

Schools Safeguarding Forum

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Safeguarding
in Schools

Southwark
Council

Suicide Prevention in Southwark

DSL Network, July 2nd 2026

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Background

Southwark Public Health have a Leadership role in Suicide Prevention across the Borough

An overview of Suicide Prevention in Southwark

- All Health and Wellbeing Boards in England have a [responsibility](#) to produce Suicide Prevention Strategies and action plans. The development of these are usually led by local Public Health teams.
- In Southwark, Public Health lead on the development of the local suicide prevention strategy, the current strategy is- [Preventing Suicides in Southwark Strategy 2023-2028](#)
- The Southwark Suicide Prevention Partnership is the multi-agency partnership working to prevent suicides in Southwark. The partnership was created to develop, implement and monitor the *Preventing Suicides in Southwark 2023-2028 Strategy and Action Plan*.
- In the event of a suicide cluster, local Public Health teams in England lead the multi-agency response, using local plans and the [national guidance on responding to suicide clusters](#). In Southwark, there are multi-agency rapid response group for both CYP and adult suicide clusters or serious incidents.
- The Child Death Review team for Southwark, Lambeth and Bromley review all under 18 deaths by suspected suicide in Southwark

Data on suicide and self-harm

National Picture

- In England in 2024, there were 5,717 deaths by suicide, equivalent to a rate of 11.1 per 100,000 people
- In 2024, suicide rates were highest in the North East (11.1 deaths per 100,000) and North West and Yorkshire & Humber (13.7 per 100,000) regions, and lowest in London (8.3 per 100,000).
- Suicide rates were about 3 times higher in males (17 per 100,000) than females (5.6 per 100,000 deaths).

