



## **Suicide Prevention Strategy for Staff and Students**

Many of us find suicide difficult to talk about. And yet we should talk about it more. We want our universities to be safe places; places where students and staff can thrive and succeed, where everyone feels that they belong and are part of a supportive and caring community. But we have to recognise that, for some, for some of the time; that is not how they feel. Support is available, but those in need of support sometimes feel there are barriers to accessing the support available or are unable or unwilling to do so.

Suicide is preventable. That is why Dorset's three universities have a shared vision with all our partners signed up to the Pan-Dorset suicide prevention strategy that "no one of any age living in Dorset will reach the point where they believe

## 1. Introduction

The three universities of Dorset- AECC University College, Arts University Bournemouth, and Bournemouth University – have committed to take action to prevent any death of a staff member or student by suicide. This joint Universities of Bournemouth Suicide Prevention Strategy for Students and Staff has been produced collaboratively and sets out the context and commitments of each university in supporting the Pan-Dorset Suicide Prevention Strategy. This Universities of Bournemouth strategy acknowledges the need for action across three interdependent areas: prevention, intervention and postvention (aftercare following a suicide death to support the bereaved and reduce the risk of other deaths).

This strategy aligns with the guidance of Suicide-Safer Universities (Universities UK and Papyrus, 2018) and recognises that it is possible for universities to make effective interventions to build supportive, compassionate cultures and reduce the risk of death by suicide.

Adopting a whole University approach to good mental health is a key part of creating a suicide safer University. The activities identified under the Suicide Prevention action plan in section 5, are about creating an infrastructure that supports student mental health and access to support where staff can access appropriate training and resources and know how to refer students to appropriate support.

Talking about suicide does not increase the risk of death, yet this myth persists in many  
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Source: Office for National Statistics – Suicides in England and Wales; 2019 registrations

Although a range of situations and characteristics may heighten risk, some students take their own lives without being known to be in distress or having an established risk profile. Two out of three suicides happen without previous contact with mental health services and in some of these cases the individuals involved do not fall into recognised high-risk groups.

In respect to suicide data specifically relating to staff working in Higher Education, the latest data available from the ONS is for the period between 2012 and 2017 and is broken down as follows:

Year	Number of





It is important to note that these target groups will be reviewed on an annual basis using both internal and external data analysis and reviews on any suicide attempts and associated risks identified throughout the Academic year. The three Universities will meet quarterly to share intelligence around trends, feedback on experiences of the impact of the strategy from staff and students and updates on local trends and demographics captured by the Pan-Dorset Suicide Prevention Real Time Surveillance and High-Risk working groups.

Analysis and updates will be presented at the annual University Suicide Prevention 'Summit', held in October of each year to align with World Mental Health Day, which will also provide an opportunity to sense check areas for improvement and update stakeholders present. This strategy is a live document, and as such, we are committed to reflect our learning from interventions and postvention as part of our ongoing review of practice, impact and outcomes.

## 5. Suicide Prevention Action across the Universities

This strategy will incorporate the threads of Prevention, Intervention and Postvention throughout the document, rather than having separate sections on specific support available, which differs between the three Universities. Further information on the specific resources and support available as part of Prevention and Intervention will be published on each university's website, and specific postvention steps in the event of a reported suicide will be led by the Universities incident response lead in the first instance to ensure this can be personalised to each case.

We are mindful that staff and students may require further operational guidance to this strategy which provides detail on the management and escalation of concerns and each University will consider how best to provide this for their staff and student cohorts in line with their organisational practice.

The Government's Suicide Prevention 6 key areas for action have been adopted by all three Universities within this strategy and are as follows:

- a) Reduce the risk of suicide in key high-risk groups
- b) Tailor approaches to improve mental health in specific groups
- c) Reduce access to the means of suicide
- d) Provide better information and support to those bereaved or affected by suicide
- e) Support the media in delivering sensitive approaches to suicide and suicidal behaviour
- f) Support research, data collection and monitoring

The Universities have agreed further specific action areas which align with the Pan-Dorset Suicide Prevention Strategy and which will sit under the government's 6 key areas as follows;

- a) Reduce the Risk of Suicide in key high-risk groups
  - a. Focus on young and middle-aged men to encompass both the staff and student population
  - b. Ensuring staff and students with lived experience of the impact of suicide contribute to our learning of what works well and where there are gaps in support.
  - c. Working with the Dorset Real Time Surveillance group to respond to and support any University staff and students assessed and identified as high risk
- b) Tailor approaches to improve mental health in specific groups
  - a. Developing and publishing a clear pathway of Mental Health Support for all staff and students

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- b. Raising awareness of the different states of mental health, to improve understanding of the difference between 'distress' and 'crisis' and how to access support.
  - c. Using personal coping and safety plans to enable staff and students to develop personalised approaches to managing self
- c) Reduce access to the means of suicide
- a. Consider available IT tools to use on University platforms, b.

