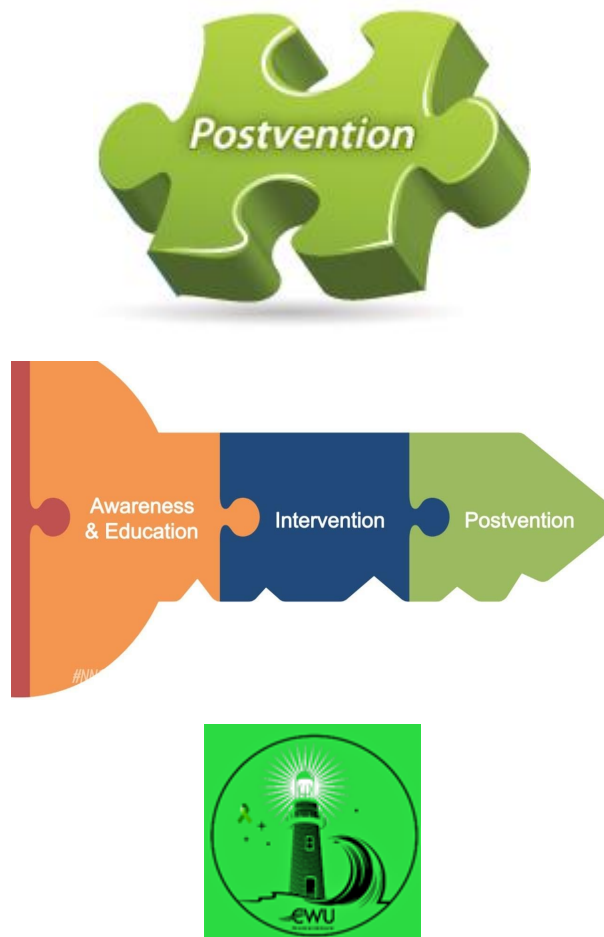


POSTVENTION PLANNING- WHY WE NEED IT AND WHAT IT IS...



We must ALWAYS be prepared and ready and able to respond and provide **robust Mental Health support appropriately** when any tragic event occurs – the reality is that we must ensure that each region has a robust CWU suicide response plan (SRP) in order to provide the right type of support for CWU members and CWU Reps when they have suffered a workplace bereavement or worker bereavement linked to suicide.

What is Postvention?

Postvention refers to the actions taken to provide support after someone dies by suicide. Effective support can help people to grieve and recover and is a **critical element in preventing further suicides from happening.**

There is no single right way to respond to suicide, but effective postvention response plans can ensure that timely

and appropriate care and support is provided. In addition, there is no single or right way to grieve, so open dialogue with colleagues is essential to put in place the most appropriate support for each employee. This can help individuals recover quicker, manage the impact on the organisation and can reduce the risk of further deaths by suicide.

Support after suicide.

An employee dying by suicide is not the only death that can have a significant impact on the workplace, the death by suicide of family or a friend of an employee can also have a profound impact.

Any supporting Trade Unions leadership can play a critical role in setting the tone for how the rest of the staff will respond to a suicide. Building a culture of openness around suicide, as well as general mental health and wellbeing, is one way that support after a suicide can be most effective. Talking about what has happened **will not increase the risk of imitational suicides within a work force**: handled well it can be critical to coming to terms with the death and moving forward.

Key Fact- Suicide postvention is a crisis intervention strategy **designed to reduce the risk of suicide contagion** & provide the support needed to help survivors cope with a suicide death and disseminate information about the need for support after suicide. Postvention particularly refers to the actions taken to support in the workplace or working community after someone dies by suicide.



Click this link for further [PUBLIC HEALTH ENGLAND SUPPORT GUIDANCE](#)

Grief after suicide

Bereavement after suicide is often called 'grief with the volume turned up'. Alongside sadness and loss can be feelings of anger, shame and guilt. Some people react by feeling numb. **All of these responses are normal.** Many find that bereavement by suicide can lead to complex feelings, affecting different people in different ways. Some feel it would be easier to explain the death in a different way. Others may not know what to say.

This complex grief can complicate how to respond to those bereaved by suicide. There won't be just one way to respond, or a set pattern to the grief of those affected by the loss. This makes it essential to see each affected employee as someone with their own specific support needs which may change over time.

