

# Advice on how to respond in the workplace when you believe that a member of staff is going to harm themselves

Most people thinking about suicide will try and let someone know and this may involve a colleague at work. It is difficult to know how to deal with this situation when it arises in the workplace setting and the following provides some general guidance. The main concern in trying to help someone who is suicidal will be their immediate safety. When a person feels suicidal they may feel desperate, hopeless and in despair. It's important to encourage the person to talk openly about how they feel, to try and understand what has brought them to this point. Just being there for the person and listening can help them feel less isolated and frightened.

## Talking openly about the possibility of suicide will not make it more likely to happen.

The following steps are useful to consider:

- **Show You Care**

Offer support and let them know you care. Say something like:

“I'm worried about you and I want to help”.  
“Tell me about what's worrying you”.  
“What's up? I'm very worried about you”.

- **Ask the Question**

Don't be afraid to discuss suicide – asking about it won't put the idea in people's heads:

“Do you feel like harming yourself”?  
“Do you feel like ending your life”?  
“Are you so down that you just want to end it all”?

- **Listen**

Be a patient listener. Allow the person to tell you how bad things are for them. Being listened to by someone who cares can help to relieve the pain they are experiencing.

- **Call For Help**

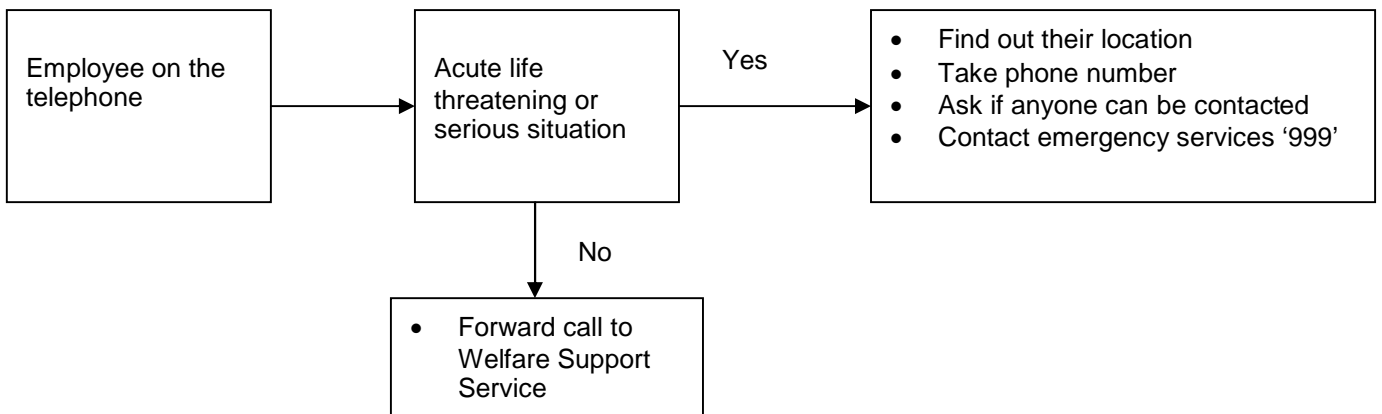
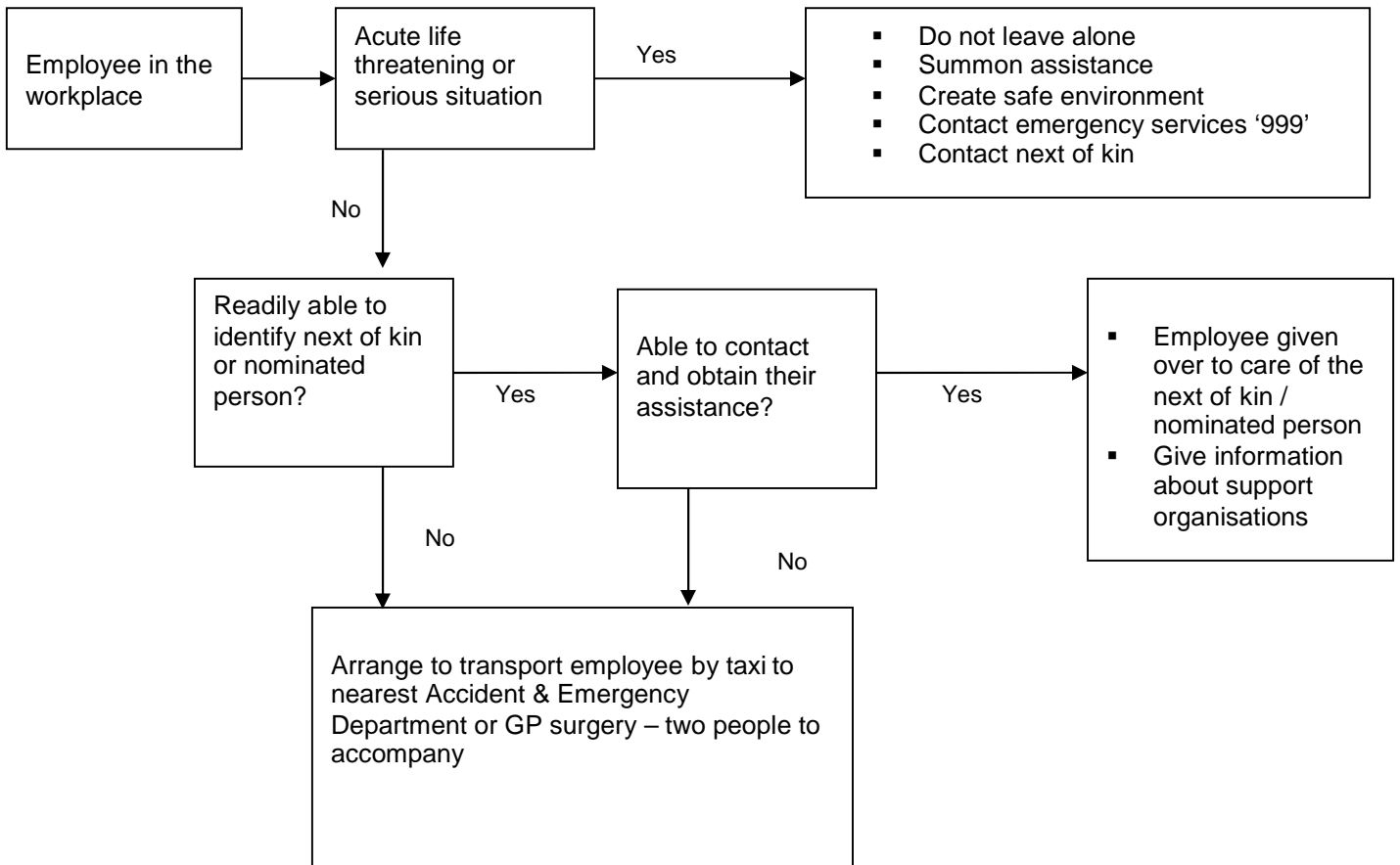
Encourage them to look for help:

