

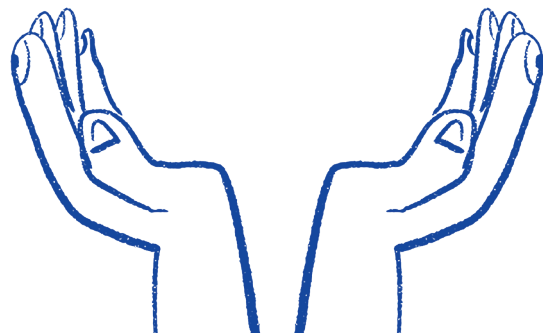
To support an employee bereaved by suicide, it is first important to understand what they may be experiencing.

Supporting an employee can be positive for all involved; you (as the employer) retain a valued employee, while the employee regains control, confidence and meaning in their life. This can also foster mutual support, respect and loyalty in the wider work force as they feel part of a supportive and compassionate team.

Leeds Mind Suicide Bereavement Services offer a safe space to talk and get practical guidance. All the Suicide Bereavement Practitioners at the service have been bereaved by suicide; they get it because they have been there.

You can benefit from our free support if you:

- Have lost anyone to suicide, such as: a friend, colleague or family member; someone you know professionally or an acquaintance
- Think someone ended their own life, even if an inquest has not been held or did not determine suicide as cause of death
- Have been affected by suicide but do not identify as bereaved, e.g. if you witnessed a death
- Were affected by a suicide months, years or decades ago
- Live or work in West Yorkshire and Craven



We offer

- Workplace group support for teams who have been impacted by suicide
- 1 to 1 and group peer support sessions
- Support for children and young people
- Emotional and practical support such as advocacy, signposting and referrals to other appropriate support
- Workshops and events
- Tailored training on the topic of suicide bereavement

Remember, supporting someone bereaved by suicide can be difficult. Employers should also seek appropriate support and care for themselves to manage the impact.

Get in touch if you or your employee(s) require support:

Phone: 0113 305 5800
Email: SBS@leedsmind.org.uk
Website: leedsmind.org.uk/sbs



Supporting an employee who has been bereaved by suicide

How to provide effective support as an employer



The short-term impact of suicide bereavement

Bereavement by suicide is often sudden, unexpected and traumatic. An employee may be reluctant to share their full experience with their employer so it is important that you keep in mind that in addition to the 'normal reactions' to grief and loss, someone bereaved by suicide may also be dealing with:

- Fears about returning to work due to concerns about the stigma surrounding suicide, and how colleagues might treat them
- Feelings of guilt, disbelief, anger and blaming, shame and abandonment
- Disrupted and disturbed sleep, poor concentration/memory and increased anxiety
- Tensions or hostility within their family or community
- New or increased caring responsibilities
- Investigations by the police, coroner & other agencies
- Local or national media coverage
- New or increased financial pressures or hardship
- Judgment from others e.g. about the person who has died which may be misinformed, negative or hurtful

Remember, people impacted by a suicide are also more likely to experience suicidal thoughts, self harm and to die by suicide themselves, so timely, compassionate support is essential.



How an employer can support

Understanding and reassurance

Acknowledge their loss and offer condolences. Avoid clichés (e.g. “they are at peace now”). Do not assume that you understand how they are feeling, offer opinion or pass judgement. Reassure them that their workload is being taken care of in their absence. You may feel like you don't know what to say but in our experience small thoughtful gestures such as a card or flowers are often appreciated.

Employee-centred approach

What are your employee's support needs? Discuss this directly with them and assess what help can be provided by the organisation. Consider cultural perspectives and needs. Consider possible triggers that the employee may encounter in their role and how these might be avoided or managed e.g. awareness days like World Suicide Prevention Day.

Communication

Communicate directly with the employee about what they wish to share. Sensitively prepare colleagues for the employee's return to work. Clarify if there is any other support they would appreciate from colleagues, such as appointing a work buddy or Mental Health First Aider. Learn about potentially triggering language e.g. instead of saying “committed suicide” say “died by suicide”.

Consider the team

The wider team's workload may be impacted by adjustments made for the person bereaved by suicide; remember to recognise and praise the additional efforts of those individuals to ensure ongoing co-operation and solidarity.

Flexibility

Flexibility in the employee's schedule or responsibilities may help someone manage better after suicide bereavement. Review, negotiate and adapt this regularly with the employee.

Signposting

Signpost to support services as well as relevant support through any Employee Assistance Programmes you provide. Encourage your employee to engage with Leeds Mind Suicide Bereavement Services. Where appropriate, liaise directly with our service for advice regarding specific concerns.

Thinking longer term

When someone is bereaved by suicide, they can experience the impact – both emotional and practical – for years after the loss. Here's what this might look like:

Longstanding complicated emotions and reactions to trauma

Consider reasonable allowances around an employee's work performance after the loss. Longer term, an employer should maintain regular communication around the employee's needs and signpost to support services if relevant, keeping in mind performance issues may be related to their bereavement. Continue to be mindful of potential triggers such as awareness days, training topics etc.

Difficulties managing anniversaries and other significant dates

Employers can make a discreet note of such dates to ensure they are well prepared to support employee needs at this time.

Increased family or caring commitments which may impact on their work/life balance.

They may also have more financial responsibilities. Employers can discuss specific needs sensitively with the employee. Consider flexible working policies and signpost to local/national debt support charities if appropriate.

