

Policy on Suicidal Callers

Purpose and background

It is important to note that there is very little chance that a volunteer or a member of staff will ever receive a call from someone expressing feelings of suicide or an inability to go on, but this policy is in place should that ever happen.

A caller may express thoughts of self harm, self injury or even suicide but this does not mean that it will lead to any resulting action. They may simply need to talk things through

Scope of the guidance

This policy applies to all employees and volunteers of Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust when dealing with service users, volunteers or members of the public.

Suicidal people and confidentiality

Confidentiality means that personal information disclosed by the vulnerable person will not be shared with a third party without their expressed permission.

There are some exceptional circumstances where staff or volunteers may need to break confidentiality without permission of the individual concerned. Examples of this might be if the person discloses that they have the intention to harm themselves or others.

Boundaries of the Guidance

Staff and volunteers are not expected to make assessments of a person's mental health or capacity. Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust does not have a specific remit to directly support people experiencing suicidal feelings. There are a number of other UK based organisations, services and healthcare professionals that directly help people experiencing suicidal thoughts and feelings and we encourage our staff and volunteers to signpost anyone with suicidal feelings to those services. Specifically The Samaritans provide this service and their helpline number is **116 123**.

Actions where there are concerns about a person causing serious self harm

If there are concerns about a service user, volunteer or member of the public causing serious harm to themselves, staff and volunteers are asked to do the following:

- The staff member or volunteer seeks support from any member of the Support Services Team as soon as they have concerns about the person. If the concern arises outside of normal working hours, the staff member or volunteer should contact the Helpline Manager or Head of Support Services.
- The details of the call or conversation should be documented (including date and time) and an attempt should be made to ascertain any action the person has taken or might be about to take.
- The staff member or volunteer will encourage anyone that states they have taken action to harm themselves to contact the emergency services immediately. If the person is reluctant or unable to do so, the staff member or volunteer will explain we will contact the emergency services on their behalf.

- Where someone expresses suicidal feelings, but have not taken any self harming actions, staff members or volunteers will firmly encourage the person to seek appropriate support from a GP, other health professional or relevant organisation. You may have to, with the support of the Helpline Manager or Head of Support Services, make the decision as to whether the situation warrants breaking confidentiality in order to contact the emergency services or an identified health professional involved in the person's care e.g. GP.

Guidance

Written guidance in the form of a Suicidal People Support Framework has been developed. This is a practical tool to assist staff and volunteers in managing situations where suicide is discussed and covers where a service user, volunteer or member of the public:

- Hints or implies suicidal feelings or thoughts
- States that they have been thinking seriously of committing suicide, or have been planning suicide
- States they have already taken some action to end their lives e.g. taken pills, or seriously self harmed.

Suicidal People Support Framework

Is there an immediate and serious risk of harm? Consider factors such as:

- Have they taken any action already? E.g. taken tablets, cutting themselves, in a position of danger (railway line/cliff top etc.)
- Do they have a plan of how to end their life? What is the plan?
- Are they alone or isolated?



Yes

Immediate and Serious Risk - threat of serious harm to the person

- Notify the Helpline Manager or Head of Support Services
- Encourage the person to contact someone for help or offer to make contact on their behalf e.g. GP, 999, CNS, A&E
- Clarify any action taken e.g. which/how many pills taken



Accepts Help

Individual makes contact with someone themselves or gives permission for you to make contact on their behalf

OR

The Helpline Manager /Head of Support Services decides to breach confidentiality and call 999 or other services on their behalf

AND

Inform person of the action you are taking

Refuses Help

Continue to encourage them to get help

AND

The Helpline Manager / Head of Support Services decides to breach confidentiality and call 999 or other services on their behalf

AND

Inform person of the action you are taking



No

Low Immediate risk

Encourage them to speak to someone about their feelings – GP, Samaritans (116 123), Doctor or Nurse, Family and Friends

Offer information about organisations that can help e.g. health and social care organisations, support groups etc.

IN ALL CASES

- Use your listening and questioning skills, explore feelings and offer support – avoid making judgements. Signpost people to organisations that can assist – refer to list of useful organisations.
- Try to understand what the person wants from you – not caring or being ambivalent about the outcome may be warning signs.
- If cancer is cited as a reason for suicidal thoughts, provide further information and signpost to cancer information and support services including support lines.