

Appendix 2: Suicide Risk Factors and Warning Signs

- There are a number of evidence based suicide risk assessment tools and rating scales available that can help inform and support the judgment of the assessor, although it must be acknowledged they can never replace it.
- The risk factors and warning signs below have been taken from a broad literature review and also identified as being common in a number of recent suicides in England and Wales.

Risk Factors

- No one risk factor or set of risk factors necessarily conveys an increased risk of suicide, or its imminence. However, the following factors have been found to be present in a number of suicides and if present should alert the assessor to a potential risk:
 - Mental Illness, e.g. Schizophrenia, Bi Polar Disorder
 - Current or previous history of Depression
 - Previous or recent suicide attempt
 - Family history of suicide
 - Recent discharge or lack of engagement with psychiatric services/non-compliance with medication
 - Loss: spouse, close family member, employment, financial
 - Serious illness, self or family member
 - Relationship difficulties or breakdown
 - Domestic Violence
 - Alcohol or drug misuse
 - Problems with Authority, e.g. The UK Border and Immigration Authorities, additional criminal charges and lengthening of sentence.
 - First time in prison, early stages of custody
 - Feelings of failure, shame, guilt, remorse or humiliation
 - Cultural or language difficulties, leading to feelings of isolation
 - Receiving or perceiving bad news

Warning Signs

- A review of literature has identified a number warning signs that empirically have been shown to be temporarily related to the acute onset of suicidal behaviour's, e.g. within hours to a few days. ^[5]
- The first three signs should warn the assessor of an acute risk of suicidal behaviour, especially in those individuals with other associated risk factors:
 - Threatening to kill or hurt self
 - Looking for ways to kill self; seeking to access pills, weapons or other means
 - Talking or writing about death, sending a farewell letter
 - Preparation for dying, writing a will, getting affairs in order

The remaining list of warning signs should alert the assessor that precautions should be put in place to ensure the safety and security of the individual:

- Rage, anger seeking revenge
- Anxiety agitation, tearfulness, sleeplessness or sleeping a lot
- Feelings of despair or hopelessness
- No sense of purpose or reason for living
- Dramatic changes in mood or behaviour; sudden or increasing alcohol misuse, aggression, (may be due to neurological/organic disorder
- Reckless behaviour, or engaging in risky activities
- Withdrawing from friends, family or society, becoming isolated

Appendix 3 : Literature Review and Further Reading

1. Ministry of Justice, *Safety in Custody statistics England and Wales, end June 2013*
2. Royal College of Psychiatrists, *Suicides in Prisons*, February 2002
3. World Health Organisation (WHO), *Preventing Suicide in Prisons and Jails*, 2007
4. Rudd M.D. et al, *The Assessment and Management of Suicidality*; Sarasota, FI Professional Resource Press, 2006
5. *National Confidential Enquiry in to Suicide and Homicide by People with Mental Illness Annual Report*, July 2013
6. Beck Aaron T., Kovacs M., Weissman A. *Assessment of Suicidal Ideation* Journal of Clinical Psychology volume 47 (2) April 79, 343-352
7. *Suicide Risk Management Diagnosis Step by Step* British Medical Journal (BMJ) publishing Group 2011 – Best Practice, Evidence Centre
8. Ministry of Justice, National Offender Management Service; *Suicide Prevention and Self-Harm Management PSI 64/2011*
9. Adrienne Rivlin DPhil, Keith Hawton, DSc, Lisa Marzano, PHD and Seena Faze, MD – *Psychiatric disorders in male prisoners who made near lethal suicide attempts ;case control study*
10. Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC); *Professional Code of Conduct and Scope of Professional Practice (2002) and Guidance for Nurses in Verification of Death (2008)*
11. *Resuscitation Council Guidelines (2010)*
12. Royal College of Nursing (RCN) *Advisory Paper (2004)*
13. *Decisions relating To CPR - Joint statement from the British Medical Association (BMA), the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) and the Resuscitation Council, 2007*
14. Fruehwald S, Matschnig T, Koenig F, Bauer P. Frottier P - *Suicide in Custody; a case control study. British Journal of Psychiatry 2004,185;494-498]*
15. Centre for Suicide Research Dept of Psychiatry University of Oxford, *Assessment of Suicide Risk in People with Depression*

16. Shaw, J. et al, *National Study of Self-inflicted Deaths by Prisoners 2008-2010*,
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