Communicating after a suicide

Effective, open and direct communication is crucial when responding to the suicide of an employee. It is also one of the things that CWU Representatives report as struggling with the most.

Today's immediate communication culture and the speed at which information spreads via social media means any Regional postvention group **needs to**

**be ready to communicate quickly, appropriately
and sensitively to everyone affected in the workplace**

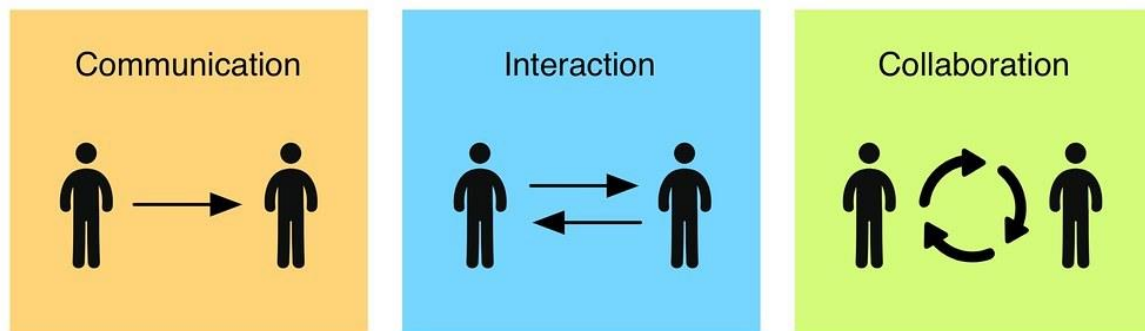
Even before any official announcement, there may
already be a great deal of inaccurate information

circulating which can be particularly harmful. **Effective communication will form part of a multi
layered guide for what the CWU response should be within the crucial first 72 hours post suicide.**

Q-Why is the first 72 crucial?

1. This is because of the urgent & foreseeable need for psychological support **in the immediate
aftermath of any suicide** & the foreseeable reality is that that the **very first-person**
colleagues turn to is the local CWU Representative.

Who to communicate with and when



You may find it helpful to **map who the
priority people to contact may likely to be in the
event of an employee suicide.** This may

be the family/partner of the colleague who
has died and the team in which they worked,
moving outwards from there. It may not be
as simple as proximity to the individual who
has died, but that can be your starting point.

When considering your communications,
draw your circles of impact (work teammates,
close work friends, direct contacts), considering
their demographics (younger/older members

of staff, faith/religious beliefs, how long they have been a friend or colleague of the deceased) and any other relevant factors that may affect how they may respond.

Communicating with these key groups swiftly and in order of impact can prevent problems further down the line.

Circle 1

- **Workplace or immediate team colleagues**
- **colleagues who were close friends or relatives of the deceased**
- **Local Trade union Rep/s and Line manager**

Circle 2

- **Other local surrounding work teams**
- **ex/retired colleagues from the Workplace**
- **social groups associated with the deceased through work**

Circle 3

- **wider trusted employees**
- **senior management**
- **customers who may have interacted with the deceased**

We are acutely aware from experience that this will be the hardest thing any local CWU Rep has to ever deal with. It's not an obligatory task but many CWU Reps will take this task upon themselves to try and best support their work colleagues.

What we must do is identify who from the CWU should be involved immediately once notification of any tragic occurrence is received, for example-

We have to Consider How any Regional Post intervention committee should look & understand what support roles are covered and how they are covered- we must Identify who should sit on that committee and be responsible for postvention planning BEFORE a suicide occurs.

Identify Who acts as a the CWU nominated person as the point of contact with the Family, so as to Protect and respect the privacy rights of the deceased employee and carry out their loved ones wishes.

Identify those closest to the deceased who may need extra time off or extra specialist support both in and out of work

* Identify who in the area/region can support that workplace with listening sessions, for example MHFAs & ASIST & Phycological First Aid trained CWU persons.

*** Look at how we educate on both suicide prevention and postvention strategies and review our own support actions taken after the tragedy of any CWU member suicide.**

Forming a CWU postvention group in your Region – The Key 5 tasks

1. Remember - Postvention support does not just belong in one team or one Region. It belongs in ALL regions **but collaboration and cross-team working** across all UK regions is key to building an effective, comprehensive and standardised response. Region to Region we can learn from each other.

