

# What if asking about suicide could save a life?

## Campaign briefing

Phase 03 - 26 February 2026



What if... asking about **suicide** could save a life?

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## Campaign briefing

This document provides an update on the development of the third phase of our suicide prevention campaign, launching on 26 February 2026.

### Setting the scene

Last year we set out to have **Scotland's biggest ever conversation about suicide**.

And we did. Our co-produced campaign was a success.

Data from YouGov showed an **8% increase** in conversations compared to just before the campaign launched. *(Data from YouGov, May 2025. 1,002 representative adults (18+) in Scotland).*

In fact, there's actually been an **increase in conversations over the last five years** between September 2020 and February 2025. *(Data from YouGov, September 2020. c. 1,000 representative adults (18+) in Scotland. February 2026, 1,026 representative adults (18+) in Scotland)*

This work was underpinned by the co-produced public awareness campaigns framework, and the initial longer term developed messaging "What if a conversation about suicide could save a life?"

So far, the campaign so far had two phases of activity.

Phase 01 April 2025-May 2025	Phase 02 September 2025- October 2025
<p>Four of the co-production group participants agreed to take part as ambassadors for <a href="#">the initial What if campaign</a>. They each wrote a letter to a loved one or themselves, to explore their own experiences of suicide.</p> <p>Seonaid and Clare had been bereaved, Laura made three attempts on her life, and Ross made a plan to die by suicide.</p> <p>They came together at Observatory House on Calton Hill in Edinburgh to meet, read their letters to each other and have a conversation.</p> <p>Each letter and (an almost completely unedited) conversation was framed into a four</p>	<p>Building on phase 01, the co-production group wanted to continue the conversation.</p> <p>And so the <a href="#">What if Podcast</a> was born.</p> <p>We co-produced four key themes, from a very long list of different ideas. These formed four episodes, which were filmed at studios in Glasgow using a multi-camera set up.</p> <p>Broadcaster Amy Irons who lost her partner Wayne to suicide, hosted the podcast series.</p> <p>We were joined by a stellar list of a dozen guests, each bringing personal experiences about suicide.</p>

<p>part series, “The Conversation” to draw back the curtain on suicide.</p> <p>Our ambassadors each gave a deeply moving one to one interview. We also captured stunning photography and b-roll on the day but also in a space closer to home where they felt comfortable.</p> <p>Working with Republic of Media, we developed a media plan to give 71% of the Scottish adult population an opportunity to see the campaign.</p> <p>This was delivered through YouTube, Meta, and Mobsta (network display advertising). The out of home print and digital, and some limited print media included a focus on Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, Aberdeen, Inverness, Orkney and the Western Isles.</p>	<p>This included world-leading expert Rory O’Connor, former footballer Kris Boyd and TikTok influencer Lisa Marshall (@the_widowdiaries) to name a few.</p> <p>The podcast was a central pillar of activity, with an episode dropping every week starting on World Suicide Prevention Day, but it was about more than that.</p> <p>Clips from every episode were created, and along with behind the scenes images, helped us create over 200 pieces of content.</p> <p>This ‘flood the channels’ approach drove substantial traffic, too, showing the value of high quality, high volume content.</p>
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## So, what next?

**Scotland’s biggest ever conversation about suicide continues.**

### Co-production

We brought a refreshed co-production group back together, widening diversity and providing an opportunity for new people to be involved.

This was particularly important given that some of our ambassadors who had given so much for themselves, felt it was the right time to step away.

Our group wanted something very bold, which would focus on not just *talking* about suicide, but having the confidence to *ask* someone if they are considering suicide.

They wanted to know how confident people feel to **ask** someone they are worried about, ‘are you thinking about suicide?’

We learnt that whether it’s family (-4%), friends (-5%) or colleagues (-6%) we are less confident to ask someone directly, ‘are you thinking about suicide?’ *(Data from YouGov, February 2026, 1,026 representative adults (18+) in Scotland)*

And so, our focus on 'asking' was established, using the foundations from previous phases of campaign activity to turn the dial up on the importance of asking the question for both help seekers and help givers.

The long term established messaging theme 'What if' remains the same, with a small but important tweak:

## What if... asking about **suicide** could save a life?

This allowed us to also build on the strong visual concept and approach that had already been seen, in order to keep hitting people with not only the same messaging, but also the same visuals.

### Campaign priorities

We established some key priorities:

- Continue encouraging conversations
- Tackle myths about 'asking about suicide'
- Provide advice on how to ask
- Show examples of real-life conversations
- Share more stories of finding hope

In order to do this we widened the search for new ambassadors, beyond those already connected to the suicide prevention network. This is something we had never done before.

It was important the campaign was still rooted in real people with real-life experiences.

The interest was remarkable, with lots of people coming forward with their lived experience and willingness to be involved.

With that came the extra challenge of making sure people we involved were in the right place to do so. Safeguarding continues to come first.

### Introducing our six ambassadors



Nine years ago, **Jon** made an attempt on his life. He's learned to support others, asking others if they are considering suicide.

	<p>In 2018, Scott made a suicide attempt. Having found a way forward, Scott now talks openly to fiancée Lynn about his feelings.</p>
	<p>When <b>Lindsay</b> found <b>Jenna</b> in distress in a gym changing room she asked, 'are you thinking about suicide?' She was...</p>
	<p><b>Noor</b> arrived in Scotland from Jordan nine years ago to study. Two years ago she lost her close friend to suicide.</p>

**Finding hope** - each of our ambassadors did a powerful interview to continue telling stories of hope, with a focus on their lived experience of asking as well as capturing stunning portrait photography.

## Our new TV & radio ad

For the first time we are creating a [TV ad](#) and reaching people via radio.

