

Step by Step service

Step by Step is a Samaritans service that provides practical support to help young people's educational services settings recover from an attempted or suspected suicide.

In addition to the support Samaritans branches offer, Step by Step's Postvention Advisors give advice and guidance to senior management teams to help them respond effectively and reduce the risk of further suicides.

What is a Postvention Advisor?

Postvention Advisors are experienced Samaritans listening volunteers who have undertaken specialist training in postvention (what to do after a suspected suicide). They work as part of an organisation-wide team, and work with all branches to support schools and colleges across the UK and ROI.

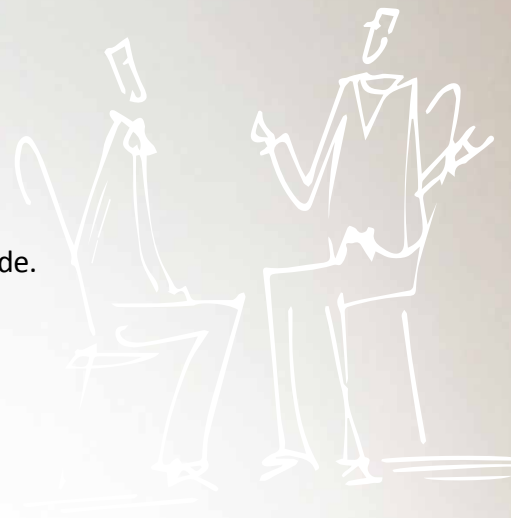
Why Step by Step?

Samaritans offers this service to support the organisation and their community and to reduce the risk of further suicide. Research on 'copycat' suicides, otherwise known as contagion, and bereavement by suicide tells us that:

- In young people especially, exposure to suicide can lead to increased risk of suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts for an extended period of time, sometimes years following the suicide.
 - People bereaved by the sudden death of a friend or family member are 65% more likely to attempt suicide if the deceased died by suicide than if they died by natural causes.
 - Contagion appears stronger in adolescence as a result of their development stage where there is a need for acceptance, belonging, and approval by peers.
 - Young adults who have been exposed to suicide bereavement may be at increased risk of suicide attempts compared with young adults bereaved by other causes of death, whether they were related to the deceased or not.
 - The period immediately following a suspected suicide is critical – risk of 'copycat' suicide is highest during the first few weeks after a suicide.
- The implication of not addressing what has happened can increase the stigma; facts may be distorted by rumour or speculation and those affected may not seek help due to feelings of isolation and blame.

What are the service aims?

- To reach out to high risk communities to reduce the risk of further suicide.
- To enable the community to be prepared for, respond to and recover from a suspected or attempted suicide.
- To prevent stigma and isolation within the community.



What does the service offer?

- Talks to staff and students about who Samaritans are and what we do.
- Posters, leaflets, cards and information for relevant staff and students.
- Talks for staff and students after a suspected suicide.
- Emotional support for staff and students, in branch, by phone, email, text or letter or on location.
- Third party referral.
- Talk on postvention for stakeholders.
- Support with media and press for staff and student press.
- Information leaflets for staff, students and friends on coping after a suspected suicide.
- Guidance booklet on key principles in postvention.
- Phone and face to face ongoing support and advice for staff.
- Templates and scripts for communications.
- Support with funerals, memorials and vigils.
- Support with anniversaries.

How does the service do this?

When Step by Step receives news of a suspected suicide or receives a request for support or information via our email or phone, a Postvention Advisor is allocated and responds, offering support and practical advice to the management team. The Postvention Advisor also contacts the local

Samaritans branch and together advise the organisation and provide any emotional support that may be needed by staff. Support is available for as long as the staff feel they need it. We provide follow up contacts to offer any further support that may be needed as the establishment begins its recovery.

Contact the Step by Step team

✉ stepbystep@samaritans.org

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