# How to deal with threats of suicide

## Guidance for colleagues

## 1. Introduction

1.1 Colleagues should treat all threats of suicide as a potential life threatening risk to the individual and a reputational risk to the organisation if we do not act appropriately. Any tenant expressing suicidal intentions must be taken very seriously.

1.2 This guidance is to help colleagues when dealing with cases when a tenant suggests or implies they may be considering the possibility of committing suicide. Colleagues are not expected to counsel tenants when this occurs but we need to ensure we take the right action informing the relevant agency within a given timescale.

1.3 Medical practitioners advise/discuss the difference between ‘suicidal ideas’ and ‘suicidal intention’. Having suicidal thoughts is not uncommon when we are stressed, depressed or experiencing major traumas. They become significant when they change from ideas to plans (intent) to carry out to act.

## 2. Assessing risk

2.1 There are two categories of risk which the individual needs to consider:

- Is there an immediate risk of someone committing suicide? Or
- If not immediate, is there a suggestion this will happen in the near future?

2.2 On being presented with someone who is threatening suicide, colleagues should continue the conversation to establish the tenant’s true state of mind and assess it as best as they can. If colleagues cannot make a judgement on their intention then it should be assumed that they intend to harm themselves.

## 3. Dealing with the conversation

3.1 If, during the conversation, it becomes apparent that the tenant is suggesting they intend or might commit suicide, then we should take note of what is said. We should remain calm during the conversation and listen carefully, acknowledging any concerns.
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<th>Make sure that you clarify who they are, their home address and contact telephone number and try to find out their current location. This will be useful if you need to contact the police, adult social care or ambulance service.</th>
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| 5.1 | - Do not dismiss a cry for help.  
- Do not get emotionally involved and try to resolve the problem yourself.  
- Do not suggest that we don’t care.  
- Do not, ‘do nothing’ following the conversation. |
| 6. | **Following the conversation** |
| 6.1 | If you consider there to be an immediate risk to the tenant, phone 999 immediately. |
6.2 Unless there is an immediate risk to the tenant (as described above) you should review any notes to make sure you have captured the key elements of the conversation. You should also review any previous notes and find out about any lines of support which are already in place.

6.3 Once you have built a picture, discuss the incident with your line manager who will assist in the appropriate next steps.

7. **Options on what to do next**

7.1 If there is the suggestion that the tenant would like us to facilitate contacting someone to speak with, then consider the options (e.g. Samaritans, CPN or Adult Social Care) and make appropriate contact.

7.2 It may be appropriate to call the tenant back, especially if the conversation had been difficult/heated, to build a further picture. This could also give them time to calm down.

7.3 **In all cases** we should make contact with any support workers, social workers and doctor to highlight our concerns detailing the facts of the incident. We should also phone the relevant local authority safeguarding team to report a safeguarding concern and record that we have done so. Take the name of the person you have spoken to and add that to the notes.

When phoning or emailing the safeguarding authority the following information will help them:

- name and address of the person you are concerned about;
- the age of the person;
- details of your concern;
- who (if anyone) lives with them; and
- whether they have any family members they are in contact with.

Don’t worry if you haven’t got all this information. If you are concerned it is important to ring anyway.

7.4 **In all cases** we should keep detailed notes so that these can be maintained for future reference.