2. Identify individuals in your own region who will act on a postvention group.

These individuals will likely include **CWU Rep's, CWU Officer, MHFAs & ASIST & Psychological First Aid trained CWU people**, any Communications leader will be responsible for recording how effective the CWU suicide response plan was.

3. In the event of a suicide, the postvention group will also have a role in implementing the plan and in supporting those in direct contact with affected colleagues.

4. Make sure that Regional postvention group members are clearly identified, and that they understand the duties assigned to them and others across the union membership.

5. * Identify & Foster relationships with external offices and agencies (e.g. bereavement organisations such as CRUISE bereavement care and SOBS (Survivors of bereavement by suicide) And be ready to Prepare and share contact details and resources for those agreed external offices and agencies.

Answering the unanswerable questions

Another important consideration in a death by suicide is the ever-present but unanswerable **“Why did this happen?”, “Why didn’t they tell me how they were feeling?” and “What could I have done differently?”** questions that can linger on in some minds. CWU support teams and bereavement

support counsellors are unlikely to be able to answer these questions satisfactorily, nor should they try. Some suicidal people are able to hide their feelings and often describe not wanting to burden people they know with their feelings.

It is best to acknowledge that these are normal questions and encourage any affected person to talk it through with supportive family/friends or a mental health professional.

Typically, a mental health support advocate who is part of the postvention response group can sensitively encourage them to follow through with their professional services.

Ongoing co-ordination and communication between CWU postvention teams & local management and wellbeing support professionals is crucial to this process.

In the recovery phase you

should consider:

There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach, and every response needs to be tailored to the specifics of each work group/team situation and culture, as well as to each individual affected.

Create a culture that allows employees to disclose their needs and seek services confidentially – and where mental health is discussed without stigma.

When considering your response

make sure that you think about:

- circles of impact (work teammates, close work friends, direct reports);
- demographics of impacted employees (eg, younger and/or new employees versus senior employees; differences in faith etc.

- workplace schedules, demands, and proximity to any critical response event.

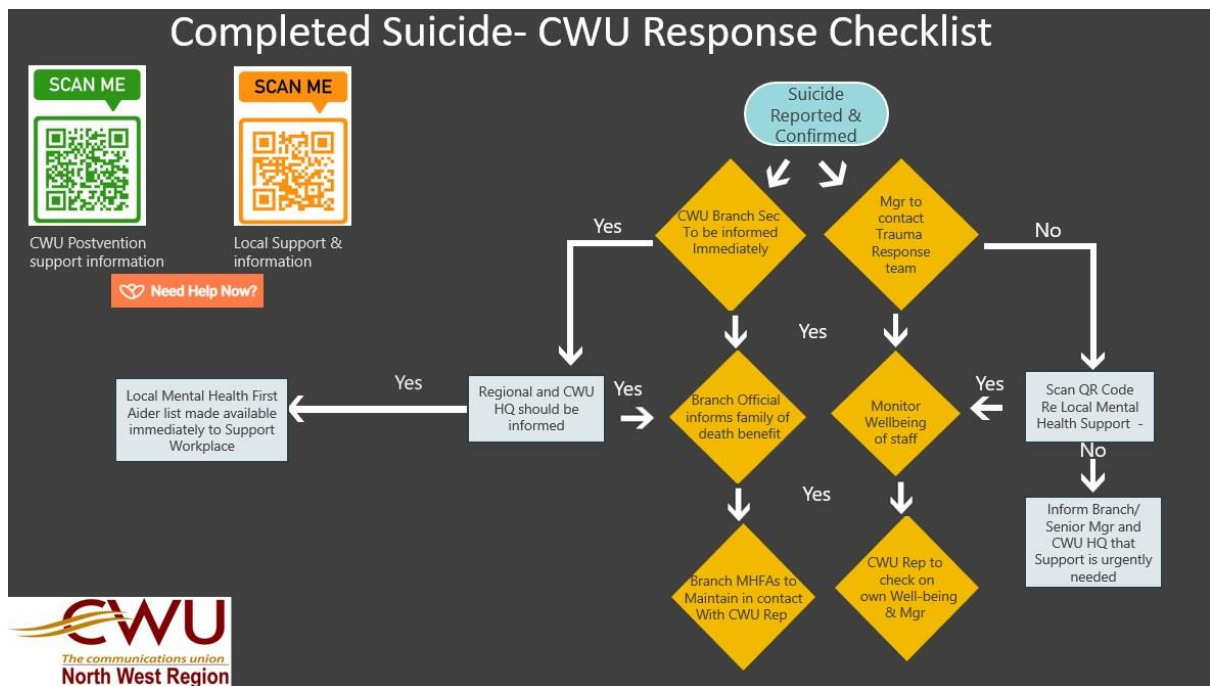
Suicide is the most difficult subject to bring to a discussion at work. But it is vitally important to give the fullest consideration to the implications of a workplace suicide in order to be able to provide the support that colleagues will need.

