

055. Suicide Prevention and Response Policy and Procedure

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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a comprehensive framework to prevent suicide and respond effectively to incidents of suicide within the IFG's community. This policy integrates prevention, intervention, and postvention strategies to ensure the well-being of students, staff, and faculty.

Scope

This policy applies to all IFG community members, including students, staff, faculty, and visitors. It aims to create a supportive environment that encourages mental health, reduces the stigma associated with seeking help, and provides clear guidelines for responding to suicidal behaviour.

Definitions

- Suicide: The act of intentionally causing one's own death.
- Suicidal Ideation: Thoughts or plans about suicide.
- Postvention: Support and interventions provided after a suicide to those affected by it.

Policy Statement

IFG is committed to:

- Promoting positive mental health and well-being.
- Reducing the risk of suicide through prevention and intervention strategies.
- Providing empathic support to those affected by suicide.
- Ensuring a coordinated and compassionate response to suicide incidents.

Prevention Strategies

a. Awareness and Training

- Implement regular training for staff and students on recognising signs of, and contributing factors to, suicidal behaviour and how to respond appropriately.
- Utilise programmes such as ASIST, safeTALK, and Mental Health First Aid.
- Conduct annual workshops and discussions during Academic Board meetings to raise awareness and update teaching staff on suicide prevention. Ensuring that staff are familiar with the signs and risk factors outlined in Appendix A

b. Creating a Supportive Environment

- Foster a campus culture where mental health is openly discussed and seeking help is encouraged.
- Promote initiatives that enhance social connectedness and a sense of belonging among students.
- Direct students to Togetherall, an anonymous, clinically moderated online peer support platform, as the primary avenue for peer-to-peer support and shared lived experiences.

c. Early Identification and Intervention

- Establish early alert systems to identify students at risk, such as monitoring academic performance, attendance, and behavioural changes, and provide a risk-based approach to individualised support.
- Develop protocols for faculty and staff to report and manage concerns about students' well-being.
- Ensure that information about external counselling and mental health support services is easily accessible and clearly communicated to students.

d. Collaboration with External Organisations

- Build strong partnerships with local health services, mental health organisations, and crisis intervention centres.
- Participate in national and regional suicide prevention initiatives to stay informed about best practices and emerging trends.
- Have clear out of hours protocols in place to support people in crisis.
- IFG has partnered with Togetherall to offer all students unlimited, 24/7 access to confidential and anonymous mental health support from trained counsellors, as well as peer-led support groups.
- For intervention and postvention strategies, work closely with local mental health authorities (such as Westminster City Council safeguarding team) instead of maintaining an internal crisis intervention approach.

e. Communication and Outreach

- Distribute materials on mental health resources, warning signs of suicide, and how to seek help
- Utilise various communication channels, including information on the IFG website (SCSI) and Togetherall page as well as social media and other information from Togetherall to promote mental health awareness.
- Ensure all students are in regular communication with us.

Intervention Strategies**a. Immediate Response**

- In the event of a suicide attempt, ensure immediate medical assistance is provided.
- Secure the safety of the individual and those around them.
- Have a protocol in place for emergency responders to follow, including contacting the crisis intervention approach.

b. Assessment and Referral

- Conduct a comprehensive risk assessment for individuals displaying suicidal ideation or behaviour.
- Develop individualised safety plans for students at risk, including coping strategies and contact information for support services.
- Refer individuals to appropriate mental health services for further evaluation and support.

c. Crisis Intervention Approach

- IFG does not maintain an internal crisis intervention approach. Instead, in the event of a serious incident, intervention is coordinated by the Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSOs) and senior academic staff.
- Where appropriate, IFG works in partnership with Togetherall for 24/7 mental health support and with the local authorities safeguarding department, Westminster City Council, to ensure professional and timely intervention.
- All academic staff (including teaching staff) are made aware of crisis indicators and referral pathways through annual safeguarding and mental health awareness discussions held at Academic Board meetings.

Postvention Strategies**a. Communication and Support**

- Develop a communication plan to inform the IFG's community about suicide sensitively and respectfully.