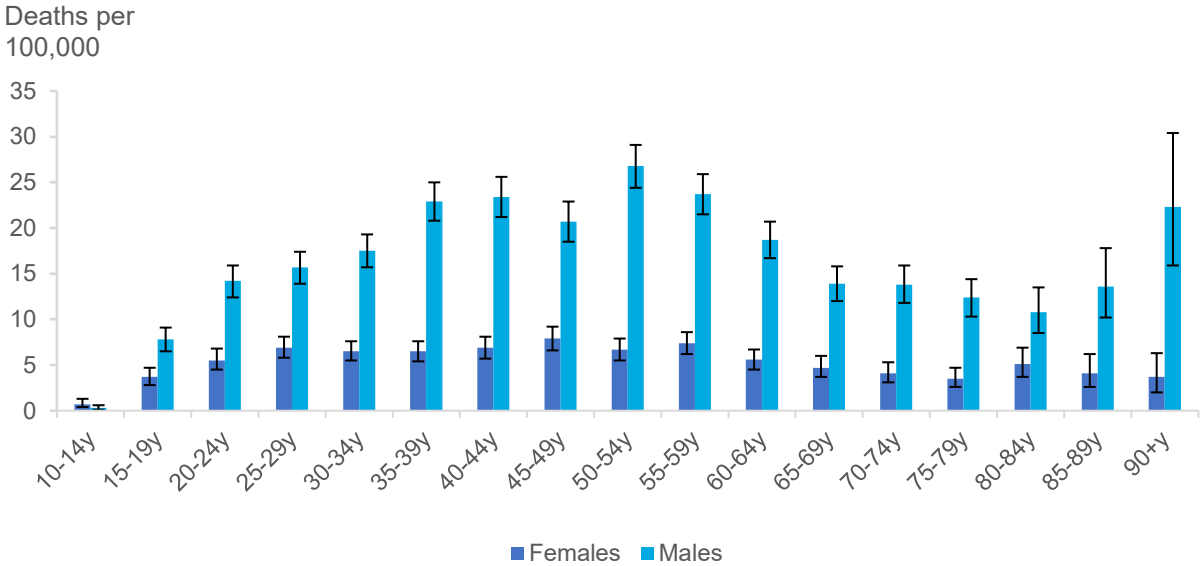
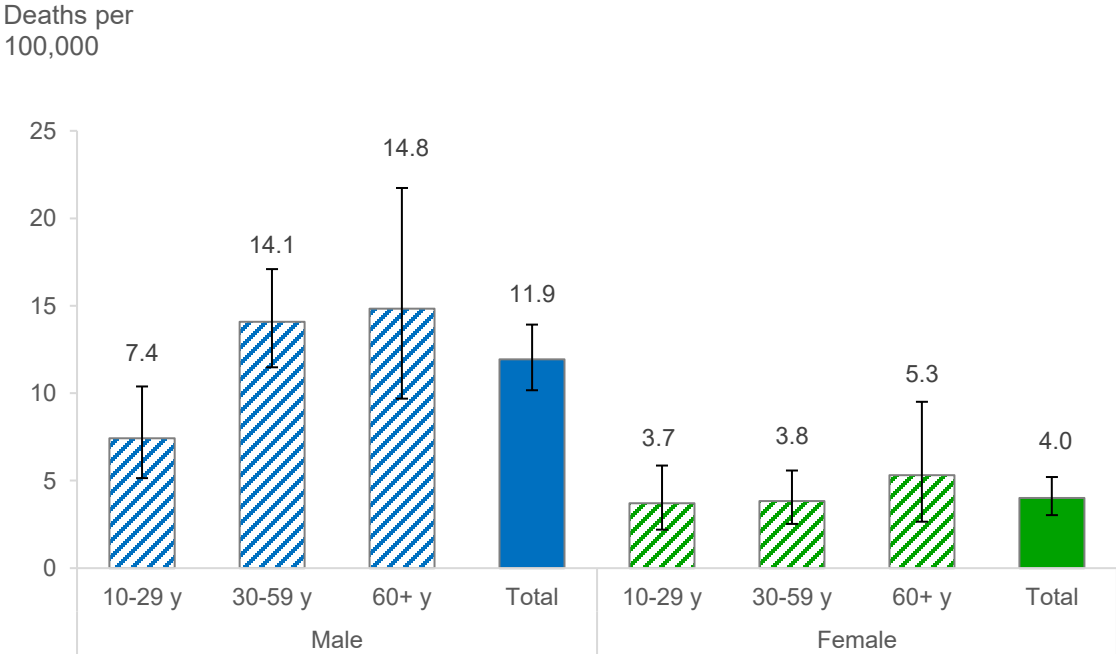


Figure 1: Age-specific suicide rates per 100,000 in England, by age group and sex, for deaths* registered in 2024. Bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

Southwark's 2022–24 3-yr suicide rate was similar to London and lower than England levels, with a downward trend

Suicide Statistics in Southwark

- In 2022–24, Southwark's suicide rate (8.3 per 100,000), which is the same as London rate and lower than England rate (11.1 per 100,000 people)
- The Southwark resident suicide rates were almost 3.5 times higher in males (13.2 per 100,000) than in females (3.8 per 100,000) overall.
- Rates were lower in under-30 yr males than in mid-age men; female rates were similar across age groups.



10-yr Southwark suicide deaths per 100,000 residents, by sex and age group, 2014 to 2023

In 2023/24, CYP self-harm admission rates were statistically similar for 10–14, 15–19 and 20–24 yr olds

Local Picture (Self-harm)

Southwark’s 2023/24 hospital self-harm admission rates for all three CYP age groups were statistically similar to London levels and significantly lower than England levels.

