



World Suicide Prevention Day

Around one in five adults will have suicidal thoughts at some point in their life. But sadly suicide is still heavily stigmatised. This stigma can both stop people from talking about it and obscures the fact that suicide can be preventable.

World Suicide Prevention Day (WSPD), on 10th September, offers businesses an opportunity to engage with employees on the topic. It is a chance to increase understanding about suicide, challenge stigma, signpost to support and provide people with the confidence to spot warning signs and have intervening conversations. This short paper provides ideas on how to mark the day and signposts to resources. It is important to note, as per advice from Public Health England, that talking about suicide **will not** put the idea in someone's mind, but it **will** make the topic less taboo.

The workplace

There are many reasons why suicide is a workplace issue.

- The suicide of a colleague is devastating and will have a lasting impact on a workplace community and business
- Businesses have a responsibility to minimise unhealthy working environments that cause significant stress and which may contribute to poor and worsening mental health
- The majority of adults are in work. If every business took steps to normalise conversations about suicide, this would help to challenge stigma at both an individual and societal level
- The unique relationships we build and the regular interactions we have with our workplace community means colleagues are well positioned to identify when someone is struggling, have an intervening conversation and signpost to support.
- Businesses can provide and signpost to mental health and wellbeing support, e.g. counsellors, EAP, Mental Health Advocates
- Employers can arm employees with skills that will benefit their whole community. The ability to have a supportive, intervening conversation with someone who is struggling could be important for not just colleagues, but friends, families and even strangers

The role of business

A very important part of suicide prevention is to have a holistic and inclusive approach to employee wellbeing. The CMHA's [Thriving at Work Framework](#) and resources, supports businesses to do this. As part of this wellbeing strategy, a business must actively address the risk of suicide. World Suicide Prevention Day (WSPD) provides a chance to start, or continue, this journey. This document outlines ideas for marking the day. Bear in mind that employees from different communities, cultures and demographics have different interactions with suicide and this should be reflected in any initiatives.

1 Share stories

Storytelling is important for building understanding and challenging stigma. On WSPD, share the stories of lives lost, lives saved through intervention and those bereaved by suicide. You could sensitively recruit for volunteers who are able to share a relevant experience. Or you can use the stories which have been shared in public forums.

Suggested action

- [Zero Suicide Alliance](#) and [CALM](#) have stories about suicide which can be shared on WSPD. You could use this content as part of a discussion group – ask colleagues to read them and then offer a safe space to discuss.

2 Educate

WSPD is an opportunity to increase knowledge and skills so employees are more likely to spot warning signs and more confident in starting a conversation about suicide.

Suggested actions

- Share free online learning from [Zero Suicide Alliance](#) or workplace mental health modules via [Wellbeing in the Workplace](#) from the Samaritans
- [Contact us](#) to find out more about the CMHA's mental health training (incorporating or focusing on suicide awareness and prevention).
- Share the [Time to Talk resources](#) which include conversation starters. While they don't specifically relate to suicide, they help to open up conversations about suicide.
- Everymind Australia provides [suggestions on appropriate language](#) when discussing suicide.

3 Events

Host specific events to mark WSPD and engage employees.

Suggested actions:

- *Inviting expert speakers / people who can sharing lived experience as standalone speakers, or part of a panel event.*
- *A more informal option is to allocate coffee hours or drop-ins to allow colleagues a safe space to discuss the topic. Ensure a MHFA-er (or equivalent) is available in case anyone needs support.*

4 Signpost to wellbeing support

WSPD is a chance to reshare and clearly signpost to mental health support, including internal wellbeing offerings and external helplines.

Suggested actions:

- *Ask a business leader to share an email or video recognising the importance of WSPD and signpost to support. This should include a reminder that people should not wait to use the support when they feel at crisis point, but access support earlier on.*
- *Sharing real life experiences of colleagues who have used your wellbeing support services, e.g. via a blog, can be a helpful to show their value.*

5 Reflect on existing policies and processes

Leadership, HR and wellbeing teams could review the business's approach to suicide policies, including prevention, intervention and postvention.

Suggested actions:

- *Download the BITC toolkit: [Reducing the risk of suicide: a toolkit for employers](#)*

Please note: Suicide is a difficult and triggering topic. Consider the safety of contributors or listeners in any initiative. Ensure that MHFA-ers, advocates or counsellors are available to listen and signpost to crisis and other support, pre- and post-event. **If you believe that you, or someone you know, is in immediate danger, please call for an ambulance on 999.**

Resources

Data, Awareness and Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The Samaritans Facts and Figures on suicide▪ Papyrus infographic on how to speak to someone about suicide▪ The Last Photo: suicidal doesn't always look suicidal – powerful photo campaign from CALM▪ Men Tell Health Podcast Episode 7 – James Jackson's story, including reflections on interventions both by a friend and the Samaritans which helped during times when he felt suicidal
WSPD Specific Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The Samaritans WSPD guidance - includes social media assets, and tips▪ The International Alliance for Suicide Prevention's resources for WSPD
Signposting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Rethink Mental Illness: guidance on coping with loss as a result of suicide▪ Samaritans: 116 123; Available 24/7▪ Switchboard (LGBT+ helpline): 0300 330 0630 Daily: 10.00am – 10.00pm▪ Papyrus – for people under 35: 0800 068 41 41 Mon – Fri: 10.00am to 10.00pm, weekends 2.00pm to 10.00pm, bank holidays 2.00pm to 5.00pm▪ Childline – for children and young people under 19: 0800 1111; Available 24/7▪ The Silver Line – for older people: 0800 4 70 80 90; Available 24/7▪ The Empowerment Group (offering heavily subsidised online one-to-one counselling sessions for Black individuals in the UK aged 18+) www.theempowermentgroup.co.uk▪ Rethink Sahayak Asian Mental Health Helpline: 0808 800 2073 Mon - Weds: 4.00pm - 7.00pm; Tues - Thurs: 12.00pm - 3.00pm Fri - Sun: Closed▪ Jami – Mental health support for the Jewish community https://jamiuk.org/get-support/
CMHA Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Consultancy: We offer consultancy to organisations in a variety of ways - to get support on campaign and event curation, or broader suicide policy implementation. Contact us to find out more▪ Training: CMHA UK can create tailored training specific to the needs of your organisation. Contact us to find out more