- Provide grief counselling and support to those affected by the suicide, including students, staff, and faculty.
- Offer ongoing support to individuals identified as being at risk of contagion, including rapid referral for mental health services.

b. Memorials and Tributes

- Plan memorials that celebrate the life of the deceased without glamorising suicide.
- Ensure that any tributes are conducted in a way that minimises the risk of contagion, avoiding sensationalism.
- Ensure there is clarity over eligibility for posthumous academic awards.

c. Continuous Improvement

- Conduct thorough case reviews and debriefings after any suicide to learn from the incident and improve future responses.
- Engage with public health authorities and suicide prevention organisations to stay informed about best practices.

d. Community Healing

- Organise community healing events and activities to support the collective recovery of the IFG's community.
- Provide resources and signposting to platforms such as Togetherall, which offer safe, peer-led spaces for students to process grief and emotions.
- Ensure that a sensitive and informed approach is taken when organising community healing interventions.

Roles and Responsibilities**a. IFG Board**

- Provide visible support for student wellbeing and ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to approved external mental health support services (e.g., Togetherall).
- Designate a senior leader responsible for overseeing the implementation of the suicide prevention and response policy (such as the Deputy DSO)

b. Postvention Team

- Comprises members from the IFG Board, Senior Management, student services, IFG communications (Director of Marketing and Partnerships), Togetherall and other external mental health professionals
- Each member has defined responsibilities, including family liaison, internal and external communications, and coordination with external agencies. As the family are unlikely to be based in the UK family liaison is the responsibility of the Academic Director or other member of IFG Board

c. Staff

- Recognise uncharacteristic or concerning changes and/or signs of distress in students and refer them to appropriate resources.
- Participate in training and awareness programs.
- Create an environment where students feel able to raise concerns and are guided towards appropriate external mental health support.

d. Students

- Encourage peers to seek help and utilise available mental health resources from Togetherall.
- Encouraged to participate in external mental health awareness activities and training programmes.

e. Crisis Intervention Approach

- Be available to respond to crises at any time, ensuring rapid and effective intervention.
- Maintain confidentiality and handle all situations with sensitivity and care.

Evaluation and Review

- The policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains effective and incorporates the latest best practices in suicide prevention and response.
- Feedback from the IFG's community will be sought to continuously improve the policy.
- Implement an internal audit system to assess the effectiveness of prevention and intervention strategies.

Resources

- **Internal:** IFG personal tutors and crisis intervention approach.
- **External:** National suicide prevention organisations (e.g., Samaritans, PAPYRUS), Togetherall, local mental health services, crisis hotlines, Public Health England, and local suicide prevention partnerships.

Appendices

Appendix A: Risk Factors and Warning Signs

- Detailed list of risk factors and warning signs associated with suicidal behaviour.

Appendix B: Training Programmes

- Description and contact information for recommended training programs such as ASIST, safeTALK, Mental Health First Aid, and more.

Appendix C: Resources and Support Services

- Comprehensive list of internal and external support services, including contact information.

Appendix D: Communication Templates

- Pre-approved communication templates for notifying the IFG's community about a suicide incident.

Appendix E: Postvention Checklist

- Step-by-step checklist for the postvention team to follow in the aftermath of a suicide.

Appendix F: Legal and Ethical Considerations

- Guidelines on confidentiality, information sharing, and ethical considerations in suicide prevention and response.

Appendix A: Risk Factors and Warning Signs

1. Risk Factors

- **Mental Health Disorders:** Depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia.
- **Substance Abuse:** Alcohol and drug abuse.
- **History of Trauma or Abuse:** Physical, sexual, or emotional abuse.
- **Previous Suicide Attempts:** Prior attempts increase the risk of future attempts.
- **Family History:** Family history of suicide or mental health disorders.
- **Chronic Illness:** Chronic pain or serious medical conditions.
- **Isolation:** Lack of social support or feelings of loneliness.

2. Warning Signs

- **Behavioural Changes:** Withdrawal from friends and activities, changes in sleeping and eating patterns.
- **Mood Changes:** Increased irritability, depression, anxiety, feelings of hopelessness.
- **Verbal Cues:** Talking about wanting to die, feeling trapped, or being a burden to others.
- **Giving Away Possessions:** Disposing of personal belongings or making final arrangements.
- **Self-Harm:** Engaging in risky behaviours or self-injury.
- **Substance Abuse:** Increased use of alcohol or drugs.

Appendix B: Training Programmes

1. ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training)

- Contact: [ASIST website](<https://www.livingworks.net/asist>)
- Description: A two-day interactive workshop that teaches participants to recognise when someone may be at risk of suicide and how to intervene to help them stay safe.

2. safeTALK

- Contact: [safeTALK website](<https://www.livingworks.net/safetalk>)
- Description: A half-day alertness training that prepares participants to recognise and engage persons with thoughts of suicide and connect them with further help.

