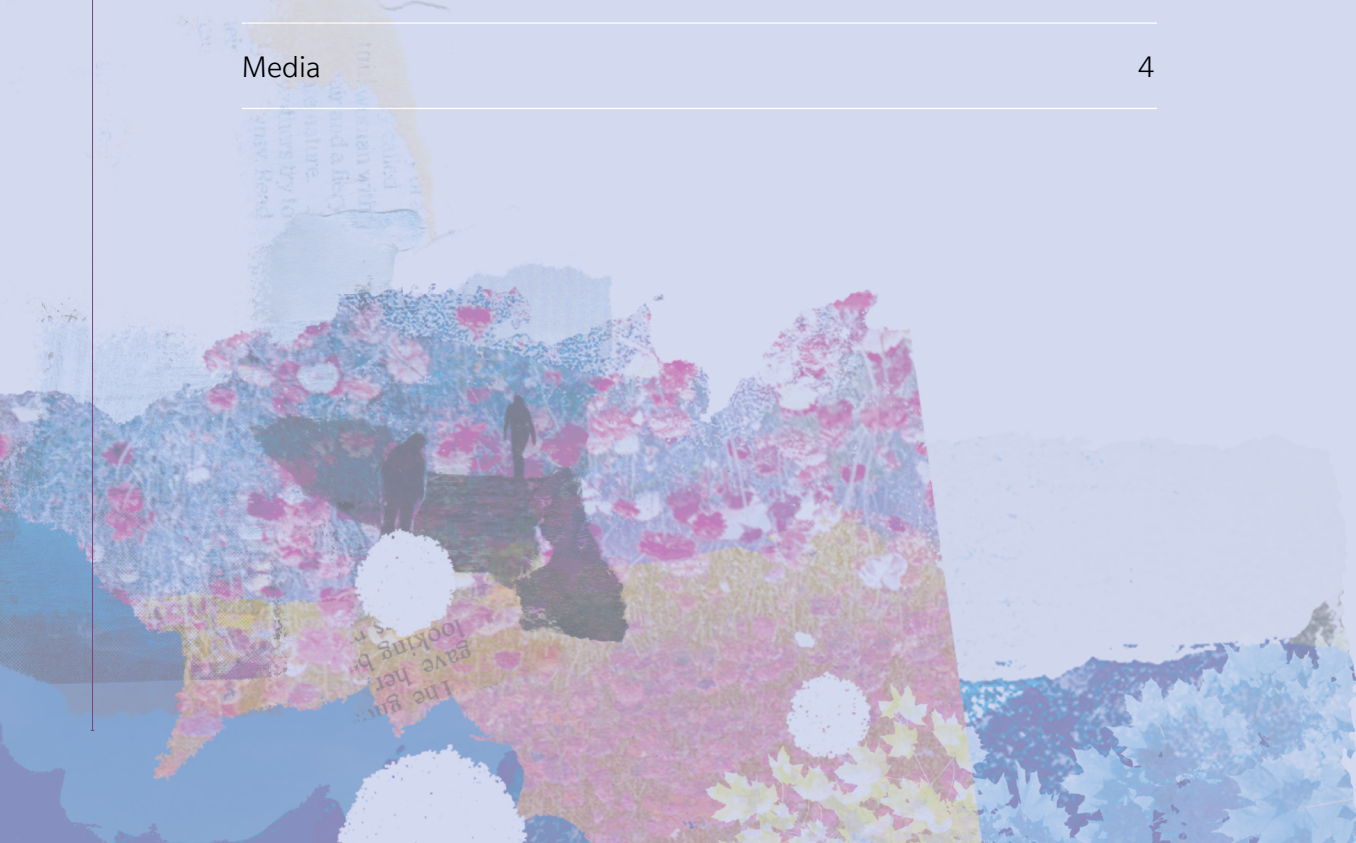


POSTVENTION GUIDANCE: RESOURCES

Communications considerations

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This list covers some of the areas you will need to consider in your approach to communications after the death of a student.

Urgent admin

Removing the deceased from university mailing lists is a priority. Families may be accessing the student's email account after they have died, and it can be distressing to continue to receive emails that have been sent to other students or from colleagues who are unaware they have died.

All communications

- Unless there are over-riding reasons why not, communications should only ever be issued after discussion with the family of the student who has died.
- All communications issued about the death of a student must be:
 - as personalised as possible
 - be warm and empathetic in tone
 - be from a named individual (with their contact details included)
 - and include reference to sources of wellbeing support.
- Speculation or a perception of 'covering up' can be reduced by a timely communication informing relevant individuals and groups that a student has died.
- Ideally, even initial communications should include a brief recollection from a member of staff who knew the student well (eg academic advisor) reflecting on them as an individual.
- Communications should be tailored to the recipient(s) based on their relationship to the deceased.
- Verbal communication (including video and telephone calls) will always be preferable to email communication. Written messages should include an offer to discuss verbally.

Students

- Before the next of kin have been informed, known friends should be definitively asked not to communicate anything about the incident.
- Sensitively ask all students identified through the incident response to be mindful of the impact of what they communicate and to who. Specifically that they should not be posting details or speculating on the cause/method.
- If a death occurs out of usual term time consider how best to communicate with and support students.

Staff and other groups

Even if not directly impacted by the death, communications should be considered to other groups of staff to ensure they are aware of what has happened and where to address any questions. Examples include:

- residences staff who may hear second hand that a student in their hall has died (particular care should be taken to speak to staff responsible for cleaning or providing residential life support to the relevant flat)
- academic and support staff in the student's school/programme of study
- communications colleagues who may receive enquiries about what has happened
- head of Counselling and Mental Health Service and Disability Support Service
- If the student has been under the care of the NHS, make sure that the relevant team is aware the student has died.

Responding to communications

Responses to communications about the death of a student should ideally be responded to (even if this is just a holding response) the day that they are received. There is seldom a higher priority than responding to such a situation).

Social media

Be mindful that information about a suicide might spread quickly on social media. It might be inaccurate and lacking in signposting to support for those who have been impacted. Social media posts should be proactively monitored and directly challenge or correct anything that is factually inaccurate either by public or direct messaging.

Media

Follow up on any media reporting about a death that does not respect the Samaritan's Media Guidelines for Reporting Suicide and their Guidance for Reporting Youth Suicides and Suicide Clusters. Most publications will quickly update their copy. The Samaritans' media advice team can be contacted for advice and support if necessary (mediaadvice@samaritans.org)