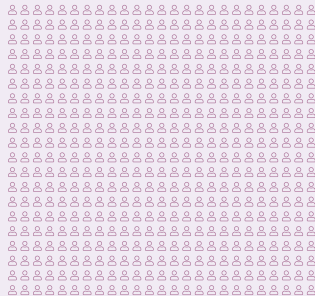
In a company of 60 people, around 5 are experiencing thoughts of suicide or self-harm.



In a company of 600 people, around 50 are experiencing thoughts of suicide or self-harm.



In a company of 6000 people, around 500 are experiencing thoughts of suicide or self-harm.

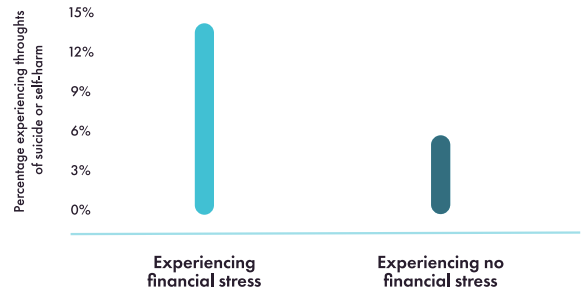


Source: The Workplace Health Report: 2022

During this cost of living crisis, the effects of financial stress may be exacerbating the risk of suicide. In a second 2022 study produced by our team, we found that employees experiencing financial stress are twice as likely to experience thoughts of suicide or self-harm.

Relationship between suicidal thoughts and financial stress

Employees experiencing thoughts of suicide or self-harm on at least "several days", as measured by the PHQ-9 questionnaire.



Source: Cost of Living Crisis: Financial Stress and Employee Wellbeing

These statistics highlight the urgent need for employers to be proactive when it comes to suicide reduction. Even small steps or changes can save lives.

On the next page, you'll discover actionable steps you can take to reduce the risk of suicide within your organisation.

How organisations can help

Every organisation has a role to play in preventing suicide. Below, you'll find three actionable steps that your organisation should take to drive a culture of compassion.

1. Normalise the mental health conversation



The best way to break the stigma around mental health is to foster a psychologically safe working environment in which employees feel able to open up.

Maintain an open dialogue around mental health by:

- Ensuring your leaders regularly ask each employee how they are (twice), preferably in a 1:1 environment
- Encourage leaders to share experiences of struggles they've had and what helped them during those times
- Raise awareness of the mental health services your organisation offers, and the pathways for employees to access them

Contributed by our Global Wellbeing Advisory Board:



Dr Stephanie Fitzgerald



Arli Kashyap-Aynsley



Dr Richard Heron

2. Make it easy for employees to access the support they need



It takes a lot for anyone to admit they need help, so it's vital that support pathways are clear-cut, known, accessible and actually work. Organisations should:

- Map out the care pathways associated with mental health support and share that with all employees
- Educate all employees on this care pathway so that they are all well-versed and able to dive in and support colleagues
- Test out the support mechanisms that you have in place to ensure they work and any potential issues are addressed

3. Communicate a culture of care



Communicating a culture of care will ensure that every employee feels supported at times when they are struggling. To achieve this:

- Ensure every employee knows someone in their workplace who will listen to them, without judgement, at a time of distress
- Co-ordinate peer support groups and give every employee the opportunity to become a point of support for others
- Emphasise your commitment to confidentiality – employees need to trust the person at the other end of the conversation

About confidentiality

When someone shares something with us, we should treat it with the strictest confidence.

However, confidentiality has its limits, and when a person is at risk of harming themselves, the limits of confidentiality are reached.

In this situation, we should do everything we can to keep them safe, including informing a relevant person or calling 999. This ensures they will get access to timely and appropriate help.



The language of suicide

The way we talk and the words we use has a huge impact on the way we perceive the world. So, when talking about suicide, language really does matter.

For example, you should avoid the phrase “commit suicide” because this relates to an era when suicide was a crime.

Similarly, avoid using the words “successful” or “unsuccessful” as this connotes an achievement of something positive, despite the tragic outcomes. We’ve added alternatives into the table below.

SAY THIS

INSTEAD OF THIS

| | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| ✓ Died by suicide | ✗ Committed suicide |
| ✓ Suicide death | ✗ Successful attempt |
| ✓ Suicide attempt | ✗ Unsuccessful attempt |
| ✓ Person living with suicidal thoughts or behavior | ✗ Suicide ideator or attempter |
| ✓ Suicide | ✗ Completed suicide |

Find more resources for journalists
and media here [↗](#)



Ross was always the life and soul of the party. Or at least that's what many people believed. We knew different – beneath the facade he had long been fighting severe depression.

But even I, his dad, didn't realise quite how desperate our wonderful son had become.

In the early hours of the 21st February 2021 came the call that would change our world forever. Ross had died at the age of 31. Our boy - the warm, fun-loving, hard-working and dedicated family man - had gone. I had been as proud of my son as any dad could have been. Feeling suicidal he had asked for therapy and was put on a six-month waiting list. He died two weeks into the wait.

In a farewell letter Ross wrote to his family: "Please fight for mental health. The support is just not there." Now I am doing what I can to honour his memory and his dying request.

Much of my focus is on Baton of Hope UK, which I and others are planning to make the biggest suicide prevention initiative the nation has ever seen. Its aim is to secure practical measures to reduce the suicide figures which have stagnated for more than twenty years.

It's a silent pandemic which has been overlooked for far too long.

[Learn more about The Baton of Hope](#)



Mike McCarthy

Campaigner for mental health awareness,
journalist and media consultant

Behind the stories



HARRY BLISS

In 2018, Harry lost a friend and mentor to suicide, due to a short bout of stress. As the co-founder and CEO of Champion Health, he is driven every day by the mission to prevent tragedies like this happening to others.

[Find out more](#)



STEVE PHILLIP

After losing his 34-year-old son Jordan to suicide, Steve set up The Jordan Legacy CIC to make communities, individuals and businesses aware of how they can save lives by taking practical action to prevent suicides happening.

[Find out more](#)



MIKE MCCARTHY

In 2021, Mike lost his son Ross to suicide. He now campaigns for better mental health provision by setting up a Talk Club in his local area of Sheffield, and is raising money for CALM.

[Find out more](#)



ALICE HENDY

After her only sibling, Josh, took his own life at the age of just 21, Alice founded R;pple, an online monitoring tool designed to intercept harmful online content related to self-harm and suicide.

[Find out more](#)

A final thought

Thank you from us all at Champion Health for taking your time to prioritise suicide prevention.

We truly hope that you never have to use the information in this guide. But, if you do, we hope you'll feel better equipped to make a difference - no matter how small.

Remember that a little support goes a long way. Your actions could save someone's life.

About Champion Health

Champion Health was founded by Harry Bliss in 2018 powered by a mission to change and save lives. The company provide innovative, evidence-based workplace health solutions, developed by world-leading academics, GPs and technology professionals. Through blended expertise, Champion Health is proud to have prevented suicides in the workplace and improved health outcomes across the UK.

For more information, please contact hello@championhealth.co.uk or visit www.championhealth.co.uk.

Free resources used to develop this guide:

Business in the community
www.bitc.org.uk/toolkit/suicide-prevention-toolkit

International Association for Suicide Prevention:
<https://www.iasp.info/wspd/>

World Health Organisation (WHO):
www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/suicide

Samaritans:
www.samaritans.org

The future of workplace health

CHAMPION
HEALTH