

## **Suicide - Procedures for when:**

- a) a client is threatening suicide and**
- b) for when a client takes their life**

### **1. Definition**

Many of the clients who access counselling and support at The Sue Lambert Trust have complex mental health issues and report suicidal feelings.

Our current experience is that suicide is extremely rare among our active clients however, if it happens the impact can be significant for those involved.

As counsellors, we are in a privileged position to be able to work with suicidal clients offering an opportunity to explore the possible impact of suicide on clients and their families and this can be a really positive piece of preventative work for our clients.

Clients who feel respected and cared for are often in a better place to be able to work through these issues and become clearer about their decision. The goal is that the client can have more time and be more regulated through conversation and realise there may be some hope for the future.

### **2. Key aims**

The key aims of these Procedures are:

- To ensure that the counsellor knows what to do if they are concerned about a client's suicidal ideation.
- To ensure that the counsellor and other workers concerned are suitably supported during this difficult period.
- To ensure that if an external investigation takes place Sue Lambert Trust is able to respond appropriately.

### **3. Procedures when a client is threatening suicide**

- When a counsellor is seriously concerned about a client's suicidal ideation, the counsellor should firstly try to evaluate the reality of the situation. They should speak with a member of the clinical team who will support them to consider whether a suicide risk assessment should be completed.
- Following the risk assessment, the next course of action is to be decided by more than one member of the clinical team and decisions and further actions will be noted on the safeguarding record to be reviewed weekly with the counsellor and clinical team until there is no further particular concern.
- Extra supervision will be made available if necessary for the counsellor whilst the client is under review.

#### **4. Procedures when a client takes their life**

- When we are informed that a client has taken their own life, a member of the clinical team should be informed.
- Clinical team member to inform counsellor and counsellor's supervisor and provide debrief, preferably face to face, as soon as possible. Then any other staff and volunteers who had contact with the client can be informed as necessary and as soon as possible.
- Additional supervision to be offered to counsellor.
- Any reasonable adjustments to be offered to counsellor.
- The clinical team will offer the counsellor extra support as necessary
- Counsellor to write his/her understanding of place client was in as soon as possible following the death.
- Attendance at funeral may be possible if client's family members specifically invite the counsellor.
- If there is an inquest the counsellor may have the choice of attending or sending notes but may be required to write a report. Support from the organisation will be forthcoming as necessary.
- The Trust to conduct a critical incident review and make a formal report to trustees summarising the case, lessons learned and proposals for improvement of practice/systems, where appropriate.

#### **4. Related guidance, policy and procedures:**

- **Suicide Risk Assessment**
- **Managing Difficult Situations Guidelines**
- **Professional Boundaries Policy**
- **Safeguarding Policy**