

Self-harm prevention and advice for professionals, families and young people.

NHS Kent and Medway

Pathway

Schools and settings

Workforce skills and training

Parents and carers

Children / young people

Contents

4	Self-harm pathway
5	Definitions
6	Responding to issues of self-harm and suicide ideation in children/young people
7	i-Thrive
8	Severity and impact
9	Self-harm guidance for schools and settings
10	Introduction
11	What is self-harm?
13	Self-harm behaviours in children / young people
14	How common is self-harm?
15	The cycle of self-harm
16	Quick guide flow chart
17	If a child / young person shows signs and symptoms of self-harming
23	Online activity
24	Risk assessment
26	Safety planning
28	School/setting policy
32	Including self-harm within a taught Personal Social Health Education (PSHE) programme
34	Information for services and support
37	Workforce skills and training
38	List of training opportunities
40	Self-harm guidance for parents and carers
41	What is self-harm?
42	Flow chart for parents and carers
43	What to do if you are worried about someone?
44	Tips for talking about self-harm

- 45 Safer strategies
- 46 Attending to your own needs
- 47 Telling others
- 48 What is a safety-plan?
- 49 Information for services and support

53 **Self-harm guidance for children/young people**

- 54 What is self-harm?
- 55 The cycle of self-harm
- 56 Reasons for self-harm
- 57 Coping methods
- 59 What happens if you attend A&E or a minor injuries unit for your mental health
- 62 My friend has a problem – how can I help?
- 63 Information for services and support

- 66 Links in document
- 71 References

Self-harm pathway

This guidance has been updated in line with the NICE Clinical Guideline [Self-harm: assessment, management and preventing recurrence](#) and aims to support a change so that children / young people and families are supported to thrive.

The approach is underpinned by:

[Preventing Suicide in children / young people in Kent and Medway](#)

and contributes to

[children / young people, children / young people and young adults' emotional wellbeing and mental health : Kent & Medway ICS](#)

This first edition of the guidance was published in January 2024 and will be reviewed April 2024.

If you would like to provide feedback on how this can be improved, please complete our feedback form <https://forms.office.com/e/JVjDJbcS>

Definitions

What does self-harm mean?

The National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) defines self-harm as 'intentional self-poisoning or self-injury, irrespective of the apparent purpose of the act'.

This is the definition used throughout this guidance.

What does suicidal ideation mean?

Suicidal ideation, also known as suicidal thoughts, is thinking about or having an unusual preoccupation with suicide.

The range of suicidal ideation varies greatly from fleeting thoughts to planning and attempting suicide.

What does crisis mean?

A crisis is any situation in which a person feels they need urgent help. For example, they might feel in crisis if:

- they are having suicidal thoughts and feelings
- they are having thoughts about harming them self or someone else
- they have seriously hurt themselves.

When a child / young person self-harms and **where the risk level is deemed to be either 'serious' or 'immediate'**, then emergency services should be contacted.

If the child / young person needs more support, **there should be a consultation first and then a referral to** a local service, which may lead to an assessment.

A person-centred safety plan will be agreed with the child or young person and information related to self-harm will be shared, and other services may become involved.

Responding to issues of self-harm and suicidal ideation in children / young people

Audience

This document and pathway is primarily for staff working directly with children and young people including teachers, professionals, volunteers and youth services who:

- self-harm, or are thinking about self-harming as a coping strategy
- require support and options which are available for self-harm, suicidal ideation and/ or previous suicide attempt. This document primarily focuses on recognising and managing self-harm.

Overview

This guidance provides information for adults who work with children or young people regarding how to respond to issues of self-harm and suicidal thoughts. It addresses how to ask questions of children or young people who may have suicidal thoughts or be self-harming, and how to respond to a disclosure of these thoughts and behaviours. It provides guidance on confidentiality, safeguarding and routes of support and escalation.

This document should be used as a guide, alongside any existing knowledge and information available to inform the decision process.

