



## **Suicide Prevention and Postvention Protocol for all Surrey Schools and Colleges:**

**How to support the School/College community in the case of a death by (suspected) suicide or sudden unexpected death and information which may help prevent suicides for all Surrey schools.**

**“Nobody likes to think about a death in school. Yet suicide is a leading cause of death for young people in the UK and ROI.”**

# 1. Introduction

This pack is intended for schools that have been affected by a suspected<sup>1</sup> suicide or sudden unexpected death and would like to be prepared and plan a response that helps rebuild the wellbeing of the community and reduces the risk of further suicides. We have based this pack on research and best practice concerning suicide response within school communities.

People bereaved by suicide can be up to 65% more likely to attempt suicide themselves<sup>2</sup> and are particularly vulnerable. Schools and communities should be aware of an increased risk for at least two years following a suicide event. It is therefore important to work to prevent both suicides and the potential impact of a suicide.

This protocol has been developed to help schools and colleges in Surrey identify and support students who may be suicidal and importantly to consider a wide range of associated issues, in the case of a death by (suspected) suicide. It both supports schools/colleges to prepare in case there ever is a (suspected) suicide, how to best respond when a suspected suicide has taken place and how to ensure prevention is embedded within the curriculum.

## This Protocols aims to:

- Help prevent suicides in schools or colleges.
- To provide guidance on developing a plan when there has been a (suspected) suicide (postvention), in the case of a student (or former student) at the school/college (although this protocol also contains useful information in the case of a death of an adult).
- To provide guidance on developing a plan in advance of an event taking place.
- To provide details of support available following a suicide/suspected suicide.
- To enable agencies/organisations working to reduce suicides in Surrey the opportunity to learn from events leading to the suicide/suspected suicide.
- To signpost to relevant training and support services.

# 2. Prevention of Suicide

This section covers the following areas:

1. Development of a Suicide Prevention Policy
2. Language around Suicide
3. Intervention – how to identify and what to do when someone is struggling
4. Suicide Prevention Training
5. Teaching Resilience in School

## A. Development of a Suicide Prevention Policy or Plan

Both Samaritans and Papyrus recommend that schools and colleges develop a suicide safety policy or plan which is known by the whole community and which is focused on suicide

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<sup>1</sup> The word 'suspected' is used in the document as a suicide is not the confirmed cause of death until the Coroner's inquest is complete.

<sup>2</sup> <http://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/6/1/e009948>

prevention. Both organisations have published guidance which can help develop your policy, as follows:

- <https://papyrus-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/toolkitfinal.pdf>
- <https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/schools/step-step/step-step-resources/responding-suspected-suicide-schools-and-colleges/>

## B. Language Around Suicide

It is recognised that language can help as well as harm. Papyrus talk about “using sensitive and appropriate language” to “help build awareness and understanding to increase empathy and support.” Their website contains useful resources which can be downloaded to help start conversations about suicide. However, the following table identifies unhelpful and helpful language which might be helpful to be aware of:

<b>Unhelpful Language</b>	<b>Why it is Unhelpful</b>	<b>Language to use instead (using Papyrus guidance)</b>
Successful suicide	If someone dies by suicide it cannot ever be a success.	Died by suicide Ended their life Took their own life Killed themselves
Commit suicide	Suicide hasn't been a crime since 1961. Using the word “commit” suggests that it is still a crime which perpetuates stigma or the sense that it's a sin.	Died by suicide Ended their life Took their own life Killed themselves
You're not thinking of doing something stupid/silly are you?	This suggests that the person's thoughts of suicide are stupid or silly, and/or that the person is him/herself stupid or silly. If asked this question, people are most likely to deny their true feelings for fear of being viewed negatively.	Are you telling me you want to kill yourself/end your life/die/die by suicide? Sometimes, when people are feeling the way you are, they think about suicide. Is that what you're thinking about? It sounds like you're thinking about suicide; is that right?

## C. Intervention – how to identify if, and what to do when someone is suicidal

Staff may feel worried about over-responding, but in truth, it is much better to over-respond than under-respond in the case of a potential suicide.

Papyrus guidance on spotting the signs of suicidal thoughts is as follows:

“It's not always easy to know if someone is suicidal. After all, we cannot read other people's minds to truly understand how they are feeling in any given moment.

Sometimes though, there may be signs that a young person is feeling suicidal; some signs are more obvious than others and some can be quite subtle. After all, some young people may not have the skills, confidence or language to describe how they feel. Therefore, we might need to pay a little more attention than usual. Alternatively, some young people may be more comfortable directly expressing their thoughts of suicide which will allow us to explore them further.

So, what might the signs be? People thinking about suicide often invite us to ask directly if suicide has become an option for them.

There is no exhaustive list of 'invitations' but changes in behaviour (loss of interest/withdrawal, giving away possessions), physical indicators (weight loss, lack of interest in appearance), expressing thoughts or feelings (Hopeless, sad, guilty, worthless) and the words/language being used ("I can't take it anymore", "Everyone would be better off without me") could all be indicators that someone is experiencing thoughts of suicide.

Recent research has indicated that asking a young person if they are experiencing thoughts of suicide can actually reduce the risk of them ending their life. Asking and determining if that person is feeling suicidal gives you the opportunity to explore those feelings further and support them to stay safe.

The most important thing to do to ascertain if someone is struggling with thoughts of suicide is to **ASK!**"

Generally speaking, someone in distress may elicit direct and/or indirect warning signs of suicidal thoughts. It's important for staff to learn how to identify these warning signs as they may indicate intention for suicidal behaviour. It's also important to understand that those with a mental illness or who have had a prior suicide attempt and/or been bereaved by suicide themselves are at greater risk of suicide.

