

CASE STUDY TRL 2023-2027

Developing and implementing a sector leading suicide prevention programme
For National Highways

Introduction

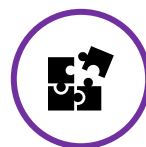
Suicide prevention is a complex public health and safety challenge that affects individuals, communities and organisations across the transport sector. With an estimated 20% of fatalities on the strategic road network suspected to be suicides, it is an important part of achieving National Highways' ambition of reducing harm. Recognising the need for a coordinated and proactive approach, National Highways has taken significant steps to embed suicide prevention across its activities and influence wider industry practice. This case study outlines how TRL has supported these efforts through the development of a suicide prevention standard, guidance and RIS3 plan along with strategic implementation activities that are helping to create safer outcomes across the Strategic Road Network and the wider highways sector.



Overview

TRL has worked with National Highways to develop a new suicide prevention standard within the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB), produce accompanying UKRLG guidance for the wider industry, and support the development and implementation of the National Highways Suicide Prevention Plan for RIS3.

Together, these initiatives are helping to embed suicide prevention within the planning, design and operation of the strategic road network, supporting a more consistent approach across the highways sector and strengthening National Highways' position as a leader in this important area.



Challenges

- Suicide prevention has not traditionally been considered as part of the planning, design and operation of highway infrastructure.
- There was a need for greater consistency in how suicide risk is identified, assessed and managed across the highways sector.
- Common myths and misconceptions about suicide can prevent organisations and individuals from having conversations and taking action.
- Perceived gaps in knowledge and confidence can make it difficult to embed responsibility for suicide prevention across the sector.





Action Taken

1. Developing a coordinated approach to suicide prevention across the highways sector

TRL worked with National Highways to develop a package of resources and strategic initiatives designed to embed suicide prevention within the planning, design and operation of the strategic road network.

- Developed a new suicide prevention standard within the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB), requiring suicide risk to be proactively considered throughout highway design and project development.
- Produced accompanying guidance to support the consistent application of suicide prevention principles across the wider highways sector.
- Supported the development of the National Highways Suicide Prevention Plan for RIS3, establishing a clear vision, priorities and actions for reducing suicide related harm across the network. Within this, identified opportunities for National Highways to strengthen its leadership role and influence wider industry practice.

2. Supporting implementation and organisational change

TRL has continued to support the implementation of the Suicide Prevention Plan through a range of activities designed to embed suicide prevention within organisational culture, decision making and day to day activities.

- Developed a stakeholder engagement plan to strengthen collaboration across the highways, health, local authority and suicide prevention sectors.
- Developed a performance monitoring framework to measure progress and support continuous improvement.
- Identified engineering opportunities to reduce suicide risk across the strategic road network.
- Developed a learning needs analysis to identify capability gaps and inform future training, awareness and capability building activities.
- Supported launch and embedment activities for the new DMRB suicide prevention standard, promoting awareness and encouraging adoption across the sector.



Results

1. Establishing a sector leading framework for suicide prevention

- The new suicide prevention standard within the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) has successfully progressed through consultation and approval processes, ensuring it is practical, proportionate and fit for purpose for the highways sector. The standard is

scheduled for industry rollout from October 2026, providing a consistent framework for proactively considering suicide risk within highway planning and design.

- The accompanying [UKRLG guidance](#) was launched in September 2025 through collaboration with the UK Roads Leadership Group (UKRLG), providing the wider highways sector with practical guidance on the identification, assessment and management of suicide risk and supporting a more consistent approach to suicide prevention across organisations.
- National Highways Suicide Prevention Plan for RIS3 was developed through extensive collaboration with National Highways teams and a broad range of external stakeholders, drawing on national and international evidence, research and best practice. The plan established a clear strategic framework for reducing suicide-related harm, aligning activities across the organisation and supporting National Highways' ambition to achieve zero harm on the strategic road network.

2. Building the foundations for long term change

- Supported the launch and long-term embedment of the new suicide prevention standard through a package of implementation resources, including guidance, briefing materials, mock assessment and review reports. This helped build organisational capability, improve consistency of application and support the integration of suicide prevention within routine planning, design and operational activities across the sector.
- Developed a Learning Needs Analysis to identify capability gaps and training requirements across relevant roles, providing a clear evidence base for future awareness, training and capability-building activities. This helped National Highways understand where investment should be targeted to build the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to support the successful implementation of the Suicide Prevention Plan and embed suicide prevention within day-to-day activities.
- Developed a stakeholder engagement plan aligned to the ambitions of the new Suicide Prevention Plan, enabling National Highways to identify key stakeholders, engagement priorities and the most effective approaches for collaboration across the highways, health, local authority and suicide prevention sectors. This provides a clear and coordinated approach to future engagement activities.
- Developed a performance monitoring framework that identifies the most relevant measures of success based on available data and programme objectives. This provides National Highways with a mechanism to track progress, evaluate impact and demonstrate the effectiveness of suicide prevention activities over time.
- Identified engineering opportunities to reduce suicide risk across the strategic road network, providing National Highways with a clearer understanding of where engineering interventions could support the reduction of suicide-related harm. Collaboration with supply chain partners has been initiated to explore the practical implementation of potential design solutions.