

A photograph of two men sitting at a wooden table in a cafe. The man on the left has curly brown hair and is wearing a light blue button-down shirt over a white t-shirt. He is looking intently at a tablet computer. The man on the right has short dark hair and a beard, wearing a dark blue button-down shirt. He is also looking at the tablet. A white coffee cup is on the table to the left. The background is a bright window showing a blurred outdoor scene.

LIFE-SAVING CONVERSATIONS

Suicide Awareness in the Armed Forces community

HELP for
HEROES

WHY WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT SUICIDE

Suicide is a preventable death. Help for Heroes strongly believes that one life taken by suicide is one too many, and so we must address the increase we've seen in veterans struggling with suicidal thoughts.

Research has shown that talking about suicide can reduce suicidal thoughts and lower the chance of someone acting on those feelings^{1,2}. You can make a difference. By reaching out, having a conversation and asking if someone is feeling suicidal, you could save a life.

- **There were 69,420 recorded suicides in the general population in the UK between 2011 and 2021.** This averages at 6,311 deaths per year³
- **Only 27 per cent of people who take their own lives were in contact with mental health services** in the year before their death⁴

We've seen an increase of nearly 20 per cent in reported incidents of suicidal thoughts, intent or attempts amongst veterans we support since 2021⁵.

Similar to the general population, veterans can be at added risk due to factors like gender, social and economic issues and living with mental or physical difficulties. **It's clear we need to start talking about suicide.**

1. Dazzi, T., Gribble, S., Wessely, S. & Fear, N. (2014). Does asking about suicide and related behaviours induce suicidal ideation? What is the evidence? *Psychological Medicine*, 44(16), 3361-3363.

2. DeCou, C. (2017). On the Iatrogenic Risk of Assessing Suicidality: A Meta-Analysis. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behaviour*, 45(5), 531-542.

3. The National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Safety in Mental Health. Annual Report: UK patient and general population data, 2011-2021| 2024| University of Manchester.

4. Suicide after leaving the UK Armed Forces 1996-2018: A cohort study| 2023| Rodway et al | Suicide after leaving the UK Armed Forces 1996-2018: A cohort study | *PLOS Medicine*.

5. From Help for Heroes internal data. 17 per cent. 2021 n = 143 > 2025 n = 168.

THE TIME IS NOW: YOU CAN HELP US TAKE ACTION

Veterans can be reluctant to ask for help. You can help change the culture, by creating suicide-safer communities for veterans in the UK.

Suicide awareness and prevention is woven through our services. From tackling social isolation or addressing the worry of housing and financial issues. To improving physical and psychological health with our clinical and mental health teams.

Our ambassadors and fellowship community, corporate partners, volunteers and staff are also taking Suicide Awareness Training. You can join them. Arm yourself with the tools and confidence to help get people talking and seeking help.

Read on to find out what you can do to help make your community suicide-safer.

ONLINE SUICIDE AWARENESS TRAINING

Could you Read between the Lines? By taking the free Suicide Awareness Training, you'll be building suicide-safer communities. Developed in partnership with Zero Suicide Alliance (ZSA), the training features scenarios, real life stories and resources to help guide you through what to do, should the situation arise.

In just 30 minutes, you'll learn:

- How to spot the signs to help you understand how people are really feeling.
- Tools to be able to start what could be a life-saving conversation.
- How to signpost people who are struggling with their mental health for professional support.



This course is open to everyone.

By taking the training, you could save a life.

Visit: helpforheroes.org.uk/SuicideAwareness

SUICIDE AWARENESS COURSE START THE CONVERSATION

If you are receiving support from us, this free course from our Recovery College will equip you to help anyone experiencing mental health difficulties, which could mean they're at risk of suicide. You will also learn how to spot the signs that could suggest someone is at risk, and what you can do to help.

The online course will be delivered to small groups of students. Sessions are run by our mental health team, and a veteran or family member of our Peer Support Trainer team with lived experience of suicide.

The course equips you with the tools you need to start a conversation about mental health with your peers and families.

What you'll learn:

- How common mental health challenges can affect people.
- Understanding the signs and symptoms that could show someone is at risk.
- How to develop self-care strategies for you and the person you're helping.
- The language you should use when talking about suicide.
- How to have an open conversation about suicide.
- How to develop effective safety plans.
- The range of sources of support available.

Course structure and duration:

- 1 x meet and greet session.
- 1 x 2.5-hour module.

Please Note: The course is delivered as training, it is not intended as counselling or therapy. The course has been designed in a sensitive way, without any graphic discussions or details and we'll not be asking anyone to share personal experiences.



To apply for this course, you'll need to go through our Get Help process. Visit helpforheroes.org.uk/get-help or call our Helpline on **0300 303 9888**.

HIDDEN WOUNDS

If you or a loved one are experiencing difficulties with your mental health, our Hidden Wounds service provides free, confidential psychological wellbeing advice and support to eligible members of the Armed Forces community.

We offer a clinical assessment to help identify the most appropriate treatment plan, followed by a range of evidence-based psychological therapies tailored to individual needs. Sessions are run by a qualified psychological wellbeing therapist and include access to self-guided support, as well as one-to-one sessions.



Visit: **helpforheroes.org.uk**
and search 'Mental Health'.



FURTHER INFORMATION



helpforheroes.org.uk/suicideawareness

SOURCES OF SUPPORT

You can download our Sources of Support PDF from our Suicide Awareness page for a list of support available across the UK. Scan the QR code above or visit helpforheroes.org.uk/suicideawareness

EMERGENCY SUPPORT

If you are feeling suicidal, help and support is available right now. You do not have to struggle with difficult feelings alone.

- For immediate support in an emergency please call 999
- To access confidential emotional support for feelings of distress, despair, or suicidal thoughts – Samaritans freephone **116 123** (24/7) or email jo@samaritans.org

H■**L**P for
HEROES



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