We developed a script building on the 'What if' messaging, that explored all the internal questions people ask themselves to avoid the question:

***Suicide is a topic that makes many of us nervous;***

***it can feel like the hardest thing to ask someone about***

***What if I say the wrong thing?***

***What if they say yes?***

***What if it gives them the idea?***

***But lots of people don't realise...***

***If you're worried about someone, asking them 'are you thinking about suicide' is the best way to prevent it from happening.***

All six of our ambassadors were involved in creating the ad, shooting in everyday settings, where people may find themselves with a friend or family member they are worried about.

## How to ask about suicide

**The conversation** - we have also developed three longer form pieces of content exploring how to ask about suicide, with our ambassadors.

One of the first things the co-production group did was to map out the three stages of asking; **ask directly, listen and acknowledge and keep safe.**

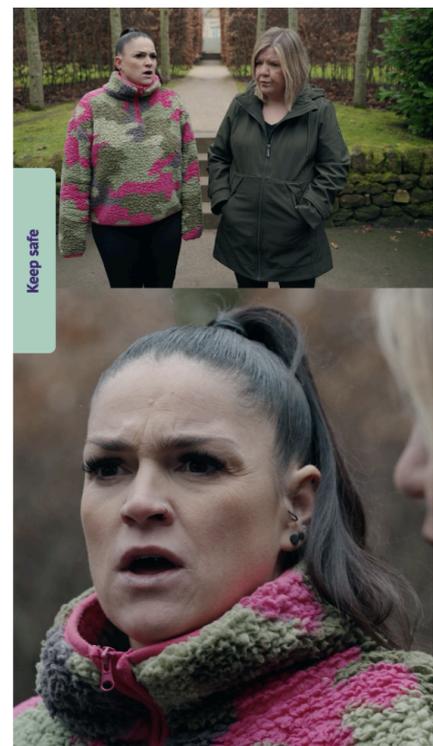
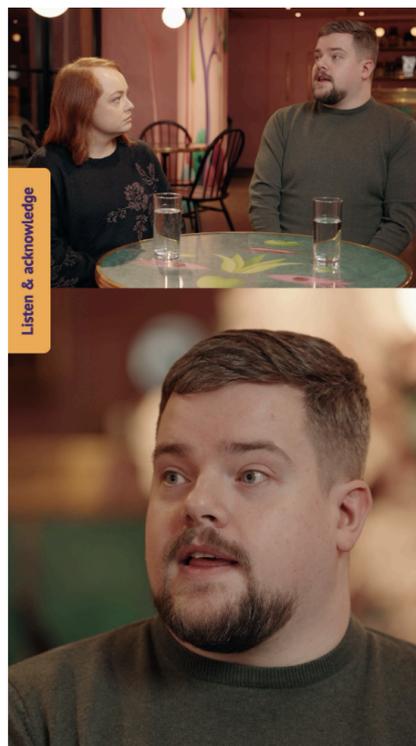
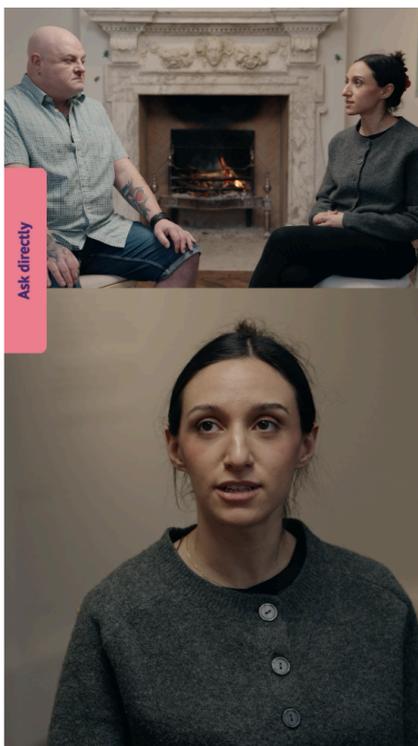
This was because if we were going to encourage the public to ask the question, we needed to make clear advice and support available as a resource, for what happens after the question is asked.

We know lots of people are afraid to ask the question because they do not know what to do next if the answer is yes.

Research was done on currently available resources, but there was nothing concise, yet detailed enough, so developing this was a key element of the campaign.

These longer form conversations, as well as three 90 second animations on the three stages of asking, help to provide important advice.

*The animations are voiced by Jordan who has his own experience of asking people if they are thinking about suicide.*





## Outputs

We expect 3.6 million people will see the campaign, seeing the campaign on average 7.1 times. That's almost 80% of the population.

Media spread includes:

- TV ad across Scotland
- Radio ad across Scotland - Bauer – Moray Firth, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Scottish Borders, South West Scotland & Dundee
- City train stations - Aberdeen, Inverness, Edinburgh, Glasgow & Dundee
- Interior bus panels - Glasgow & Dundee
- Paid (Meta) & organic digital media

**What if... asking about suicide could save a life?**

Learn how to ask at: [SuicidePrevention.scot](https://SuicidePrevention.scot)

**Jon**  
Made a suicide attempt

**What if... asking about suicide could save a life?**

**Lynn**  
Has learned to ask her fiancé Scott directly about suicide

**What if... asking about suicide could save a life?**

**Lindsay**  
Asked her friend Jenna if she was thinking about suicide

**What if... asking about suicide could save a life?**

**Noor**  
Lost her friend to suicide

**What if... asking about suicide could save a life?**

**Noor**  
On the Friday, she phoned for help from the crisis team and they told her someone would phone her back on the Monday. She took her own life on the Sunday.

## Toolkit

Like previous campaign phases, a free to order toolkit will be available for organisations working in suicide prevention. This is accessible [here](#).

## Contact information

Contact our strategic comms & campaigns team via [communications@suicideprevention.scot](mailto:communications@suicideprevention.scot).