

Contacting the mental health team

If you have concerns that your relative's suicide risk has increased at any time, contact their mental health team.

Use the office hours number or the out of hours number listed on the care plan.

Mental health staff will welcome you raising concerns, and will be able to give you advice or take any actions that will be required, such as making an urgent appointment or home visit.

Useful organisations

Maytree – short-term residential care for people who are suicidal

www.maytree.org.uk

0207 263 7070

Mind – www.mind.org.uk

020 8519 2122

Search their website for the information pack titled: "Supporting someone who feels suicidal"

Papyrus – prevention of young suicide

www.papyrus-uk.org

Rethink Mental Illness

www.rethink.org

Samaritans – www.samaritans.org.uk

116 123 (24-hour support)

Contact us

Suicide Prevention Lead
Nursing & Quality Directorate
Fromeside (East) Admin
Blackberry Hill Hospital
Bristol
BS16 2EW

anthony.harrison@nhs.net

For information about Trust services visit

www.awp.nhs.uk

PALS

To make a comment, raise a concern or make a complaint, please contact the Trust's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).

Tel: 01225 362900

Freephone: 0800 073 1778

Email: awp.pals@nhs.net

Other formats and languages

If you need this information in another format (such as large print or Braille) or another language, please call the PALS number.

Lead: Suicide Prevention Lead

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Guidance to help support a person who may be suicidal



This leaflet helps to support the care that someone is receiving from mental health services. It does not contain an exhaustive list of all the likely needs of carers. Always discuss your individual needs with your relative's care coordinator.

Important note

It is important to remember that you are not the only person with a role in helping to keep them safe. We recognise your input in contributing to their care and safety; this is shared with mental health services.

Why do people consider ending their life?

There is often a complex combination of reasons. These are often related to being depressed, alcohol and drug misuse, relationship difficulties, physical health problems, unemployment and bereavement. However, sometimes it is not possible to identify any specific reason.

Suicidal behaviour and self-harm

Often self-harm is not an attempt by the person to end their life. However, people who self-harm are at a greater risk of suicide than the general population and should never be dismissed as just wanting attention.

How do I know if my relative is suicidal?

As there are many reasons why a person may feel suicidal, it can be difficult for other people to identify specific signs that might suggest that the person is thinking about ending their life.

What might I notice?

There are a number of signs that might alert you to someone's suicidal feelings, including:

- references to death or suicide, or suggesting that others will be "better off without me".
- a sense of hopelessness, feelings of failure, low self-esteem, being self-critical.

- expressing dark thoughts about themselves and/or their family.
- a change in behaviour, including an uncharacteristic calmness or spending more time alone.
- unexpectedly setting affairs in order, such as making a will.
- neglecting themselves, by eating poorly or not caring about their appearance.
- anger that current treatment does not seem to have made things better.

But sometimes there are no warning signs.

What can I expect from services?

When your relative is under the care of mental health services, they will have a written care plan. This sets out things that need to be done by them or others in a crisis. You can ask your relative or their care coordinator for a copy.

As the person's close family member, staff should take your role in helping to support the person into account when planning their care. Sometimes the person may have asked staff not to discuss details of their care and treatment; but this does not mean that they cannot listen to you and respond sensitively to any concerns you may have.

What can I do to help?

1. Encourage them to cooperate fully with the treatment they are receiving – including taking their medication and not stock-piling it
2. Reassure them that they are valued and loved and that people care about them

3. Listen to their concerns however exaggerated or unrealistic these may sound, accepting that these are very real and distressing for them
4. Ask about things you can do to help them feel safer or less despairing
5. Talking about depressed or suicidal feelings is a good thing, and will not put ideas into the other person's head.

If you are worried about their risk of suicide, you may have thought about trying to make things safer by removing objects such as knives or tablets. It is best to talk to them about this, so they understand why you may want to take temporary responsibility for things, such as looking after their medication, or suggesting that they do not drive, or are not left alone.

Do not hesitate to discuss with staff how else you might need help.

Taking care of yourself

Trying to support a relative who may be suicidal can be very stressful. You can expect staff to discuss your role in the person's care with you. This opportunity can be a useful way of helping to reduce your stress. If you are unclear about anything, please raise this with their care coordinator, as they will be very happy to have this conversation.