

MEDIA FRAMEWORK FOR REPORTING SUICIDE

Developed by Public Health North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council in line with the refreshed Northamptonshire Suicide Prevention Strategy 2022-2025 and Action Plan

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Suicide in Northamptonshire

Suicide is defined as the deliberate act to intentionally end one's life. The effect of suicide can be devastating, and the impact felt by many – including family, friends, neighbours, employers, colleagues, professionals, and the wider community. In Northamptonshire, approximately 60 people take their own life each year. The Northamptonshire Suicide Prevention Strategy 2022-2025 and Action Plan (Northamptonshire Suicide Prevention Steering Group, 2022) aims to reduce suicide and self-harm in Northamptonshire, through a whole-county, all-age approach.

One of the seven priorities of the strategy includes supporting the media in delivering sensitive approaches to suicide and suicidal behaviour. National guidance (Department of Health and Social Care, 2021) emphasises the importance of the media continuing to cover the subject of suicide. This approach can aid a reduction of stigma and an increased awareness of suicidal behaviour and suicide prevention. There is evidence to suggest that media reporting can lead to copycat behaviour, particularly amongst those at risk and younger people (Samaritans, n.d.). Concern around the misuse of the internet to promote suicide and suicidal methods continues to grow. However, by developing the positive use of local and regional media as well as social media and the internet to support vulnerable people and reduce online harms, there are opportunities to reach those at risk and less willing to access support.

This priority will contribute to the work of the strategy by supporting the effective reporting of suicide in Northamptonshire, enabling improved collaboration with local media agencies, and providing improved signposting to local support and services. The two key objectives for this priority are: develop a local Media Framework to support responsible reporting of suicide; and establish a local media monitoring system.

General Reporting Tips

Samaritans have developed a document offering media guidelines for reporting suicide - [Samaritans' media guidelines for reporting suicide | Samaritans](#) and [Media Guidelines FINAL.pdf \(samaritans.org\)](#).

This document offers 10 top tips for reporting suicide. The resource acknowledges that sensitive reporting can inform and educate the public about suicide, encouraging important conversations and promotes help seeking. It also acknowledges that evidence shows that some forms of media coverage can lead to increases in suicide rates.

The 10 top tips for journalists reinforce industry codes of practice to support the highest standards of safe coverage of suicide - [10 top tips for reporting suicide | Samaritans' media guidelines](#) and [10 top tips for reporting suicide poster FINAL.pdf \(samaritans.org\)](#).

Number	Tip
1	Avoid reporting methods of suicide
2	Include references to suicide being preventable and signpost sources of support
3	Steer clear of language that sensationalises or glorifies suicide
4	Do not refer to a specific site or location as popular or known for suicides
5	Avoid dramatic, emotive, or sensational pictures or video footage
6	Avoid excessive amounts of coverage and overly prominent placement of stories
7	Treat social media with particular caution
8	Avoid including content from suicide notes or similar messages left by a person who has died
9	Speculation about the 'trigger' or cause of a suicide can oversimplify the issue and should be avoided
10	Young people are more susceptible to suicide contagion

Rail Suicide Reporting Tips

Samaritans have developed a document offering guidance for reporting on rail suicides - [Guidance for reporting on rail suicides | Samaritans' media guidelines](#) and [Guidance for reporting rail suicides FINAL.pdf \(samaritans.org\)](#).

The document acknowledges that suicides on the railways are relatively rare, accounting for less than 5% of the suicides in the UK every year. However, they are public incidents and as such can cause a great deal of distress to witnesses including passengers, train drivers and other rail staff. Because these deaths take place in a public setting these incidents are sometimes deemed newsworthy, particularly if they cause disruption to services.

Murder-Suicide Reporting Tips

Samaritans have developed a document offering guidance for reporting on murder-suicides - [Guidance for reporting on murder suicides | Samaritans' media guidelines](#) and [Guidance for reporting on a murder-suicide FINAL.pdf \(samaritans.org\)](#).

The document acknowledges that a murder-suicide is when a person kills another individual, or individuals, before taking their own life. The murder victim may be someone known to them or a stranger. It includes cases where individuals kill members of their family before taking their own lives, or where an individual murders a number of people in a public place, such as a school, before taking their own life. These incidents are rare, but their impact can be widespread and tend to receive a disproportionate amount of media coverage.