“Let's talk to someone who can help”.  
“I will stay with you until you get help”.  
“You're not alone and there are people who can help you out of this situation”.

If you feel someone is in real danger of suicide or other crisis situations, the attached protocol may be helpful in dealing with the situation in the workplace. It is important to consider how the experience has affected you and if you may need any help to deal with your feelings.

*This guidance has been compiled by the Occupational Health Service and Welfare Support Service in consultation with Carecall (October 2009)*

# CRISIS INTERVENTION PATHWAY



Consider need for post-incident de-briefing for management / staff

Consider how to deal sensitively with return to work

# Further Advice \*

## WARNING SIGNS:

Most people who feel suicidal don't really want to die; they just want an end to their pain. These are some of the signs which may indicate that someone is thinking of taking their life:

- A suicide attempt or act of self-harm
- Expressing suicidal thoughts
- Pre-occupation with death
- Depression
- Becoming isolated
- Alcohol abuse
- Drug abuse
- Sudden changes in mood or behaviour
- Making 'final' arrangements, eg giving away possessions (such as books, CDs, DVDs).

## RISK FACTORS

- Access to a method of suicide, eg medication, firearms
- Loss of someone close (such as a friend or family member)
- Relationship break-up
- Impulsiveness, recklessness and risk-taking behaviour
- Alcohol / drug abuse.

**Note:** Some of these warning signs and risk factors can be associated with everyday behaviour and should be looked at in context with the overall picture of the person you are concerned about. However, the more warning signs and risk factors, the higher the possible risk.

## CONTACT IN CRISIS

- Lifeline - 0808 808 8000
- Samaritans - 08457 90 90 90
- Carecall - 0800 389 5362
- Welfare Support Service - (028) 9054 7427

(\*Adapted from: Concerned about Suicide. DHSSPS/Health Service Executive. May 2009)