

Supporting colleagues with suicidal thoughts or intent

If someone has expressed suicidal thoughts or intent, this can be a difficult conversation and not everyone feels they have the confidence to do it. However finding a quiet space that your colleague feels comfortable in and using a sensitive approach can save lives.

Approach, listen, offer support

- Ask open questions in a calm, empathic way about how they are doing, mention things that you have noticed in a non-judgemental approach
- Encourage them to talk but do not promise confidentiality
- Offer to contact their GP, crisis line, Samaritans or occupational health with them to access professional support
- Agree a plan and offer ongoing support.

Crisis action - if you have immediate concerns for a colleague's safety

- Stay with the person, call 999 or take them to the emergency department
- Once they have professional support in place ask whether they would like you to stay or not
- Get support for yourself.

If the person has left and you have concerns for their safety you can ring police (101) to do a welfare check

Common myths

Myth: Asking about suicide might give someone the idea

Fact: Talking about suicidal feelings in an honest and non-judgmental way can help break down the stigma associated with it, meaning people are more likely to seek help and open up about how they feel.

Myth: If someone is seriously considering taking their own life there is nothing you can do about it.

Fact: Suicide is not inevitable it can be preventable, most people with suicidal thoughts do not go on to take their own life.

Support for self and other team members

The impact on others should not be underestimated. While you can play an important role in suicide prevention, it is important to remember you are not responsible for other people's actions.

Sources of support are your manager, GP and occupational health.

Useful numbers

Samaritans (24/7) 0117 983 1000
Crisis Line (24/7) 0300 555 0334
MIND Line (24/7) 0808 808 0330
Occupational Health (8am-5pm) 0117 342 3400

Starting a conversation can be challenging some useful phrases and ideas can be found at: samaritans.org/difficultconversations

Key points:

- Be open
- Be non-judgemental
- Show you're listening
- Don't try to offer solutions, focus on feelings.

What to do if a suicide attempt has taken place

- Treat as any other life threatening emergency
- First aid measures, ring 999 or 2222 from within the hospital.