In 2023/24, CYP self-harm admission rates were statistically similar for 10–14, 15–19 and 20–24 yr olds

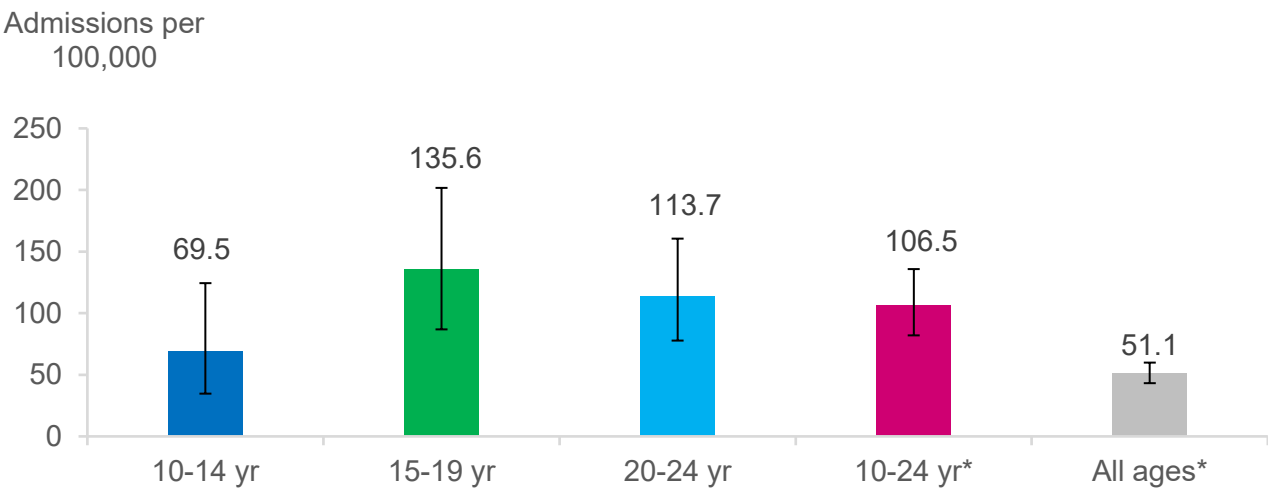
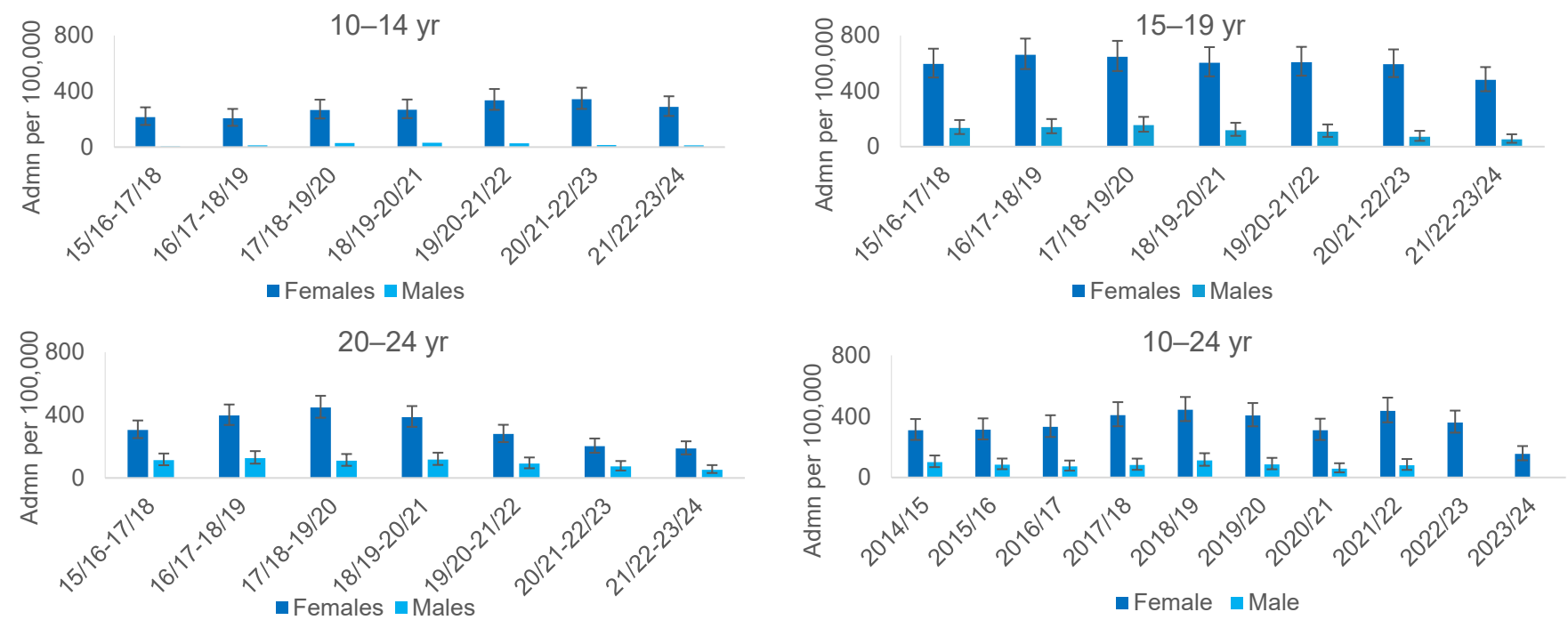