3. Mental Health First Aid

- Contact: [Mental Health First Aid website](<https://www.mhfaengland.org/>)
- Description: A training course that teaches people how to identify, understand, and help someone who may be experiencing a mental health issue.

4. QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer)

- Contact: [QPR website](<https://qprinstitute.com/>)
- Description: A one-hour training programme that teaches participants how to recognise the warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to question, persuade, and refer someone to help.

Appendix C: Resources and Support Services

1. Internal Resources

- Crisis Intervention Designator:
Michael Addison, Academic Director
Email: m.addison@intfoundationgroup.co.uk
Tel: +44 (0)20 3633 0510 / +44 (0)7814 993368

2. External Resources

- Peer Support Programmes:
Togetherall
<https://togetherall.com>
- Counselling Services:
Adult Safeguarding
T: 020 7641 2176
E: adultsocialcare@westminster.gov.uk

Under 18s
T: 020 7641 4000
E: accesstochildrensservices@westminster.gov.uk
- Student Health Centre:
London Doctors Clinic Oxford Street
6 Newburgh Street, Carnaby, London, W1F 7RQ
Tel: +44 (0)20 3733 5411
<https://www.londondoctorsclinic.co.uk/clinics/oxford-street>

Other External Resources

- Samaritans: 116 123 (UK and Ireland), [Samaritans website](<https://www.samaritans.org/>)
- PAPYRUS HOPELineUK: 0800 068 41 41, [PAPYRUS website](<https://www.papyrus-uk.org/>)
- Mind: 0300 123 3393, [Mind website](<https://www.mind.org.uk/>)
- CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably): 0800 58 58 58, [CALM website](<https://www.thecalmzone.net/>)
- YoungMinds: Text YM to 85258, [YoungMinds website](<https://youngminds.org.uk/>)

Appendix D: Communication Templates

Notification of Suicide Incident to IFG's Community

Subject: Important Notification

Dear [IFG Community Member],

It is with deep sadness that we inform you of the passing of one of our students, [Student's Name], who died by suicide on [Date]. This news is heartbreaking for all of us, and our thoughts and condolences go out to [Student's Name]'s family, friends, and everyone affected by this tragedy.

We understand that this news may be distressing, and we want to remind everyone that support services are available. Counselling services can be reached at [Counselling Services Contact Information], and additional resources are listed below.

In times like these, it is essential to support one another. Please do not hesitate to reach out for help or to offer support to those who may need it.

Sincerely,
[Name]
[Title]
[Contact Information]

Notification of Suicide Attempt to IFG's Community

Subject: Important Notification

Dear [IFG Community Member],

We are writing to inform you that one of our students, [Student's Name], was involved in a serious incident yesterday. [Student's Name] is currently receiving medical care and support. We ask that you respect their privacy and the privacy of their family during this challenging time.

Support services are available for anyone who needs them. Counselling services can be reached at [Counselling Services Contact Information], and additional resources are listed below.

Please be vigilant and supportive of each other during this time. Do not hesitate to reach out if you or someone you know needs assistance.

Sincerely,
[Name]
[Title]
[Contact Information]

Appendix E: Postvention Checklist

1. Immediate Response

- Ensure the safety of all individuals involved.
- Contact emergency services and provide immediate medical assistance if required.
- Notify the crisis intervention approach.

2. Communication

- Prepare a communication plan to inform the IFG's community.
- Use pre-approved templates for initial notifications.
- Coordinate with the communications team for consistent messaging.

3. Support

- Provide immediate grief counselling and support services.
- Identify and support individuals at risk of contagion.
- Offer ongoing counselling and support groups.

4. Review and Debrief

- Conduct a thorough review of the incident.
- Hold debriefing sessions with involved staff and students.
- Document lessons learned and update policies and procedures as necessary.

5. Memorials and Tributes

- Plan and conduct memorials respectfully, avoiding the glamorisation of suicide.
- Coordinate with the family of the deceased regarding tributes and memorials.

Appendix F: Legal and Ethical Considerations

1. Confidentiality

- Ensure all information regarding the incident is kept confidential.
- Share information only with authorised personnel on a need-to-know basis.

2. Information Sharing

- Develop clear protocols for information sharing with external agencies and within the IFG's community.
- Obtain consent from individuals before sharing personal information whenever possible.

3. Ethical Considerations

- Ensure all actions taken are in the best interest of the affected individuals and the broader community.
 - Maintain sensitivity and respect in all communications and interactions related to the incident.
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