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	Action	By When
1	Each University to publish support available to those bereaved by suicide on their websites. Including how to access the Dorset Open Door bereavement support service	
2	Where required and appropriate, university staff will be offered a serious	





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Peer review and lessons learned:

In order to ensure any loss from suicide informs our understanding, knowledge and support provision, the Universities have created an internal serious case review model. This process will be separate from any other formal process, e.g., Coroners or Adult Safeguarding Board case reviews and will be led by one of the other three Universities.

The peer review will be held in the context that cause-of-death has not yet been confirmed by the coroner, but that there are factors to indicate a suspected suicide.

The peer review will be facilitated between the three Universities as follows:

- x The University strategic lead for suicide prevention, who is a member of the Pan-Dorset Suicide Prevention Strategy Steering Group and trained in suicide prevention, will be appointed as a lead peer reviewer, secured from a University not involved in the incident. This will be agreed amongst the strategic leads.
- x Observer/assistant reviewer/s will be identified and secured from the remaining University (AECC UC, AUB, BU) to provide support and sense checking to the lead peer reviewer.
- x Reviewers will look at a chronology of the University interventions, to identify any opportunities for learning/improvement and any gaps in processes or resources. The role of the reviewers is to focus solely on the University involvement and not that of any external organisations, friends or families.
- x Where appropriate to do so, and agreed in advance with the affected University, the reviewers will speak to key staff involved. Any conversations will focus on process and not individuals' thoughts, feelings or behaviours.
- x Students will not be involved in the peer review.

## Appendix 2 – Suicide Prevention Communications plan

The three University Media and Communication leads will be working together on aligning the Universities plan to the Pan-Dorset Suicide Prevention Strategy Communication plan, and are represented on the associated steering group.

Activities throughout the year will include supporting ongoing awareness campaigns led by both the Local and National Suicide Prevention community in order to share resources and tools that may ultimately help to save a life.

Any loss of life through suicide is felt deeply within our community and we know has a ripple effect on those affected. We are therefore committed to ensuring that any communication regarding suicidal behaviour and suicides is done with great responsibility, supported and led by the respective University designated communications team.



## Appendix 3

Bournemouth University has approximately 18,000 students and just under 2000 staff. Located across two main campuses in Bournemouth, with satellite campuses in Yeovil and Portsmouth. We also have affiliated courses with Wiltshire college.

The University works closely with partner organisations from across our community and are a member of the Dorset Community Mental Health Alliance as well as the Pan-Dorset Suicide Prevention Strategy Steering Group and National Suicide Prevention Alliance (NPSA)

Bournemouth University has an established commitment to providing wellbeing support to students and staff, which is overseen by the Wellbeing Board, co-chaired by the Director of HR and Director of Student Services. The Wellbeing Board is well placed to monitor the progress and effectiveness of the strategy and action plan and will receive regular updates on progress to date.

This strategy is underpinned by the University's core values of;

- x Excellence – we strive for excellence in everything we do
- x Inclusivity – we value and respect diversity and act to ensure we are inclusive
- x Creativity – we are imaginative, innovative and create solutions to problems
- x Responsibility – we take responsibility for the impact<sup>6</sup> of our actions and focus all our actions as a learning community on making a positive contribution to society.

## Key contacts

Concerns about a student:

During office hours, please contact AskBU on 01202 969696.

For escalation or urgent concerns, please email the Head of Student Support and Wellbeing at [krandle@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:krandle@bournemouth.ac.uk) or telephone reception on 01202 962222 and ask to speak to the Student Services Executive on call.

Out of hours: Telephone 01202 962222 and ask to speak to the Welfare Duty Officer (WDO) who will be able to assess the risk and escalate if required.

Further information about support for students can be found at <https://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/students/health-wellbeing>



Concerns about a member of staff:

During office hours, please contact Health, Safety & Wellbeing Team via 01202 961213 or 01202 962482 or [HealthandSafetyMailbox@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:HealthandSafetyMailbox@bournemouth.ac.uk)

For escalation or urgent concerns, please email the Head of Health, Safety & Wellbeing at [kbutters@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:kbutters@bournemouth.ac.uk) or telephone on 01202 96113.

Out of hours, please ring 01202 962222 and ask to speak to the Welfare Duty Officer (WDO) who will be able to assess the risk and escalate as required.

Further information about support for staff can be found at <https://staffintranet.bournemouth.ac.uk/workingatbu/healthsafetywellbeing/>

Major Incident Response

Further information regarding the major incident process at Bournemouth University, which will be considered following the notification of all cases of suspected suicide, can be found at:

<https://intranetsp.bournemouth.ac.uk/policy/BU%20Major%20Incident%20Plan.docx>