



Kingston University

Suicide Prevention Strategy

Student Services

2025/26

Issue Date: August 2023

Approved by: Senior Leadership Team

Review Date: February 2025

Reviewed by: Student Life Committee

Introduction and scope

1. Any unexpected, sudden death is greatly impactful on everyone involved. Death by suicide can be particularly devastating for family and friends, and deeply affects the whole University community. At Kingston University, we aim to ensure all students have access to relevant and timely support if they find themselves struggling with their mental health and wellbeing while studying with us.
2. Kingston University takes a whole institution approach to preventing student suicide by:
 - reducing risk through creating safer living and learning communities,
 - establishing effective suicide prevention interventions, and
 - ensuring that students and staff who are affected by suicide, or have attempted suicide, are supported to access timely and appropriate support, working in partnership with stakeholders within the University and relevant local, regional, and national agencies.
3. The mental health and wellbeing of our students is a priority, and our commitment to promoting and supporting good mental health underpins the Kingston University culture and experience. This strategy forms part of the University's overarching [Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework](#). It sets out Kingston University's approach to prevention, intervention and postvention in relation to student suicide. The strategy focuses on the University's role in preventing and responding to *student* suicides but acknowledges the impact this may also have on the wellbeing of *staff*. Kingston University has a separate [Student Death and Serious Incident Procedure](#), that covers in more detail how we respond to student deaths.
4. This strategy aligns with [Suicide-safer Universities](#) guidance provided by Universities UK and Papyrus, and with the Suicide Prevention Action Plan created by the Royal Borough of Kingston. It outlines the roles, responsibilities, and processes through which we seek to prevent suicide (prevention and intervention). It also considers our response when, despite best practice, a sudden death by suspected suicide does occur (postvention).
5. This policy was approved and issued by the Senior Leadership Team and will be reviewed annually by the Student Life Committee.

Prevention

6. Many people experience suicidal thoughts and feelings at some point in their lives. Preventative approaches aim to identify people who may be at risk before they start to plan or attempt a suicide. This requires a clear, whole-university approach.
7. Our [Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework](#) sets out Kingston University's whole institution and student lifecycle approach to preventing and addressing mental health decline. The Framework is aligned with the domains of the [Student Minds Charter](#) for which Kingston University is a signatory.
8. The University has strong links with secondary schools and colleges in the local community through a comprehensive education liaison and outreach programme. We seek to ensure a smooth transition to university through this work, as well as our pre-arrival programme, Head Start, and other initiatives. Through enrolment, induction and reinduction processes and activities, as well as additional communications and campaigns throughout the year, students are encouraged and supported to disclose any difficulties they are having and seek support, as and when they need it.

This includes disclosing any mental health diagnosis so that appropriate support and adjustments can be put in place. The University initiates proactive contact across the admissions cycle with those who declare a mental health condition.

9. Students can find information about support directly via our [Student Hub](#) (internal link), which includes access to university services and signposting to external support from NHS trusts, the voluntary sector and other relevant organisations. We also provide students with self-help guides and resources on a broad range of topics.
10. The University aims to model and nurture good communications, and we provide guidance for all staff on how to raise concerns about a student's welfare so these can be followed up quickly, including what actions to take in an emergency: [Students of concern - guidance for staff](#) (internal link). This includes specific guidance on how to respond to a student disclosing self-harm or suicidal thoughts.
11. Modules on *Safeguarding, Supporting Student Mental Health and Wellbeing, and Implementing Reasonable Adjustments*, form part of essential training for all staff. Academic staff are encouraged to embed wellbeing within the curriculum and have a specific Mental Health Toolkit within the Support for Academic Staff canvas module. Specific training on suicide awareness has been introduced for key frontline staff and we will continue to provide opportunities for our staff and students to develop skills and confidence to support others who are experiencing mental distress through training and open discussions.
12. The university will continue to drive forward actions to prevent and take strong action against bullying and harassment through focused campaigns and our reporting tool, [Report and Support](#).

Intervention

13. It is not unusual for students to reference suicidal thoughts and feelings. At Kingston University we aim to create an environment where students do not feel isolated or stigmatised but are comfortable to have open and honest conversations about their feelings, including suicidal thoughts and ideation. In these situations it is important that staff can listen to the student express such feelings calmly and respond appropriately. We recognise the importance of asking students about any suicidal thoughts and plans they express, so appropriate actions can be taken.
14. We aim to ensure that all members of the University community know how to identify and support someone who may be at risk of suicide through emergency intervention, signposting and/or referrals. This includes academic staff, the student engagement team, accommodation team, student conduct and complaints team, and student advice staff. We provide guidance for all staff about the processes and procedures in place to raise concerns about students who are in distress or disclose suicidal ideation, and how to contact emergency services if this is indicated. In addition, there are specific roles with a particular focus on both signposting and directly supporting students' mental health and wellbeing.
15. Institutional safeguarding leads and student wellbeing staff are trained to develop safety plans with individual students at risk of suicide. We offer one-off sessions, short-term counselling and have good links and referral processes in place with external services such as statutory mental health services and NHS crisis intervention teams. The University cannot replicate or replace statutory

services but works closely with them to make sure our students are offered the most appropriate support for their care needs.

16. Academic attendance and engagement are monitored by a central student engagement team, as well as course leaders and personal tutors, so we can proactively contact students who show signs of not engaging and offer them support. This data can also be used as appropriate to assist in investigating concerns about a student's welfare (e.g., if they are reported missing).
17. In line with the University's data protection policy, we do not disclose information about students to third parties without the express consent of the individual. However, there are occasions when a student may need emergency or crisis support due to health and wellbeing concerns. At such times, our priority is to involve external services with the relevant expertise to protect the vital interests of the student. In these circumstances we may also notify a student's 'emergency contact' about our concerns and the actions we have taken, using the most recent contact details provided by the student.

Postvention

18. The immediate aftermath of a suspected suicide can be stressful, confusing, and highly emotive for everyone involved. The University has postvention plans in place to ensure an effective, appropriate, and timely response.
19. The term postvention refers to actions taken following a suspected suicide with the aim of providing compassionate support to the bereaved, caring for affected students and staff, reducing the risk of further suicides and ensuring lessons are learnt to continuously improve suicide prevention policies and action plans.
20. In the event of an unexpected death, including suspected suicide, the Student Death and Serious Incident Procedure will guide most of our postvention actions. Each member of the team involved in a suspected student suicide will have a defined responsibility. The overall process will be overseen by the Executive Director for Students and/or the Director of Student Services.
21. Staff and students who are identified as potentially being affected by any student death will be offered support, which may include individual or group counselling.
22. Internal communications for staff and students, including memorial arrangements or open meetings, will be agreed as appropriate.

Next steps

23. This strategy sets out our current approach to creating a Suicide Safer University. The University will continue to develop, embed, and refine our approach utilising appropriate tools and information to inform future developments.
24. We recognise that enacting our Student Suicide Prevention Strategy requires an ongoing institutional commitment and development of whole institutional approaches. We will work with our staff and students to embed the developments and commitments set out in this strategy and to develop and refine appropriate policy, protocols, and guidance to formalise and embed our approach.