



# People's experiences of suicide thought in later life

📍 Scotland

## What we've done and how it embodies **Time** **Space** **Compassion**

We have been focusing on research on suicide in later life, exploring some of the unique and complex experiences people face, compared with other population groups.

Our aim is to highlight some of the gaps and limitations of interventions for older adults in suicide prevention and postvention - as well as enhancing their voice within suicide research.

We explored where opportunities might occur in approach, place, relationships and language used to talk about suicide thought.

## Who we worked with

We worked within the ageing community, including bereavement support services and ageing care services to help reach individuals in the community.

A digital artist helped us to generate imagery from our research and developed a small exhibition on the wider work on suicide and later life which can be hosted in public places to raise awareness.

## What we learnt

Participants revealed the importance of authentic listening within everyday caring relationships with people in later life. This is particularly important where colloquial or off-hand comments can be made but which indicate existential loneliness and suicide thought.

The findings highlight the value of responding with time and compassion and how professionals and providers of care can actively frame opportunities for screening, assessment and signposting for people who want to access support.

There is a need to expand psycho-social support for people in later life including access to talking therapies, opportunities for peer support and learning, alongside addressing the wider impacts of ageism.

## How people felt

Many of the people we interviewed said that this was the first time anyone had actually asked them about this topic.

Even though some found it common to discuss it with their peers, they felt that it was very difficult to talk about with professionals and their own families and their expectations were low in terms of being taken seriously or being able to get meaningful support.

## What difference it made

A short film exploring the findings of the research was developed, to support practitioners.

We want them to understand that it is important to try to find space and the right words to use with people who may make throwaway and other comments that indicate suicide thought.



Use the QR code to view the film.

Research team: Hafford-Letchfield T, Hanna JR, Ellmers TJ, Rasmussen S, Cogan N, Gleeson H, Goodman J, Martin S, Walker P, Quaife M. (2022) Talking really does matter: Lay perspectives from older people on talking about suicide in later life. *Frontiers Psychology* 16(13),e1009503.

Read more at [suicideprevention.scot/conference](https://suicideprevention.scot/conference)