

Working together to prevent suicide in the ambulance service:

A national consensus statement for England

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Public Health
England



ASSOCIATION OF
AMBULANCE
CHIEF EXECUTIVES



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Health Education England

Working together to prevent suicide in the ambulance service



This consensus statement sets out our shared commitment to lead sustainable improvement in suicide prevention across the ambulance sector, focusing on promoting good mental health and wellbeing, providing care and support when needed, and ensuring a positive culture.

Any death by suicide is a tragic loss of life and devastating for those who knew the individual. While multiple factors often contribute to a person's decision to die by suicide, this is preventable with timely and effective intervention.

The accompanying publication *Prevention of suicide in the ambulance service: what we know* presents the evidence for an increased risk of suicide among ambulance staff compared to the general population. It does not identify a single driver of suicide risk in the ambulance sector; rather the collective risk factors that negatively impact on overall mental health and wellbeing.

The evidence supports a holistic approach to suicide prevention; one that targets the range of potential stressors that impact on overall mental health and wellbeing, responds to staff at increased risk or in crisis, and fosters an open and supportive culture.



In partnership, we will:

Focus on protecting and promoting the mental health and wellbeing of all ambulance service staff

We will take action to ensure that the ambulance service protects and promotes the mental health and wellbeing of all staff.

- Empower staff to recognise and talk about occupational triggers for poor mental health and wellbeing.
- Improve the preparedness of students and new staff, through education and support.
- Support all staff to recognise, protect and manage their own mental health and wellbeing.
- Commit to better understanding the supportive role played by the families and loved ones of ambulance staff, and work to ensure that they are appropriately supported.

Provide timely access to evidence-based support for those in need

We will take action to ensure that all ambulance service staff have access to the mental health and wellbeing support they need, when they need it.

- Support ambulance trusts to both identify staff at increased risk of poor mental health and wellbeing and encourage staff to recognise and act on any deterioration in their mental health and wellbeing.
- Work to provide open and timely access to confidential support, which is both evidence-based and appropriate to the individual level of need.
- Recognise and provide for the ongoing mental health and wellbeing needs of staff whose employment with the service ends, either through retirement or for other reasons.

Work to shift organisational culture to one that prioritises mental health and wellbeing and removes stigma

We will take action to support a shift in culture across the ambulance sector – to one that prioritises the mental health and wellbeing of staff and challenges stigma related to mental ill health.

- Support ambulance trusts to normalise conversations about mental health and wellbeing and help-seeking behaviour.
- Recognise that mental health and wellbeing are fluid and that individual staff will respond differently to occupational and personal circumstances.
- Support line managers at all levels to identify and respond to the mental health and wellbeing needs of their staff.
- Change working practices that are not conducive to promoting mental wellbeing by reviewing shift patterns, working hours, home and lone working, breaks and job allocations.

Recommendations for the collaborative delivery of this national consensus statement are set out in the accompanying publication *Working together to prevent suicide in the ambulance service: next steps*.

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