Figure 3: Emergency hospital admissions due to intentional self-harm, as crude rates per 100,000 Southwark 10-14 yr, 15-19 yr and 20-24 yr residents, and as *directly standardised rates for 10-24 yr and all-age residents, in 2023/24

Southwark girls and young women consistently have much higher self-harm hospital admission rates than male peers

Local Picture (Self-harm)

Southwark 10–24 yr females have 3 to 5 times higher intentional self-harm admission rates than males; 15–19 yr female 3-yr rates are 5 to 9 times higher than male peers.

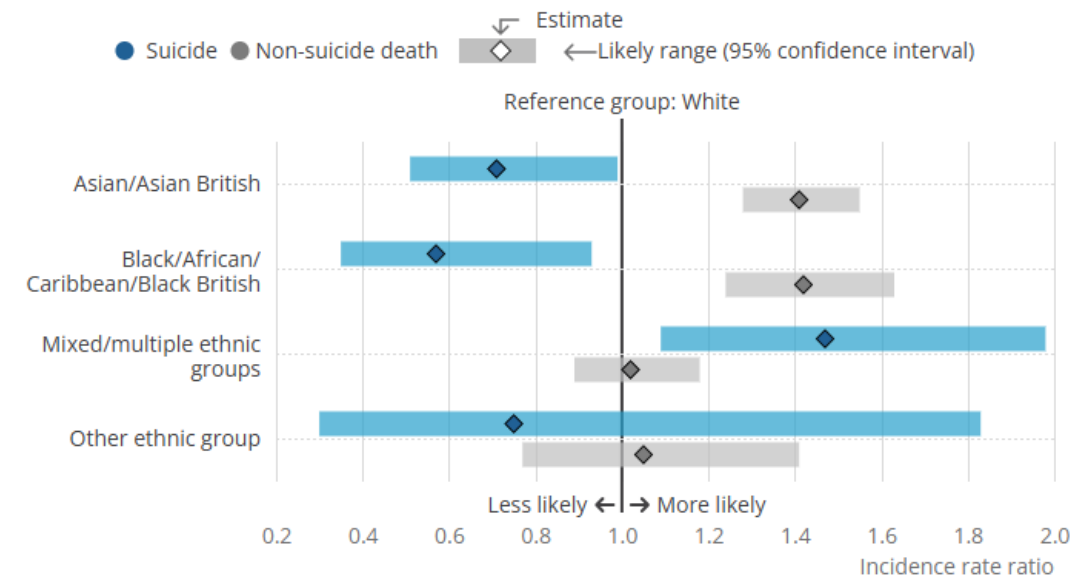


Figure

Some children and young people are at higher risk of suicide than others

Insights on CYP suicides (ONS data)

