Highland Community Planning Partnership

Suicide Prevention Scotland.

The Impact of Suicide

A short film for communities, workplaces and groups

Guidance notes

On average 135 people will be impacted by one suicide, some more than others and whilst some may feel guilty for a variety of reasons by the person's loss, others may feel they have no right to be grieving at all.

The aim of this film is to raise awareness of the much wider impact that a suicide can have both to individuals and to people around them. To highlight the importance of self-care and reaching out for support at an early stage and to help signpost people to access support, regardless of their relationship to the person who has died by or attempted suicide.

These guidance notes are designed to support anyone sharing this film in person or online within their community, workplace or group to ensure everyone's safety and wellbeing.

Before the session

Think about who is delivering this session

- Are they confident in talking about suicide with compassion and understanding?
- Do they understand the impact of stigma and language on people who are feeling suicidal or have been bereaved by suicide?
- Are they able to respond to someone expressing suicidal thoughts or distress?
- Do they have a good understanding of where to signpost someone in need of support?
- Do they have access to support and debrief?

Think about the space and environment

Whether delivering this in person or online, people should be made aware of the content and purpose of the film allowing them to make an informed choice to be part of the conversation. Your communication with them should include:

- Are you comfortable talking and hearing about suicide? Suicide can be an emotive subject and it may trigger the recall of professional and personal experiences?
- Do you have support to deal with any issues that may arise?
- Do you have any questions/concerns about attending the course?

If delivering in person...

- Is the space private and free from risk of interruption?
- Is there an alternative area should anyone want to opt out of the session or a timeout zone?

If delivering online…

- Deliver with two people: a presenter and an observer/supporter
- Ask the person to consider who is within ear shot of their device
- Ensure people have a means of contacting you during the session should they need to reach out
- Leave camera on (if online).

During the session

Whether in person or online, always:

- Share the 'Impacted by Suicide' leaflet – these can be ordered here or downloaded using this link
- Establish group guidelines, even if this is a group of people who already know each other and regularly meet. This can include:
  - Listen and respect each other's views and experiences
  - Be kind
  - What is said the space, stays in the space. Share your story but no-one else's
  - If someone leaves the space, seek agreement that a presenter will give them a minute and then check in with them
- Always use non-judgmental, person-first language (e.g. "person experiencing suicidal thoughts", "die by suicide"). Avoid stigmatising language such as "committed/commit suicide". You can view Samaritans' communications guidelines to know how to appropriately speak about suicide.

When showing the film:

- Provide another gentle content warning
- Briefly outline the film's purpose (e.g., raising awareness, starting safe conversations, highlighting help seeking)
- Reinforce that people can pause or step out if needed.

After the viewing:

- You might ask, what message stood out to you? What feels important? How does it feel talking/asking about suicide or distressing feelings?
- It's ok to allow people to share personal/professional experiences and validate them. However gently redirect conversation if someone's personal story is dominating, making sure to follow up with them at the end of the session to signpost them to support if necessary.
- Emphasise that suicide is preventable.
- Highlight hope, resilience, and real pathways to support.
- Reiterate support information and the strength there is in talking to someone.

Support

- Free training is available to people working (paid or unpaid) with communities: Suicide Intervention and Prevention Programme
- Sources of support are available on the Highland Mental Wellbeing website.
- Download the Highland Prevent Suicide app.
- Find out more about Suicide Prevention Scotland.