

Suicide prevention strategy
Our approach



Introduction

Highways England operates, maintains and modernises England’s strategic road network. Our ambition is to ensure our major roads are more dependable, durable and most importantly – safe.

At Highways England the safety of everyone on our network matters; we recognise the wide reaching and devastating impact of suicide for both individuals and communities and the important role we can play in influencing and supporting a wider community-based approach to suicide prevention.

This strategy sets out how we will continue to contribute to delivering the Government’s national strategy for suicide prevention *Preventing suicide in England: a cross-government outcomes strategy to save lives* through reducing the number of suicides and attempted suicides and supporting those people affected by them on the Strategic Road Network.



Our vision

We understand that suicide is not inevitable, it is preventable, and our vision is that no one attempts to take their life on our roads. Our vision will be achieved through a number of key principles:

- **Prevention:** To reduce the number of people who reach a point in their lives where they wish to take their own life.
- **Crisis Intervention:** To intervene with those who do reach a crisis point to reduce the number of people who attempt suicide.
- **Postvention:** To reduce the known impact of a suicide or attempted suicide. This includes reducing the impact amongst the public, and addressing the trauma that our staff, supply chain and any witnesses to a distressing event may experience.



Delivering our vision

We will deliver our vision by working in a number of areas to help us develop our capability and, in collaboration with partners, provide better intelligence, more integrated prevention plans and improved monitoring of our performance.

Developing our capability

- Embed our Suicide Prevention Strategy within Highways England, our supply chain and service providers, ensuring that the future development and management of the network reflects our vision.
- Ensure effective internal working within Highways England through the development of an enhanced capability and the establishment of a Suicide Prevention Working Group.
- Improve our engagement with key stakeholders and delivery partners, pursuing a collaborative approach to the identification, development and implementation of interventions.
- Improve the collation, analysis and sharing of data to ensure we deliver more effective and inclusive suicide prevention plans. A key activity will be to ensure consistent and accurate recording of suicide related incidents across our network.
- Use our improved understanding of suicide related incidents to identify and prioritise actions for the Strategic Road Network at a national and local level.
- Publish an Annual Suicide Prevention Report (starting in June 2018), evaluating our progress, identifying future areas of work and generating a cycle of continuous improvement.

Improving crisis intervention

- Work collaboratively with our partners to further develop guidance on crisis intervention techniques and ensure that our plans adopt a broad and inclusive approach; ensuring that they reflect best practice.
- Develop an annual programme of activities as part of a National and Regional Suicide Reduction Action Plan(s) which deliver traditional mitigation measures as well as developing new approaches.
- Ensure that wider network investments incorporate suicide prevention measures where required, for example, when we invest in road network improvements, the measures to prevent suicides will be considered, both during construction and as part of any completed scheme. Also, as we invest in network maintenance, we will consider opportunities.
- Train our staff to look out for and offer support to people who may be considering taking their own life.

Providing better information and support to those affected by suicide

We will ensure we fulfil our duty of care to staff, supply chain, customers, and those in the wider community affected by suicide.

- Continue to work to de-stigmatise mental health and suicide and encourage vulnerable people to seek help.

- Review and improve our procedures and processes to support those affected by suicide and other traumatic events.
- Provide those customers who witness a traumatic event on our network with advice and guidance.

Adopt a multi-agency approach

- National suicide reduction cannot be achieved through isolated action. We will work closely with other organisations including statutory bodies, the voluntary sector and academics to share data, knowledge and best practice.
- Work with The National Suicide Prevention Alliance (NSPA), the leading England-wide coalition for suicide prevention organisations across the public, private and voluntary sectors, to adopt a joint approach to suicide prevention.
- Develop a multi-organisational panel to provide expert advice and undertake a check and challenge role for developing our policy/strategy and specific interventions.
- Implement data sharing processes that will allow us to share data with partners. This will improve multi-agency working and better target local interventions.

Who will we engage with and why?

We will play an active role in the National Suicide Prevention Alliance, who are taking action to reduce suicide and support those affected by it.

Charities and local suicide prevention groups, such as Samaritans, who have experience in providing support to people in distress. This is essential if we are going to play our part in reducing the number of people who reach a point in their lives where they consider suicide.

Local authorities should have multi-agency suicide prevention groups in place and action plans to reduce suicide. We will have a role to play in developing these and ensuring an effective multi-agency approach is adopted. We also have a role to play in sharing our own data to ensure local authorities are immediately made aware of locations where there have been suicide attempts.

Other infrastructure operators, such as Network Rail, can provide us with data on where incidents occur and lessons learned from their own activities. This will enable us to be effective in this area as quickly as possible.

Academics and universities have undertaken significant research in this area and it is essential we identify, and work with, the most respected experts. This will ensure our activities are as effective as possible and that we adopt best practice.

The Police have significant experience in dealing directly with suicide incidents and their effects. We will ensure our activities complement each other and opportunities to work together are fully exploited.

Other government bodies, in particular Public Health England who published 'Preventing suicides in public places' – by aligning with their recommendations our approach will be consistent with that of the Government.

Highways England employees, in particular the internal Suicide Prevention Working Group. We are also doing other work across the organisation to help employees be more aware of and improve their wellbeing.



How will we know we have made a difference?

To measure our progress against this strategy we will establish a Suicide Prevention Working Group, who will be supported by our multi-organisational expert panel, which will produce a non-technical annual report. This will set out our progress against the strategy, provide examples of best practice and list our activities for the next 12 months.

We recognise that further work is needed to develop metrics that more accurately monitor our progress. As a first step it is essential that we work to fully understand the number of suicides and attempted suicides on our roads and monitor any trends. We will collect baseline data and define clear data sets for monitoring suicides on the Strategic Road

Network. We will also compare our data with wider national trends in suicide prevention to provide a framework for measuring performance.

We will continue to identify areas for further research which will improve our planning and delivery of suicide prevention measures.

In summary

Our Suicide Prevention Strategy outlines how we will improve the safety of our roads by reducing the number of people who attempt to take their lives and reduce the devastating impact suicide has when these tragedies occur.

We understand that suicide is never inevitable, it is always preventable.



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