- In 2025, the ONS analysed mortality data and information from the 2011 Census to build a picture of the groups of children and young people who experience a higher risk of dying by suicide. The population includes nearly 8 million children and young people in England.
- Key findings include:
 - Suicide rates for females are around two thirds that of males
 - Males with special educational needs saw a higher risk of suicide than those without
 - suicide rates are around 1.7 times higher in households with degree-level qualifications
 - Children and young people in Muslim and Christian households had lower suicide rates
 - Children and young people from a Mixed or Multiple ethnic background had higher rates of suicide



62% of children or young people reviewed had suffered a significant personal loss in their life prior to their death

Insights on CYP suicides (NCMD data)

- Services should be aware that child suicide is not limited to certain groups; rates of suicide were similar across all areas, and regions in England, including urban and rural environments, and across deprived and affluent neighbourhoods.
- 62% of children or young people (CYP) reviewed had suffered a significant personal loss in their life prior to their death, this includes bereavement and “living losses” such as loss of friendships and routine due to moving home or school or other close relationship breakdown.
- Over one third of the CYP reviewed had never been in contact with mental health services. This suggests that mental health needs or risks were not identified prior to the child or young person’s death.
- 16% of CYP reviewed had a confirmed diagnosis of a neurodevelopmental condition at the time of their death. For example, autism spectrum disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. This appears higher than found in the general population.
- Almost a quarter of CYP reviewed had experienced bullying either face to face or cyber bullying. The majority of reported bullying occurred in school, highlighting the need for clear anti-bullying policies in schools.

In 2024, there was a review into child suicide cases across Southwark, Lambeth and Bromley from 2020 and 2023

What we know about CYP suicides (local Child death review data)

In 2024, Public Health reviewed child suicide cases across Southwark, Lambeth and Bromley from 2020 and 2023. Key modifiable factors identified through this review included:

- **Excessive and secretive use of social media**, with children often isolating themselves
- **Suicidal or Self-Harm Ideation**: Many children expressed suicidal thoughts or self-harm behaviours, often posting about them on social media platforms
- **Domestic or Child Abuse/Neglect**: There were instances of domestic violence, parental neglect, and failure to attend medical appointments
- **Lack of appropriate parental / carer supervision**: The parent or carer is not providing adequate support or supervision to mitigate harmful behaviours.
- **Poor Information Sharing**: Ineffective communication and lack of information sharing between agencies led to missed safeguarding referrals and inadequate support.
- **Missed Clinical Signs**: Social care services failed to recognise or act on significant trauma or deteriorating mental health, missing opportunities for support.
- **Challenges for Parents with Access to Services**: Issues include language barriers, and difficulty in navigating complex care pathways

Key areas of work

The Preventing Suicides in Southwark Strategy 2023-2028 sets out 49 actions across 5 priority areas.

Preventing Suicides in Southwark Strategy 2023-2028

The [Preventing Suicides in Southwark Strategy 2023-2028](#) set out actions around five priority areas, including Reducing the risk of suicide, attempted suicide and self-harm among CYP, and providing support to educational settings.

49 actions were committed to as part of the strategy.

The *Southwark Suicide Prevention Partnership* is the multi-agency partnership working to prevent suicides in Southwark.

The Preventing Suicides in Southwark Strategy has resulted In 1282 being trained in Mental Health/ Suicide First Aid

Key achievements to date of the Preventing Suicides in Southwark Strategy

- The delivery of the Southwark Mental Health First Aid and Suicide Prevention Training Programme -training 1,422 staff and volunteers between March 2024 to March 2026.
- The SEL Suicide Bereavement Service has been operational since August 2021. Over 4 years, the service has received over 800 referrals in total and has supported 73 Southwark residents bereaved by suicide.
- The successful launch of a new Southeast London Mental Health Self-Harm Pilot in late June 2025 to support children and young people aged 11-17, through offering them the support of a youth worker. As of December 2025, the team at the Southwark site at Denmark Hill (King's College Hospital) have supported 16 young people.
- Public Health and partners have developed local suicide cluster response plans to ensure a rapid multiagency response to a potential or actual suicide cluster. This includes the development of a working draft protocol for responding to suicides in school settings.

