



Male Suicide



Each week, modern employees can often spend more time working than with their friends and families. When a workplace is operating well, it can promote a sense of belonging and purpose — qualities that boost our wellbeing and sustain us when life gets unmanageable. Many workplaces also provide access to vital mental health resources through employee assistance programs and peer-based support.

But what happens when appropriate support pathways are not in place or easily accessible?

Prominent mixed martial artist Paddy Pimblett used his recent victory at UFC London to deliver a powerful message about the issue of suicide, focusing particularly on the prevalence of suicide in men. Having recently lost a close friend to suicide and after struggling with suicidal thoughts himself, Pimblett

urged men both in and out of the UFC space to **end the stigma, start talking,** and **seek help** for their mental health concerns.

“The one thing I always say is, ‘You’ve got to get it off your chest.’ That’s something that I did. As soon as I spoke to someone, I felt like a weight was lifted off my shoulders.” – Paddy Pimblett

Data published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows that 4912 suicides were registered in England during 2020 alone. That’s an average rate of 10 suicides per 100,000 people. Males are 3.1 times more likely to die by suicide in England than females, and men aged 45-49 continue to have the highest suicide rate (23.8 per 100,000).

The COVID-19 pandemic brought many issues regarding physical and mental health to light, and the current cost of living crisis is exacerbating these issues further still. Tracey Paxton, Managing Director of Vivup Psychological Services, states, “Men often regard themselves as the ‘provider for the family’ and, due to this, we tend to see common themes that indicate why men are at a greater risk of suicide.”

- **Traditional male gender roles discourage emotional expression:** Men are told to ‘man up’, be tough and that they should not need to ask for help. Such rigid gender norms may make it difficult for men to reach out and ask for support when they need it.
- **Depression may be underdiagnosed in men:** Men tend not to disclose feelings of depression to their doctors. When they do, it is often described in terms of having problems at work or in relationships. Men also describe their feelings as “stress” rather than sadness or hopelessness.
- **Men are less likely to seek help for emotional problems:** Depression is often diagnosed less frequently in men because of the tendency to deny illness, self-monitor symptoms, and self-treat.
- **Men may be more likely to self-treat:** It is common for men to attempt to manage the symptoms of depression with alcohol and other substances.

Getting help for anyone expressing suicidal intent or showing the warning signs is incredibly important. Psychotherapy, antidepressants, and often a combination of

both can be effective in reducing symptoms of depression and lowering the risk of suicide. When accessing the Employee Assistance Programme provided by Vivup, employees can be fast-tracked through to qualified specialists in order to access a treatment pathway tailored to their specific needs.

It is important to recognise that symptoms of depression may manifest differently in men than in women, which could explain why signs are often missed by loved ones and physicians. Cultural expectations can also play a role in why men fail to seek help when they are feeling hopeless or suicidal. Fortunately, there are treatments available that can help men learn to cope, feel better, and get back to their usual selves.

If you need support and your employer offers Vivup's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) it is available 24/7, 365 days a year and here to help you. The 24-hour telephone helpline is responsive, confidential, and totally independent, acting as an invaluable support for advice and short-term low intensity help. To find out more about the resources available to you, visit vivup.co.uk.