Suicide postvention should be a crucial element of any responsible trade union's strategy on mental health and wellbeing at work. We need to educate on what POSTVENTION plans and be ready to introduce them into every branch & region.

The flow chart below can give an example of how multi-level organisational support can look in terms of a Postvention strategy.

Quickly & Sensitively Report the death of any CWU member by suicide to both to your Region and also to CWU HQ





Prepare for reactions



It's Important we prepare to be ready for reactions to anniversaries, events and milestones.

For those most deeply affected by the

suicide, anniversary or milestone reactions might emerge. Employees should be reassured that this is a normal response.

Due to the complicated nature of suicide, some employees may still struggle with the experience months after many others have come to terms with their loss and are coping better. The anniversary of the death, or a work milestone may bring up sad or traumatic memories. The annual Christmas party might remind people of the 'empty chair

In preparation for this, the postvention group could consider working with those who are directly affected to discuss how to honour the loss and celebrate the life that was lived while following safe memorialisation practices e.g:

- not glamourising or romanticising the death
- not erecting a permanent structure
- giving people safe space or Quiet room to remember but not re-live.

This may be done privately for those who wish to participate and should only be considered for the full workforce if this would be a common practice for other forms of loss.

Finally, remember that there is professional Suicide bereavement support available.

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (SOBS)

<https://uksobs.org/>

is a national charity providing dedicated support to adults who have been bereaved by suicide.

Winston's Wish

<https://www.winstonswish.org/> Is the UK's childhood

bereavement charity, supporting children and their families after the

death of a parent or sibling.

At a Loss

<https://www.ataloss.org/>

can signpost you to local support groups and services, including those that specialise in support after suicide.

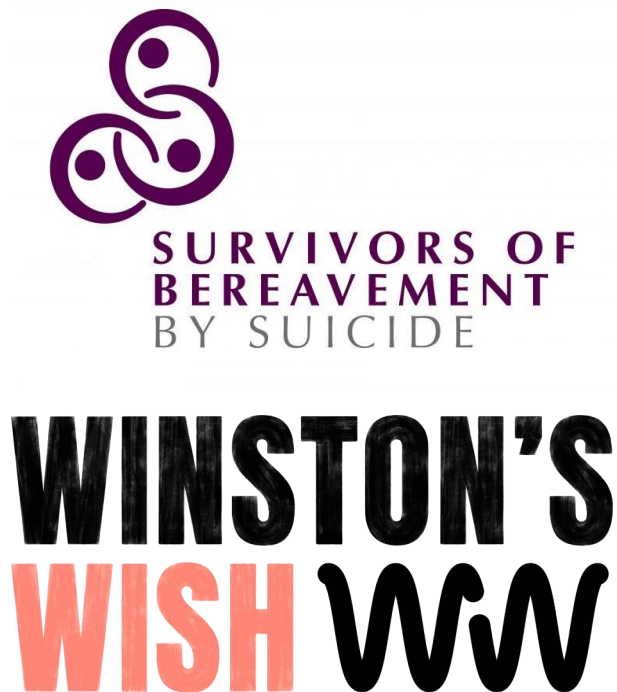
The Support after Suicide Partnership's

<https://supportaftersuicide.org.uk/>

website has information and resources on bereavement after suicide.

Help is at Hand

<https://supportaftersuicide.org.uk/resource/help-is-at-hand/> is a downloadable resource for people bereaved by suicide or other unexplained death,



At a
Loss.org

Signposting the
bereaved to support



Support
After Suicide
Partnership

Help is
at Hand

Support after someone may
have died by suicide

