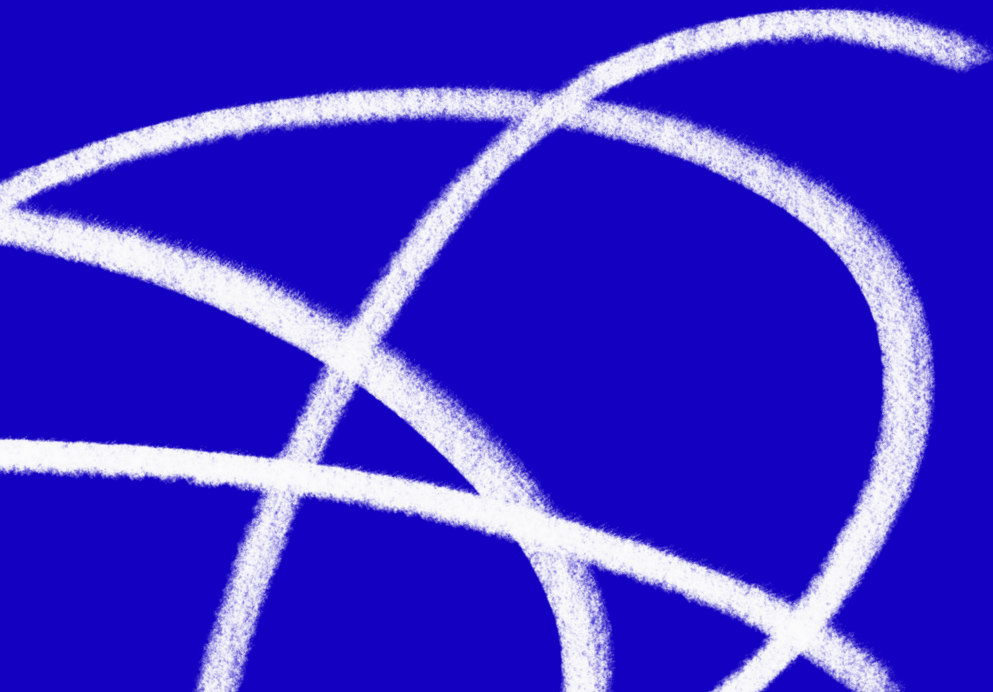




# Supporting staff after the death of a colleague



# Supporting staff after the death of a colleague

The death of a colleague can be upsetting for the entire team. Remember to take the time to be aware of your own emotions, and to seek support for yourself. See our page on taking care of your own mental health for more information.

## Telling team members that a colleague has died

- Discuss with the team member's family what details they would like shared with the team and respect their wishes.
- Share the information in a sensitive and appropriate way – in person, in a group or individually by Teams or telephone if your team is virtual. Ensure staff who were close to the colleague are informed before a more general email is sent out.
- Give your staff time to digest the news. If possible, allow them time away from their work to sit together, talk and digest what has happened. If this is not possible, plan for a time soon when the team's work can be covered so your team can get together and talk. You could offer voluntary opportunities to come together outside working hours if appropriate.

**The ACAS website contains advice and information on supporting your team and the administration required if someone in your team dies:**

[www.acas.org.uk/time-off-for-bereavement/if-someone-at-work-dies](http://www.acas.org.uk/time-off-for-bereavement/if-someone-at-work-dies)

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## **Main points to remember:**

- We all react differently at times of bereavement. Everyone in your team will have had their own experiences which may influence how they manage the loss of a coworker.
- Make yourself available to team members if they want to talk - but know where the professional boundary lies and where to refer them to for appropriate support.
- Familiarise yourself with other sources of support such as Employer Assistance Programmes, Mental Health First Aiders, local mental health support services (Talking Therapies, Local Minds, Cruse bereavement support, Mental Health Hubs etc) and signpost staff if they require more in-depth support.
- Offer condolences to the family – this could take the form of a condolence / memory book, which gives staff the opportunity to talk about their colleague. Discuss appropriate ways of offering condolences with the team member’s family and with your team.
- If staff are invited to the funeral, support them to attend if possible.
- Remember the impact of a bereavement can be long-lasting and we all grieve differently. Give your team opportunities to talk in a group or 1:1s in the weeks and months following the death.

See the guidance on supporting staff after a bereavement for more general tips on having open conversations about death and grief.

## **Supporting staff if a team member dies by suicide**

A death by suicide or suspected suicide can be particularly difficult for colleagues. The National Suicide Prevention Alliance recommend businesses work on a “Suicide Postvention Plan” which can be implemented after the suicide of a colleague to offer additional support to staff.

The link below will take you to the NSPA / Business in the Community toolkit which will help you support staff if a member of your team dies by suicide:

<https://nspa.org.uk/resource/suicide-postvention-toolkit-for-workplaces-toolkits-and-guidelines/?cn-reloaded=1>

### **Main points to remember:**

- Suicide is a difficult subject to think about, and it is easy to assume it is something you will never need to consider. However, it is good practice for an organisation, particularly larger organisations, to be aware that they may eventually need to support staff during this time and to have a plan in place.
- Learning that a colleague has died by suicide can be shocking. Preparation and an awareness of what support your team will need will make your job easier during a difficult time.
- Alongside the feelings of grief that team members might experience during any bereavement, feelings of shock, guilt and anger can be common after a suicide.
- It is good practice to offer counselling to staff members who have been affected.

# Further resources:

[Home - Cruse Bereavement Support](http://www.cruse.org.uk)  
(www.cruse.org.uk)

[Get help with grief after bereavement or loss - NHS](http://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/feelings-symptoms-behaviours/feelings-and-symptoms/grief-bereavement-loss)  
(www.nhs.uk/mental-health/feelings-symptoms-behaviours/feelings-and-symptoms/grief-bereavement-loss)

[Support and self-care for grief - Mind](http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/support-and-self-care)  
(www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/support-and-self-care)

[Supporting someone after a death - Time off work for bereavement - Acas](http://www.acas.org.uk/time-off-for-bereavement/supporting-an-employee-after-a-death)  
(www.acas.org.uk/time-off-for-bereavement/supporting-an-employee-after-a-death)

[Mental health and the law - Supporting mental health at work - Acas](http://www.acas.org.uk/supporting-mental-health-workplace)  
(www.acas.org.uk/supporting-mental-health-workplace)