There are some excellent resources to support you to identify and work with someone who is, or who may be, feeling suicidal. These are available here:

- 1) Papyrus website: Worried about someone - <https://papyrus-uk.org/worried-about-someone/>
- 2) MIND website: Supporting someone who feels suicidal - <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helping-someone-else/supporting-someone-who-feels-suicidal/#.XOP7KNIUndM>
- 3) Samaritans website: Worried about someone - [https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/support-and-information/worried-about-someone-else/?gclid=EAlaIQobChMIpeiQm9us4gIVyYbVCh1XZQLZEAAAYASAAEgKfEvD\\_BwE](https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/support-and-information/worried-about-someone-else/?gclid=EAlaIQobChMIpeiQm9us4gIVyYbVCh1XZQLZEAAAYASAAEgKfEvD_BwE)
- 4) Rethink website: How to support someone - <https://www.rethink.org/carers-family-friends/what-you-need-to-know/suicidal-thoughts-how-to-support-someone>

## D. Suicide Prevention Training

Although some suicide prevention training is available (see below), no formal training is strictly necessary to provide crucial early support for someone.

However, nationally recognised online training (how to have a conversation with someone who may be suicidal) is available free of charge from <https://www.zerosuicidealliance.com/> and <http://www.nwyhelearning.nhs.uk/elearning/HEE/SuicidePrevention/>

## **E. Promoting Resilience and Positive Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health in Schools**

Effective approaches to the positive development of health, behaviour and resilience are supportive, strategic and consistent. They permeate the school culture through well considered policies, procedures, partnerships, shared values, curriculum and wider enrichment opportunities. In order to achieve this the leadership team must have an established vision and ethos which models clear expectations of positive behaviours from the whole school community.

Surrey schools are supported in developing their whole school approach to wellbeing and resilience through the Surrey Healthy Schools Self-Evaluation Tool. This tool guides schools through a series of themes and evidence-based standards, providing links to appropriate and supportive national and local services, resources and documentation in order to positively address wellbeing across the following 5 themes:

1. Whole School Approach towards the Promotion of Positive Health and Wellbeing
2. PSHE Curriculum (incl. Health & Wellbeing, Relationships, Sex, Drug, Staying Safe & Financial Capability Education)
3. Healthy Eating (incl. Cooking and Healthy Eating in the Curriculum, Food Provision – school meals, packed lunches, pre and post school club food provision, and Cooking Clubs)
4. Physical Activity (incl. Physical Education and School Sport – PESSPA)
5. Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health

The Surrey Healthy Schools self-Evaluation Tool allows schools to reflect upon their areas of strength and areas for development and enables schools to be able to develop a comprehensive action plan to guide their development of wellbeing, health and resilience. Visit: <https://www.healthysurrey.org.uk/healthy-schools>

## **F. Resources to Support a Proactive and Developmental Approach to Wellbeing<sup>3</sup>**

### **Surrey Healthy Schools**

Surrey Healthy Schools takes an evidence-based approach and provides a comprehensive Self-Evaluation Tool for schools to co-ordinate, develop and improve their provision to support personal development, behaviour, teaching and learning, and leadership and management in line with Ofsted's Inspection Framework, the Surrey 2030 Vision and Health and Wellbeing Strategy

<https://www.healthysurrey.org.uk/healthy-schools>

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<sup>3</sup> To ensure effective teaching and learning ensure any resource meets the needs of pupils and supports the school vision, values and ethos. To help ensure that a resource is suitable for your needs apply the criteria for the selection of resources and materials – included in the Surrey PSHE Guidance <https://www.healthysurrey.org.uk/professionals/healthy-schools/pshe>

## Surrey PSHE Guidance

This guidance will enable schools and other PSHE providers to plan, develop and monitor a coherent and progressive programme of experiences which will contribute to pupils' personal, social development and wellbeing. This will impact upon all areas of school life; not just the formal curriculum, but also upon extracurricular activities, partnerships with the local community, links with external agencies and all that contributes to a positive school ethos.

<https://www.healthysurrey.org.uk/professionals/healthy-schools/pshe>

## PSHE Association PSHE Programme of Study KS1 – 5

The DfE statutory guidance for Health Education and Relationships & Sex Education is comprehensively covered by learning opportunities for each key stage across the Programme's three core themes: 'Health and Wellbeing', 'Relationships', and 'Living in the Wider World',

<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/programme-study-pshe-education-key-stages-1%E2%80%935>

## PSHE Association Guidance

Produced for the Department for Education this guidance has been fully updated and relaunched support the **statutory PSHE requirements** regarding Health Education, Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE).

<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/content/guidance-and-lessons-teaching-about-mental-health>

## Mentally Healthy Schools

Mentally Healthy Schools is a free website for primary schools, offering school staff information, advice and practical resources to better understand and promote pupils' mental health and wellbeing.

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

## Rise Above – Public Health England

Resources to support the delivery of PSHE curriculum topics to Upper KS2, KS3 and KS4 pupils, with flexible lesson plans and ready-to-use PowerPoints co-created with teachers, and video content developed with 10 to 16-year-olds.

<https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/schools/topics/rise-above/resources>

DEAL: Developing Emotional Awareness and Listening

DEAL is a free resource for teachers and other educational professionals designed to help develop resilience in secondary aged young people.

<https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/schools/deal/>

## MindEd

MindEd educational online training on children and young people's mental health.

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