

THINK 'CARE'

What to do if somebody may be at risk of suicide or self-harm:
a step-by-step guide for professionals and the general public in Bradford

1 Concern

Is the person:

1. In obvious mental distress?
2. Looking for means to harm or kill themselves (e.g. collecting tablets?)
3. Talking about death or hopelessness?
4. Making preparations like arranging someone to look after pets, saying goodbyes, or giving away possessions?
5. Experiencing a stressful event such as bereavement or breakdown, job loss, or a medical diagnosis?
6. Increasing their alcohol use or using drugs?
7. Displaying a significant change in mood e.g. anxiety, agitation, low mood?
8. Displaying a significant change in appearance, personal hygiene or weight?

These questions may help you think through whether you should be concerned about the person you are supporting. None of them on their own are an indication of suicide risk.

2 Ask

Have you had thoughts of taking your own life?
Are they present now?

3 Respond

Take the person seriously - allow them time to talk
Don't judge them, and try not to act shocked
If they are in immediate physical danger – dial 999

4 Explain and act

Explain you can't keep this information to yourself: *'I am worried about you and I need to do something'*

Consider contacting Bradford's First Response Service, which is the first port of call for anyone, of any age, experiencing a mental health crisis in Bradford, Airedale, Wharfedale and Craven. Either you or the person you are supporting can make the call, and they do not have to have used any mental health services before. The call will be assessed by a trained mental health worker, and they will either offer advice and guidance or – if the situation is urgent – a mental health professional will be dispatched.

If the person is under 18, you should also consider informing their family /carer. If you have a safeguarding concern you should contact Social Services on **01274 437500** (weekday daytime) **01274 431010** (out of hours)

The Samaritans offer a 24 hour, confidential listening service, and are available on 01274 547547 (local number) or 116 123 (national free hotline).

Bradford First Response Service:
01274 221181

MYTH-BUSTING: SOME COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT SUICIDE

Myth: Asking someone about suicide will put the idea in their head and make them more likely to kill themselves.

Reality: It is safer to ask about suicide than not to ask about suicide; research shows that it is not dangerous to ask. People often find great relief in being able to openly talk about their thoughts and feelings about suicide.

Myth: Talking about suicide is attention seeking behaviour.

Reality: Anyone considering suicide needs to be taken seriously. They may be in pain/feel hopeless. Most people who die by suicide have talked about it first.

Myth: Thinking about suicide means someone is mentally ill.

Reality: Many people who have thoughts of suicide have no mental illness.

Myth: If someone tells a professional about their thoughts of suicide, they will be sectioned under the Mental Health Act

Reality: A 'section' is only used when three people (an Approved Mental Health Professional or nearest relative and two doctors) agree that the person is suffering from a mental disorder and needs to be detained for assessment or treatment, either for their own safety or the safety of others.

Myth: Most suicides happen with no warning.

Reality: Most people struggling with thoughts of suicide find a way to communicate that they need help, sometimes at an unconscious level. However, sometimes these warning signs can be missed, dismissed or avoided. It is important to be alert to potential warning signs.

Myth: If someone is talking about suicide, it means they are less likely to attempt suicide.

Reality: Many people who attempt or die by suicide give verbal or non-verbal signs to others beforehand. Someone talking about suicide may only just be holding on to life. Any suggestion of suicidal thoughts should always be taken seriously.

Myth: If someone wants to kill themselves, there is nothing that can be done to stop them.

Reality: Suicide can be a preventable death. Research tells us that most people who are suicidal are not 100% decided about dying. A part of them wants to live, and needs help to find a way to stay alive. Doubts about suicide can remain up to and including the point of dying.

Myth: If someone is suicidal it's none of my business - only mental health professionals can help.

Reality: Suicide prevention is everybody's business. Anyone can learn to support someone who is suicidal. Caring enough to get involved can make a real difference to someone's life.