Youth Suicides, Clusters, and Self-Harm Reporting Tips

Samaritans acknowledge that young people are particularly vulnerable in relation to media coverage of suicide and self-harm. Care should be taken when covering these topics with a young audience. Samaritans have developed a document offering guidance for reporting on youth suicides - [Guidance for reporting on youth suicides | Samaritans' media guidelines](#) and [Guidance on reporting youth suicides and suicide clusters FINAL.pdf \(samaritans.org\)](#). They have also developed a document offering guidance for reporting on self-harm - [Guidance for covering self-harm in the media | Samaritans' media guidelines](#) and [Guidance for covering self-harm in the media FINAL 1.pdf \(samaritans.org\)](#).

Broadcast Media Reporting Tips

Samaritans have developed a document offering guidance for reporting on broadcast media - [Guidance on reporting suicide for broadcast media | Samaritans' media guidelines](#) and [Guidance on reporting suicide for broadcast media FINAL_eUubqSi.pdf \(samaritans.org\)](#).

The document acknowledges that the wide reach of broadcast material, including online, as well as the diverse audience it attracts, makes responsible approaches to covering suicide particularly important.

Working with People Bereaved by Suicide

Samaritans have developed a document offering guidance for working with people bereaved by suicide - [Guidance for working with people bereaved by suicide | Samaritans' media guidelines](#) and [Guidance for working with people bereaved by suicide FINAL_ONa5loK.pdf \(samaritans.org\)](#).

The document acknowledges that if a death by suicide is considered to be in the public interest, journalists may wish to speak with family members and friends. Approaching those who have lost a loved one can be difficult and requires a great deal of sensitivity. People who have been bereaved by suicide, particularly those close to the person who has died, will be profoundly affected by losing a loved one in traumatic circumstances.

Reporting on Inquests

Samaritans have developed a document offering guidance for reporting on inquests for England, Wales and Ireland - [Guidance for reporting on inquests for England, Wales and Ireland | Samaritans' media guidelines](#) and [Guidance for reporting on inquests FINAL_xjL1HHW.pdf \(samaritans.org\)](#).

The document acknowledges that information and conclusions shared during an inquest can offer an opportunity to aid understanding of some of the issues surrounding suicide. When reporting on inquests journalists should balance reporting on a sensitive issue, that is in the public interest, while minimising any potential harmful effects on vulnerable people and those who have been bereaved.

Celebrity and High-Profile Suicides Reporting Tips

Samaritans have developed a document offering guidance for reporting on celebrity and high-profile suicides - [Guidance for reporting on celebrity and high profile suicides | Samaritans' media guidelines](#) and [Guidance for reporting on celebrity suicides and suicide attempts FINAL.pdf \(samaritans.org\)](#).

The document acknowledges that when a death or suicide attempt involves a celebrity or high-profile person, there is greater likelihood of others identifying with the person. Journalists should be aware of how coverage of celebrity deaths can affect suicide rates and aim for sensitive reporting that does not glamorise or romanticise suicidal behaviour.

Emerging Suicide Methods

Samaritans continues to work closely with social media platforms and monitor online content and news coverage. As suicide methods emerge, guidance is typically issued around information sharing for the method. Where guidance is unclear, please contact the county-wide Public Health Officer for Suicide Prevention on the following email address: aarti.kumari@westnorthants.gov.uk for the latest guidance on reporting.

Samaritans' Media Advisory Service

Samaritans' media advice team is available to support journalists and to answer questions relating to suicides. The team can be contacted on the following email address: mediaadvice@samaritans.org.

Signposting to Services and Support

Samaritans suggest when covering the topic of suicide or self-harm to encourage help-seeking by including sources of support, such as the Samaritans' helpline:

When life is difficult, Samaritans are here – day or night, 365 days a year. You can call them for free on 116 123, email them at jo@samaritans.org, or visit www.samaritans.org to find your nearest branch.

Please refer to the below websites, which include service directories to both local and national services and support available for a range of mental health issues.

[Mental health services and support | North Northamptonshire Council \(\[northnorthants.gov.uk\]\(http://northnorthants.gov.uk\)\)](#)

[Mental health services and support | West Northamptonshire Council \(\[westnorthants.gov.uk\]\(http://westnorthants.gov.uk\)\)](#)

General Information

For further information on local suicide prevention work and local services, please contact the county-wide Public Health Officer for Suicide Prevention on the following email address: aarti.kumari@westnorthants.gov.uk.