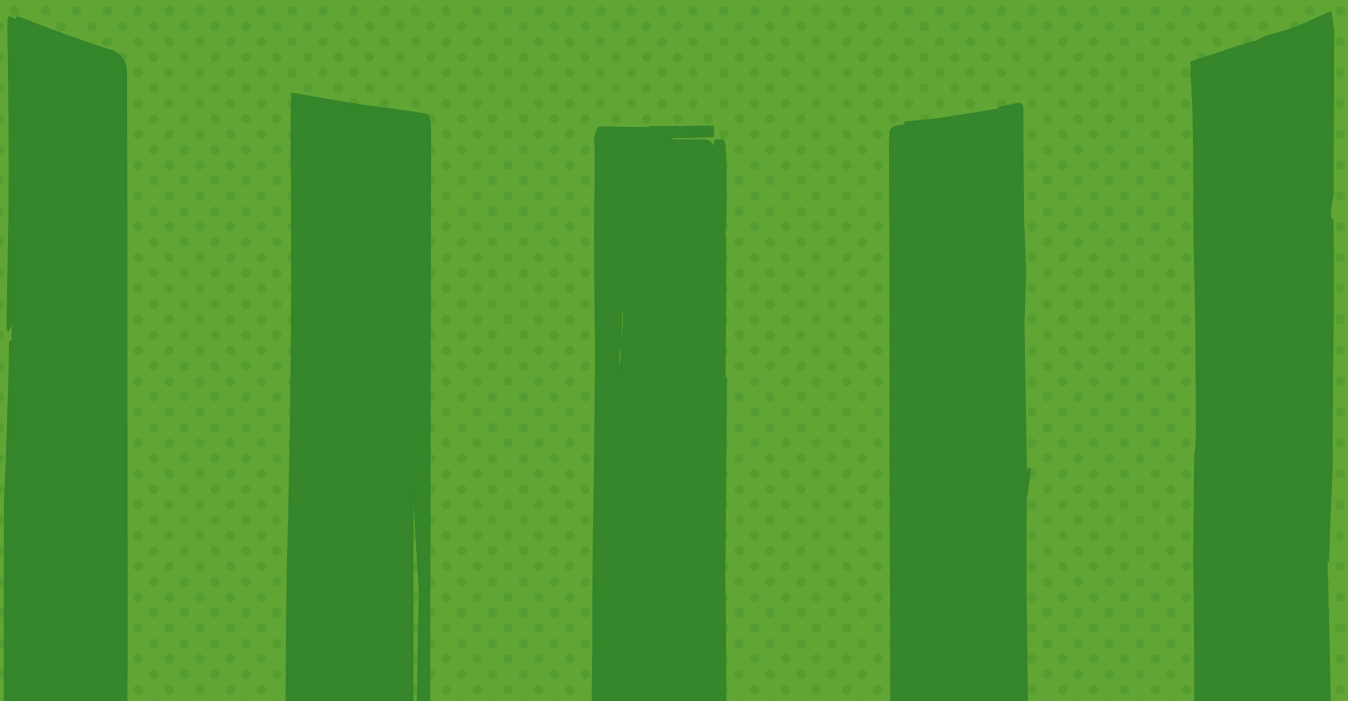




MHFA England

Five pillars of suicide prevention in the workplace



Suicide can be prevented through education and intervention. Workplaces should embed suicide awareness, prevention, and support into their mental health and wellbeing strategies. Our research showed that over 75% of employees do not know if suicide prevention is currently part of their organisation's strategy.¹ This must change.

Suicide is widely stigmatised. Many organisations don't know where to begin to change this. MHFA England®'s five pillars of suicide prevention can help you put plans in place to support those having thoughts of suicide and those impacted by suicide.



1. <https://mhfaengland.org/mhfa-centre/news/suicide-awareness-and-prevention-training-in-the-workplace/>



Lay the foundations

Lots of organisations are doing wonderful things to support the mental health and wellbeing of their people, but suicide still remains taboo in many workplaces.

The elements that create a mentally healthy workplace help lay the foundations for suicide prevention. A vital component of this is a mental health and wellbeing strategy to support the needs of your business and your people. Workplaces can build on what they already have in place to embed suicide prevention into their plans.

Creating cultures where wellbeing and productivity thrive requires good job design, physically and psychologically safe working environments, strong and positive leadership, and equitable recognition and reward, amongst other things.

By investing time and energy into these areas you will be supporting the mental health of your staff.



Encourage conversation



To tackle the stigma around suicide, workplaces must encourage people to talk freely about mental health. We have made huge progress in the last decade, but even the most progressive organisations shy away from sharing resources on suicide and suicide prevention.

MHFA England's [training](#) and [resources](#) give people the skills to spot the signs of poor mental health, the confidence to start a conversation, and the knowledge to signpost to professional help. This leads to lifesaving conversations. MHFA England training helps to empower people to normalise conversations about mental health. MHFA England training also encourages regular conversations about wellbeing through effective one to one's, check in's, and meetings.

