

The Hertfordshire Suicide Prevention Network Charter

for the Sensitive Reporting of Suicide



Suicide prevention is everybody's business

By signing up to the Charter you are committing to do your best to report stories relating to suicide responsibly and sensitively, taking into account the needs of bereaved family members and friends and the most vulnerable members of the population:

- 1. Think about the impact of the coverage on your audience**
The story might have an effect on vulnerable individuals or people connected to the person who has died.
- 2. Be cautious when referring to the methods and context of a suicide**
Too much detail of suicide methods or excessive information that can lead others to identify with the person who has died may prompt vulnerable individuals to imitate suicidal behaviour.
- 3. Avoid over-simplification**
It is important not to brush over the complex realities of suicide and its devastating impact on those left behind. Never say a method is quick, easy, painless or certain to result in death.
- 4. Aim for sensitive, non-sensationalising coverage**
Report suicide as a tragic waste and avoidable loss but be wary of over-emphasising community expressions of grief.
- 5. Consider use of language carefully**
Choose language carefully to minimise distress to bereaved family members and friends. Avoid the term 'commit suicide'; use 'take one's own life' instead. Refer to the Samaritans media guidelines on the reporting of suicide for other suggestions.
- 6. Understand the potential impact of headlines**
Consider if the headline over-dramatises the story, details the method or uses sensationalist terms. Be careful not to promote the idea that suicide achieves results, such as a bully being exposed.
- 7. Avoid dramatic or emotional images and footage.**
Consider the impact of images and video on bereaved families and friends.
- 8. Consider the placement of the story carefully**
Where possible, refrain from positioning a story too prominently.
- 9. Educate and inform**
Refer to the wider issues associated with suicide, such as risk factors like alcohol misuse or mental health problems. Include references to suicide being preventable and provide information about sources of support.
- 10. Consult with your in-house guidelines or codes of practice before going live**
If in doubt, contact the Samaritans' Media Advisory Team 020 8394 8300 (during working hours) or 07850 312224 (out of working hours). Confidential briefings for media outlets are also available.

Signed: _____

On behalf of: _____



Hertfordshire Partnership
University NHS Foundation Trust