There is a wide range of work ongoing around suicide prevention on a local, regional and national level

Wider Suicide Prevention work

- There is a wide range of work ongoing around suicide prevention on a SEL London, London and national level
- National strategy for England - [Suicide prevention in England: 5-year cross-sector strategy - GOV.UK](#)– with CYP actions set out in the [action plan](#)
- OHID London (DSHC) provide support at a London level and coordinate Community of Practice sessions for London professionals working in suicide prevention
- The SEL ICB coordinate a Self-Harm Response and Prevention Network brings together key ICB and Council professionals working in suicide and self-harm prevention. Key (SEL ICB led) outputs of this group include:
 - New guidance developed on ICB led suicide cluster responses - *This will occur when there is a death within a SEL ICB commissioned inpatient service within the SEL geographical footprint.*
 - Annual reports on persons known to mental health services relating to suspected self-harm; fatal and non-fatal, broken down by Borough
 - The launch of a Self-Harm Pilot in late June 2025 to support children and young people aged 11-17, through offering them the support of a youth worker at King's College Hospital

The checklist combines elements of the child death review Process and suicide cluster response process

The school aged post-vention checklist

- The purpose of the checklist is to support a systematic multi-agency postvention response to sudden and unexpected deaths among school-aged children and/or young people.
- The aims are to:
 - coordinate postvention activity at a multiagency level
 - support the systematic monitoring, identifying and responding to possible clusters of fatal self-harm
 - ensure that OHID's [Responding to suicide clusters guidance](#) is adhered to
 - Linking into other relevant processes such as child death review
- The checklist is a working draft and is still awaiting final approval. At which point it can be shared formally with all schools

Public Health have led on the response to multiple Incidents

Development of the checklist

- The development of the checklist followed multiple incidents where Public Health led on the local response to a child death by suicide or an unexpected death
- These responses brought together a range of stakeholders, in meetings chaired by the Public Health consultant for CYP, including:
 - CAMHS
 - Public Health officer for Child death
 - Children's services
 - Education
 - Educational psychology (Southwark Council)
 - Communications team (Southwark Council)
 - Metropolitan police Detective Inspector
 - Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children (SEL ICB)
- Learning exercises following each incident which supported with the development of the checklist
- The above stakeholders were involved in the development of the checklist. Some Southwark schools were also consulted

The checklist breaks down actions to be taken within the hours, days, weeks and months following the death

Within 24 hours of receiving notification of death

- Contacting the school
- Signposting to the Educational Psychology Service
- Alerting members of the multi-agency postvention team to death and gather availability for initial meeting.

In the first 2-3 days post- notification

- Holding an initial multi-agency postvention meeting. If a suspected suicide, decide whether a formal suicide cluster response is required
- Working through the OHID [Responding to suicide clusters](#) at this meeting

In the weeks and months following

- Continue to monitor and safeguard those identified as most affected by the death
- Ensure enhanced surveillance is in place to help identify any possible linked cases
- Update members of the multi-agency postvention group with any key developments

Closing the response

- Sets out conditions for when response can be closed and ongoing monitoring
- A plan should be established for implementing lessons learned from sudden and unexpected death and the postvention support process

Suicide Prevention support resources

Suicide Prevention training can help you identify the signs that someone may be having thoughts of suicide

Suicide Prevention training

Zero suicide alliance training [#ZeroSuicideLDN - Thrive LDN](#)

- The course is free and 20 minutes long
- The course will help:
 - improve your suicide awareness
 - identify the signs that someone may be having thoughts of suicide
 - have an appropriate conversation with someone who may be having thoughts of suicide and keep them safe
- The ZSA also [offer free live suicide prevention training webinars, with multiple dates available until October 2026](#).