If you are having empathetic, regular conversations about wellbeing and work, you are more likely to spot signs of poor mental health. Find out more about how to design and implement effective people management conversations through MHFA England's [My Whole Self resources](#).

We must not shy away from the word suicide. By avoiding using it we can contribute to shame and stigma. One of the most important questions you can ask, if you are concerned about someone, is if they are thinking of suicide or have a plan to end their life. Our research shows that only one in ten people know to ask this question.²

Our 'Suicide. Let's Talk.' resource helps you and your colleagues become more suicide aware. It gives advice on how to support someone experiencing suicide thoughts or behaviour.

[Download the poster here](#)

[Download the digital resource](#)

2. <https://mhfaengland.org/mhfa-centre/news/suicide-awareness-and-prevention-training-in-the-workplace/>

Have support in place



Supportive conversations about mental health, and an awareness of suicide prevention, can help tackle the silence and stigma around suicide and encourage people to seek support. For this to be effective, your people need to know where to signpost people to get the help they need.

The more proactive we are, if we think someone is struggling with their mental health or thoughts of suicide, the more lives can be saved.

If someone is at immediate risk of attempting suicide or has harmed themselves, dial 999.

If someone is having thoughts of suicide, even if they don't have a plan to end their life, encourage them to: Call Samaritans on 116 123, text 'SHOUT' to 85258 or call Hopeline247 on 0800 068 4141.

Depending on the severity of the situation, internal workplace support could involve:

- Speaking to one of your organisation's MHFAiders®
- Contacting an employee assistance programme or occupational health team
- Speaking to HR about reasonable adjustments to an individual's role or working patterns
- Making people aware of organisations that can help

Whatever support is available make sure that it is promoted widely via posters, presentations, and internal communications. This is where having suicide prevention included in your mental health and wellbeing strategy will be effective. It will ensure that people have clear guidelines of processes and pathways to follow.



Skilled managers

Good management doesn't happen accidentally. Employers must give managers the tools, time, and training to do the job of managing well. This supports productivity, as well as mental health and wellbeing.



By building strong working relationships, we can provide people with purpose and satisfaction in what they achieve in work. Managers can't solve everything for everyone, but strong relationships with their team will help identify when people are struggling, and support people to navigate challenges.

Our research found that most managers recognise it's part of their role to act on mental health (75%) but many don't know how to. A third of managers (33%) feel out of their depth supporting their team with mental health concerns.³

Managers must have the skills and confidence to have conversations about mental health and suicide prevention, and the knowledge to signpost to support. This must be championed by senior management, ensuring everyone understands the role of the people manager and the organisation's commitment to mental health and wellbeing.

Managers also need support themselves. Our training helps them to manage their own mental health, as well as that of their people. As well as signposting for their team, they also need to know where to go for support themselves. This should be signposted and encouraged by HR.

3. <https://mhfaengland.org/mhfa-centre/press-office/press-resource/?id=7c8294c2-1da6-e811-8147-e0071b668081>

Postvention



Postvention is a crucial part of suicide prevention. It refers to activities or interventions offered to people affected by suicide. It is estimated that for every person that dies by suicide, 135 people are impacted.⁴ The Office for National Statistics data showed that 5,579 suicides were registered in 2023⁵. That is over 750,000 people affected last year alone and the impact will be felt for far longer than a year.

In addition, research shows that 38% of people bereaved by suicide will go on to have suicidal thoughts themselves.⁶ And, 9% of people bereaved by suicide will go on to make a suicide attempt themselves.⁷ By responding to suicide bereavement, we can help prevent more lives being lost to suicide.

It's essential that employers include postvention in their suicide prevention planning. There should be a plan in place to respond if the workplace, or an individual in the workplace, is bereaved by suicide. The priority is to provide wellbeing support to those employees affected, as well as anyone who is supporting others. Employers also need to consider their communications.

Our friends at the Support After Suicide Partnership are experts on suicide postvention. They support a range of organisations to adopt best practice in suicide bereavement service provision. They have lots of resources which can help employers develop their plans.

Support After Suicide Partnership resources

4. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29512876/>

5. [https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/quarterlysuicidedeathregistrationsinengland/2001to2022registrationsandquarter1jantomartoquarter4octtodec2023provisionaldata#:~:text=In%202023%2C%205%2C579%20suicides%20were,the%20coronavirus%20\(COVID%2D19\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/quarterlysuicidedeathregistrationsinengland/2001to2022registrationsandquarter1jantomartoquarter4octtodec2023provisionaldata#:~:text=In%202023%2C%205%2C579%20suicides%20were,the%20coronavirus%20(COVID%2D19))

6. <https://suicidebereavementuk.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/From-Grief-to-Hope-Report.pdf>

7. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4735143/>

What next ?

MHFA England's training and consultancy can help create supportive cultures where wellbeing and productivity thrive. We have the expertise to help you put clear actionable plans in place to support those having thoughts of suicide and those impacted by suicide.

Together we will create a strategy that focuses on prevention and intervention, as well as supporting you to manage the ripple effect of those bereaved by suicide, if the worst should happen.

Find out more

Email us at workplace@mhfaengland.org about your requirements.



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