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**To: All Branches**

Dear Colleagues,

**Word Suicide Prevention Day 2020 – 10 September 2020:**

**Join in on World Suicide Prevention Day:**

World Suicide Prevention Day, which first started in 2003, is annually held on September 10 each year. Organised by the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), the purpose of the day is to raise awareness, promote worldwide commitment and action to prevent suicides. 2020 marks the 18th World Suicide Prevention Day.

WHO and IASP work with governments and other partners to ensure that suicide is no longer stigmatised, criminalized or penalised. WHO's role is to build political action and leadership to develop national responses to prevent suicide, strengthen national planning capacity to establish the core building blocks of such a national response, and build the national capacities to implement these responses.

Nearly 3000 people on average commit suicide daily, according to WHO. For every person who completes a suicide, 20 or more may attempt to end their lives. About one million people die by suicide each year. Behind these statistics are the individual stories of those who have, for many different reasons, questioned the value of their own lives. Additionally, the tragic ripple effect means that there are many, many more people who have been bereaved by suicide or have been close to someone who has tried to take his or her own life. And this is happening in spite of the fact that suicide is preventable. Suicide is a major preventable cause of premature death which is influenced by psycho-social, cultural and environmental risk factors that can be prevented through worldwide responses that address these main risk factors. There is strong evidence indicating that adequate prevention can reduce suicide rates.

Every year organisations and communities around the world come together to raise awareness of how people can create a world where fewer people die by suicide. In the UK over 70 suicide prevention and mental health groups under the National Suicide Prevention Alliance (NSPA) collectively campaign to raise awareness of suicide prevention and together, ask governments in the UK and Ireland to make suicide prevention a priority, and help raise awareness about how people can each support each other better.

In 2018, in the UK and Republic of Ireland, more than 6,800 people died of suicide. Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy. The number of people taking their own lives in England has jumped

more than a quarter in two years according to provisional figures collated by the Office of National Statistics. The data compares the final three months of 2019 with the same period of 2017. It shows that there were 1,413 deaths attributed to suicide recorded during that time. According to statisticians, the suicide level reached 11.4 deaths per 100,000 people in late 2019 - which is a 19-year high. The statistics show the number of suicides among men in England has hit almost 4,000 during 2019 compared with around 1,200 women. The number of suicides in England has been growing in recent years according to statistics with 75% of victims being male with the biggest rise among men in their 50s. The figures claim that 2019 saw the highest suicide figures for 5 years and Office of National Statistics (ONS) statistics have confirmed this week that the level of suicides has risen for the first time in five years, to 11.2 deaths per 100,000 in the population.

And we know that suicide is preventable, it's not inevitable.

But not being okay is still widely stigmatized, and governments can still make better, more ambitious plans to prevent suicide.

World Suicide Prevention Day is observed on September 10 each year and aims to promote worldwide action to prevent suicides. Various events and activities are held during this occasion to raise awareness that suicide is a major preventable cause of premature death.

World Suicide Prevention Day gives organisations, government agencies and individuals a chance to promote awareness about suicide, mental illnesses associated with suicide, as well as suicide prevention. Events and activities in various countries for World Suicide Prevention Day include:

- The launch of new government initiatives to prevent suicide.
- Conferences, open days, educational seminars or public lectures.
- Media programmes promoting suicide awareness and prevention.
- Memorial services or candlelight ceremonies to remember those who have died from suicide.
- Organising cultural or spiritual events, fairs or exhibitions.
- Launches of publications about suicide awareness and prevention.
- Training courses about suicide, depression and mental health awareness and first aid.

Many of these initiatives are celebrated in various countries worldwide. Some of these events and activities are held at a local level, while others are nationwide. Many communities around the world reaffirm their commitment to suicide prevention on World Suicide Prevention Day.

#### **What Trade Unionist can do:**

- Raise awareness that suicide is preventable.
- Improve education and training about suicide and mental health issues.
- Spread information about suicide awareness.
- Decrease stigmatisation regarding suicide.
- Write to the Minister demanding more government attention and action to tackle suicide:

Nadine Dorries MP  
Minister for Patient Safety, Suicide Prevention and Mental Health  
Department of Health and Social Care  
39 Victoria Street  
Westminster  
London  
SW1H 0EU

## **'Take a Minute, Change a Life.'**

Taking a minute can change a life was the theme of the 2017 World Suicide Prevention Day. These words are at the heart of suicide prevention and worth reminding ourselves of. Each one of these individuals is part of a community. Some may be well linked in to this community and their workplace and Union Branch, and they'll have a network of family, friends and work colleagues or school mates. Others may be less well connected, and some may be quite isolated. Regardless of the circumstances, communities, workmates, first aiders and Union Reps for example have an important role to play in helping support those who are vulnerable. As members of communities, it is our responsibility to look out for those who may be struggling and distressed, check in with them, and encourage them to tell their story in their own way and at their own pace. Offering a gentle word of support and listening in a non-judgemental way can make all the difference.

