

## Embracing a workplace wellbeing culture: A course for pharmacy managers and leaders

### Module 2: Supplementary materials on suicidal feelings and harmful behaviours

We have included some further information on suicide and support. We hope this helps you to feel more confident talking to someone if they are suicidal. Talking about suicide makes it less likely a suicidal person will act on these feelings.

#### Signs an employee may be experiencing suicidal feelings

- There are obvious and less obvious signs someone is feeling suicidal.
- The more obvious signs can be talking about feeling suicidal or wanting to die, or talking about suicide in general, including ways to die by suicide.
- Less obvious language may include someone talking about feeling hopeless, or that there's no point to anything, or not wanting to carry on, or that people would be better off without them.
- Behaviours that can indicate someone may be suicidal include anger, reckless activities, an increase in alcohol or drug use, withdrawing from friends or family, feeling continuously low, anxious, or agitated, or are constantly unable to sleep or sleep all the time. Giving away one's possessions can be a sign too.
- Sometimes a person may display no signs that may indicate to others they are feeling suicidal.
- If you have any concerns someone may be suicidal, the best thing can be to ask them.
- Understanding the signs someone may be suicidal and having the confidence to speak to them about how they feel can save lives.

[Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust](#) has some further information on suicide warning signs that you may find helpful.

If you are interested in finding more about suicide prevention, Zero Suicide Alliance has gateway (5-10 minutes) and full (20 minutes) [online suicide awareness training](#).

You could also consider becoming a mental health first aider by taking training through an organisation such as [Mental Health First Aid England](#) or [St Johns Ambulance](#).

## Suicide myths and facts

With the help of information from the Samaritans and Mental Health First Aid England, in the table on the slide we have listed six common myths about suicide and the facts.

Myths	Facts
You can't ask someone if they're suicidal in case it increases their risk.	Evidence shows asking and talking about suicide reduces risk
People who talk about suicide aren't serious and won't go through with it.	Many people who die by suicide talked about feeling suicidal.
If a person is serious about ending their life then there's nothing you can do.	Often suicidal thoughts are temporary and getting support at the right time can prevent suicide.
People who are suicidal want to die.	Often people simply want to stop feeling how they feel. The right support can achieve this.
You can't tell when someone is feeling suicidal	Even if someone has not mentioned they are suicidal, there are signs you can look out for (as mentioned above)
If someone who has been suicidal or has experienced ongoing distress suddenly appears better, this means the risk of a suicide attempt is over.	This may actually increase risk because the person feels relieved that they have made a decision

## Helping an employee who feels suicidal to access support

In extreme situations, a colleague may disclose or indicate they have suicidal thoughts. You may have your own safeguarding procedures to follow in this circumstance. If an employee has an immediate plan to act on suicidal thoughts, they need to seek urgent help. This could be by speaking to their GP, calling a local NHS crisis line, or their mental health team if they have one. If their life is in danger they can go to any A&E department to speak to someone about how they feel. You can provide support to them when making these calls, or you could make the call for them if necessary.

If a person has acted on suicidal thoughts, then they or someone will need to call 999 and call for an ambulance.

For people who are feeling suicidal but do not have immediate plans to act on these thoughts, the best first step is often speaking to their GP. This would be to explore appropriate support. Other options could be to reach out organisations who specialise in providing support to people who are suicidal. We have listed some below for you.

## **Samaritans**

[Samaritans](#) are available for anyone who's struggling to cope, who needs someone to listen without judgement or pressure.

## **PAPYRUS**

[PAPYRUS Prevention of Young Suicide](#) is a UK charity dedicated to the prevention of suicide and the promotion of positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in young people.

## **Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM)**

[Campaign Against Living Miserably \(CALM\)](#) is a mental health charity and helpline with a focus on preventing male suicide.

## **Local NHS urgent mental health helplines in England**

[NHS urgent mental health](#) helplines are for people of all ages in England.

## **Self -harm**

Self-harm (sometimes known as self-injury) is a behaviour that some people may experience when in distress, and often this is due to the symptoms of one or more mental health problems. Self -harm is a term that covers a wide of range of actions.

This can include cutting or burning your skin, hitting yourself or banging yourself into walls, pulling out large amounts of hair, or poisoning yourself with medication.

Self-harm can be a way to cope with distress or to communicate distress to others.

## **Signs an employee may be self-harming**

As we have discussed, there are different types of self-harm. Also, self-harm is often a very secretive behaviour. Therefore, there may not be obvious signs a member of your pharmacy team is self-harming at work. However, for someone who is burning or cutting themselves, there may be signs this is happening. The self-injury charity [Life Signs](#) lists some of the things which could indicate an employee is experiencing emotional distress and relying on self-harm.

- Obvious cuts, scratches or burns that do not appear of an accidental nature
- Frequent 'accidents' that cause physical injury
- Regularly bandaged arms and / or wrists
- Taking more time off work sick
- Taking more time to visit the doctor or hospital
- Wearing long sleeves and trousers even during hot weather
- Reluctance to wear a short-sleeved uniform.



## Helping an employee who self-harms to access support

If you discover that an employee is self-harming, you can support them to get help from their GP, or perhaps an employee assistance programme. It could also be the case that [counselling via Pharmacist Support](#) can help. Of course, if there is immediate harm that needs medical attention, you may need to support the employee to access urgent or emergency medical help.

## Mental health problems and harm to others

Research has shown that people with mental health problems are far more likely to harm themselves or be harmed by others, than to cause harm to others. However, if someone is at immediate risk of harming others, emergency help through 999 is always the best option.