Samaritans Internet, Suicide and Self-harm training [Free e-learning course | Internet, Suicide and Self-harm](#)

- The course explores:
 - Why it's important to ask people about their internet use around suicide and self-harm.
 - What people do online and the potential risks and benefits of exploring suicide and self-harm online.
 - How to ask the people you support about their internet use.
 - What advice you can give to help people stay safe and have positive experiences online.

A range of free and paid mental health training courses is available from well-recognised organisations.

Other training offers

Trauma informed training

- Thrive LDN offers free, online trauma-informed practice training designed for anyone in a role supporting others, whether formal or informal - [Trauma-Informed Practice training - Thrive LDN](#)
- Other free online mental health training available at: [training - Thrive LDN](#)

MindEd - www.minded.org.uk a free online education resource with more than 500 e-learning courses covering mental health for children, young people, adults and older people

Thrive LDN Mental Health First Aid top up webinars

- available for individuals who have already completed Mental Health First Aid training and wish to continue developing their skills - <https://thriveldn.co.uk/communications/toolkits-and-resources/toolkit/mental-health-first-aid-top-up-webinars/>

For further information on available mental health training go to:
southwark.gov.uk/mental-health-training

The SEL Suicide Bereavement service supports people of all ages, including children and young people

SEL Suicide Bereavement

- The NHS funded South East London Suicide Bereavement Service supports people who have lost someone to suicide across the boroughs of Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark. They work with people who live in these boroughs and those whose loved one lived or died in these boroughs.
- Support is offered to those who have witnessed a suicide.
- The services works with people of all ages, including children and young people who feel they would benefit from their support.
- When they receive a referral for a child, they will do an assessment to make sure the support we can offer is suitable for their needs.

selmind.org.uk/suicide-bereavement-support

A 24/7 suicide prevention helpline is available to support any professional who has had an experience with suicide

Support to professionals and Young people

Professionals - [Papyrus debrief offer](#): 24/7 suicide prevention helpline which is available to support any professional who has had an experience with suicide and would like to talk it through with a trained professional.

CYP suicide prevention support

- [The Papyrus HOPELINEUK](#) offers phone, text and email support for young people experiencing suicidal thoughts. Call them on 0800 068 4141, 9am to 12am 365 days a year.
- [Childline](#) on 0800 1111 or the [Samaritans](#) on 116 123
- [Kooth](#) is an online counselling service for individuals aged 10 to 25 years old to get free, anonymous mental health and emotional wellbeing support.

NHS crisis support CYP

For those aged 17 or under and need immediate emotional and practical phone support:

- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Crisis Line - 020 3228 5980
- NHS 111 and select the mental health option

Find out more at: [Mental health support and advice | Southwark Council](#)

Support for schools

Public Health encourage all schools to develop suicide prevention and post-vention plans

Preparing for a school suicide

All schools should consider developing suicide prevention and post-vention plans:

- The [Papyrus guidance](#) includes:
 - Example template to use to develop a policy
 - Establishing a school Suicide Postvention Team
 - Who to train/ or to make 'suicide-aware' within the school community

The [Samaritans Step by Step](#) includes:

- Detailed guidance on how to respond to a suicide, including:
 - Handling the media
 - effectively communicating the news of a suicide
 - Managing funerals/ memorials
 - How to contact the team for phone support

If there is a child death by suspected suicide in your school:

- We recommend that schools call the [Samaritans step by Step](#) team for immediate expert postvention support - Email: stepbystep@samaritans.org / Phone: 0808 168 2528
- Notify the Southwark Public Health team at public.health@southwark.gov.uk to link in with the Public Health led postvention response

Questions

Find out more at:
www.southwark.gov.uk/publichealth