People who have lived through a suicide attempt have much to teach us about how the words and actions of others are important. They often talk movingly about reaching the point where they could see no alternative but to take their own life, and about the days, hours and minutes leading up to this. They often describe realising that they did not want to die but instead wanted someone to intervene and stop them. Many say that they actively sought someone who would sense their despair and ask them whether they were okay.

Sometimes they say that they made a pact with themselves that if someone did ask if they were okay, they would tell them everything and allow them to intervene. Sadly, they often reflect that no one asked.

The individuals telling these stories are inspirational. Many of them recount reaching the point where they did try to take their own lives, and tell about coming through it. Many of them are now working as advocates for suicide prevention. Almost universally, they say that if someone had taken a minute, the trajectory that they were on could have been interrupted.

Life is precious and sometimes precarious. Taking a minute to reach out to someone – a complete stranger or close family member, a friend or work colleague – can change the course of their life.

**No one has to have all the answers;** People are often reluctant to intervene, even if they are quite concerned about someone. There are many reasons for this, not least that they fear they will not know what to say. It is important to remember, however, that there is no hard and fast formula. Individuals who have come through an episode of severe suicidal thinking often say that they were not looking for specific advice, but that compassion and empathy from others helped to turn things around for them and point them towards recovery. Another factor that deters people from starting the conversation is that they worry that they may make the situation worse. Again, this hesitation is understandable; broaching the topic of suicide is difficult and there is a myth that talking about suicide with someone can put the idea into their head or trigger the act. The evidence suggests that this is not the case. Being caring and listening with a non-judgemental ear are far more likely to reduce distress than exacerbate it.

### **Resources:**

#### **CWU Guide to Work and Suicide**

See attached pdf copy of the popular CWU 'Guide to Work and Suicide' for CWU Reps.

#### **BITC Suicide Prevention Toolkit**

This Suicide Prevention Toolkit, helps senior leaders, line managers, HR and occupational health professionals identify staff members who may have suicidal feelings and gives practical advice on how to deal with a crisis situation. It was produced in partnership with Public Health England and supported by the Samaritans. The toolkit is aimed at employers to help embed suicide prevention strategies in their organisation's health and wellbeing policies, guide the approach to supporting those at risk and act as a resource to provide support across the workforce and it gives guidance on a workplace suicide prevention programme. CWU Reps will find a lot of interesting and useful information in the toolkit. Employers are in a unique position to help employees understand the importance of wellbeing and good mental health, and the knowledge of how to keep safe and well and how to spot the signs of being unwell. This toolkit is designed to help organisations adopt a strategy to reduce the risk of a suicide that will have an impact on the workplace. In this context, the term 'workplace suicide' is understood to be a suicide in or outside the workplace. (See copy attached).

### **Zero Suicide Alliance Booklet**

The Zero Suicide Alliance campaign wants to shatter this stigma by getting more people talking about suicide, sharing thoughts, offering support. They state that there are more of us affected by it than you think. Because it's only when we start talking about suicide that we realise how many of our friends, neighbours and colleagues' lives have been touched by it. The Zero Suicide Alliance campaign aims to get people together and start a conversation and to help friends and work colleagues to understand that it can affect anyone, and what we can all do to help in raising awareness and educating EVERYONE about the part we can all play in suicide prevention. The concise 10 page booklet gives some good basic 5-step advice on keeping physically and mentally well; staying active, eating well, limiting alcohol, avoiding drugs and staying social. A copy of the Booklet is attached. The ZSA Poster is also attached to display.

### **Zero Suicide Alliance (ZSA) On-Line Suicide Prevention Training:**

ZSA provide a range of awareness training options, which provide a better understanding of the signs to look out for and the skills required to approach someone who is struggling, whether that be through social isolation or suicidal thoughts. The ZSA 'FREE' on-line suicide prevention training course will teach you how to recognise the warning signs and safeguard someone that could be contemplating suicide - It takes 20 minutes to complete and is available at: [www.zerosuicidealliance.com](http://www.zerosuicidealliance.com).

Also available at the ZSA Website are FREE newsletters, videos and resources such as posters, e-mail banners, screen-savers and other campaign material to help spread the word and raise awareness.

The CWU Health, Safety & Environment Department is supporting the ZSA campaign as part of the Union's overall Mental Health Strategy and is urging all CWU Reps to access and complete the on-line training.

### **Mental Health First Aid Training**

The CWU Health, Safety & Environment Department has been raising awareness and promoting Mental Health First Aid Training for CWU Reps since the courses became available in the UK in 2007 and would continue to encourage CWU Reps to attend the 2-Day Course.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) came to England in 2007 and was developed and launched under the Department of Health and National Institute for Mental Health in England as part of a national approach to improving public mental health. Mental Health First Aid England was launched as a community interest company in 2009. The CWU National HQ Mental Health Strategy Group have taken this forward to develop our own in-house network of MHFA

Trainers across all regions of the UK, providing courses where required. For further information contact either the CWU Regional Secretary or CWU/HQ Equality, Education & Development Department.

### **Please Visit these Websites:**

- The International Association of Suicide Prevention: [www.iasp.info/wspd](http://www.iasp.info/wspd) (provides a Suicide Toolkit and Suicide 'What you can do' support guide)
- The Samaritans website: [www.samaritans.org/](http://www.samaritans.org/) (lots of information, support guidance, annual suicide statistics, reports, 24 hour helpline)
- World Health Organization: <http://www.who.int> (suicide fact sheet and other information available)
- The Official World Suicide Prevention Day Facebook Event Page at: <https://www.facebook.com/events/s/world-suicide-prevention-day/605931673628490/>

### **Conclusion:**

Mental health, stress, depression and anxiety are at epidemic levels in the UK and suicide rates are a big concern. Better support for people experiencing mental health problems would help prevent suicides and enable people to lead fulfilling lives with manageable conditions. However, lack of support means many people are growing increasingly desperate. It needs to be made easier for people to find help without shame or stigma at work as well as at home and in the community. We also need to raise awareness generally to ensure those in distress are recognised and signposted to get professional help and support before it's too late.

**Remember** - On September 10th, we are working towards the common goal of preventing suicide but it's not just for one day! World Suicide Prevention Day is the annual focal point and effort needs to continue all year round. The information in this LTB will allow Health and Safety Reps, Branches, CWU Regional Health and Safety Sub-Committees, Joint Health and Safety Committees etc., to organise and run their own local awareness raising initiatives to their own timetable and agenda. Show your support by raising awareness through workplace, branch, regional, area or community action. You can find out what local activities have been scheduled or initiate activities yourself. We need to make sure that clinicians and other service providers care enough about it to make suicide prevention their core business. And we need to make sure that communities care enough about it to be able to identify and support those who may be at heightened risk. We also need to ensure that we are caring ourselves!

**Finally, if there is anyone you are concerned about, take a minute to check in with them. It could change their life.**

### **Where to go for help:**

#### **The Samaritans**

The report advises those struggling to cope and needing someone to talk to, to either:-

- Call Samaritans on their Helpline 116 123 or
- e-mail [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) or
- visit Samaritans website: <https://www.samaritans.org/>

Samaritans are available round the clock, every single day of the year, providing a safe place for anyone struggling to cope, whoever they are, however they feel, whatever life has done to them. If you need someone to talk to, Samaritans will listen and won't judge or tell you what to do! For urgent support call – 24 Hours a Day.

### **Contact Details For Samaritans England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland:**

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CWU 150 The Broadway, Wimbledon, London, SW19 1RX  
email: [info@cwu.org](mailto:info@cwu.org) Tel: 020 8971 7200 Fax: 020 8971 7300  
General Secretary: Dave Ward

 [@DaveWardGS](https://twitter.com/DaveWardGS)  [Dave Ward CWU](https://www.facebook.com/DaveWardCWU)

## Samaritans Central Office England

Central Office telephone: +44 (0)20 8394 8300

Central Office email: [admin@samaritans.org](mailto:admin@samaritans.org)

Central Office postal address: The Upper Mill, Kingston Road, Ewell, Surrey KT17 2AF

## Samaritans in Ireland

Ireland Office telephone: +353 1 6710071

Ireland Office email: [ireland@samaritans.org](mailto:ireland@samaritans.org)

Ireland Office postal address: 4-5 Usher's Court, Usher's Quay, Dublin 8

## Samaritans in Scotland

Scotland Office telephone: +44 (0)131 556 7058

Scotland Office email: [scotland@samaritans.org](mailto:scotland@samaritans.org)

Scotland Office postal address: CBC House, 24 Canning Street, Edinburgh EH3 8EG

## Samaritans in Wales

Wales Office telephone: +44 (0)29 2022 2008

Wales Office email: [wales@samaritans.org](mailto:wales@samaritans.org)

Wales Office postal address: Floor 2, 33-35 Cathedral Road, Cardiff CF11 9HB

### Attachments:

- CWU Guide to Work and Suicide
- BITC Suicide Prevention Toolkit
- Zero Suicide Alliance Guidance Booklet
- ZSP Poster

## ***World Suicide Prevention Day – Thursday 10 September 2020***

Yours sincerely



**Dave Joyce**  
**National Health, Safety & Environment Officer**



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