- The pathway in this guidance makes clear where children / young people and/or families and staff can access advice and support as concerns about the severity and/or impact associated with self-harming increases.
- The severity and impact of the self-harming behaviour on the safety and emotional wellbeing of the child / young person should inform decisions about the support that is provided.
- If a child / young person is deemed to need support from other professionals, the worker supporting the individual will need to seek consent from the child / young person and parental guardian to share information (unless there are significant safeguarding risks, in which case, safeguarding procedures must be followed).
- Everyone involved with a child / young person who self-harms should be open-minded and compassionate. Children / young people benefit from a non-judgemental approach from an adult who can listen, foster a good relationship with them and encourage them to establish positive relationships with services. That adult may be anyone who meets the child / young person in any setting – perhaps a parent/carer, friend, teacher, counsellor, GP, nurse or specialist professional.

Pathway

Schools and settings

Workforce skills and training

Parents and carers

Children and young people

i-THRIVE

Kent and Medway are implementing [the i-THRIVE](#) framework which provides a way to help children / young people get what they need, based on their individual circumstances. It is not linear, and it recognises that if something hasn't worked, we just need to try something else.

It means a child / young person does not have to navigate the system alone; the system will respond in the best way possible, when the time is right. This means staff, from any part of the system, can work together and provide the support the child / young person needs and wants.



Thriving	when a child / young person understands the who, what, why, when and how of their everyday needs.
Seeking advice	is when a child / young person can seek advice independently or can be guided through advice and act upon it.
Getting help	is when a child / young person is accessing goal-based support. They recognise they need help and are willing to have someone to help them reach their goals.
Further support	is when a child / young person has had a significant ongoing or unexpected challenge in their life. This may mean they need evidence-based specialist support to get back on track and rejoin activities in their normal day to day lives.
Getting risk support	Is when a child / young person needs to be 'held' to keep them and those around them safe. Risk support does not provide help or advice, it's about waiting until the child / young person can express what their needs and wishes are and is able to explore how they will achieve them safely.

Pathway

Schools and settings

Workforce skills and training

Parents and carers

Children and young people

Severity and impact

The severity and impact of the self-harming behaviour on the safety and emotional wellbeing of the child / young person should inform decisions about the support or treatment that is provided.

To understand the severity and risk it is important to have a full conversation with the child / young person. The degree of physical harm does not reflect the severity of the emotional distress. It should also be understood that suicidal ideation is quite common and does not necessarily indicate that a person is in danger of harming themselves.

It is important to use trauma informed approaches to enable you to understand what is happening in their life currently and previously to give you a wider and more in-depth understanding of their risk and protective factors.

Through recognition of need you will be able to identify if help and support is required and how.

It is expected that those staff supporting in the different needs-based areas have [the skills, knowledge and hold competencies](#) which will ensure that children / young people and carers are confident in the support which is offered.

You can view full details of the services and support available for [young people, parents and carers](#), as well as [schools and settings](#) within the audience specific areas of this guidance.

[Pathway](#)

[Schools & settings](#)

[Workforce skills & training](#)

[Parents & Carers](#)

[Children & Young people](#)

Self-harm guidance

Schools and settings

This guidance has been updated in line with the NICE Clinical Guideline [Self-harm: assessment, management and preventing recurrence](#) and aims to support a change so that children / young people and families are supported to thrive.

The approach is underpinned by:

[Preventing Suicide in children / young people in Kent and Medway](#)

and contributes to

[children / young people, children / young people and young adults' emotional wellbeing and mental health : Kent & Medway ICS](#)

This first edition of the guidance was published in January 2024 and will be reviewed April 2024.

If you would like to provide feedback on how this can be improved, please complete our feedback form

<https://forms.office.com/e/jVjDJbcS>

Introduction

This guidance is for adults working with children / young people under the age of 18 (under 25 for those with special educational needs and disabilities or for care leavers) who self-harm.

It is targeted at those who work with children / young people in a wide range of settings such as schools, youth work or community groups, and is not aimed at people who work within the mental health sector. Everyone can play a part in helping children / young people at risk.

This guidance sets out key principles and ways of working but does not prescribe how to act in individual situations. It is not intended to override individual organisational or professional guidelines where they exist. It can however be used as a prompt for discussions about organisational approaches to working with risk taking behaviours, self-harm and suicidal intent, or to highlight staff skills or training needs.

Pathway

Schools and settings

Workforce skills and training

Parents and carers

Children and young people

What is self-harm?

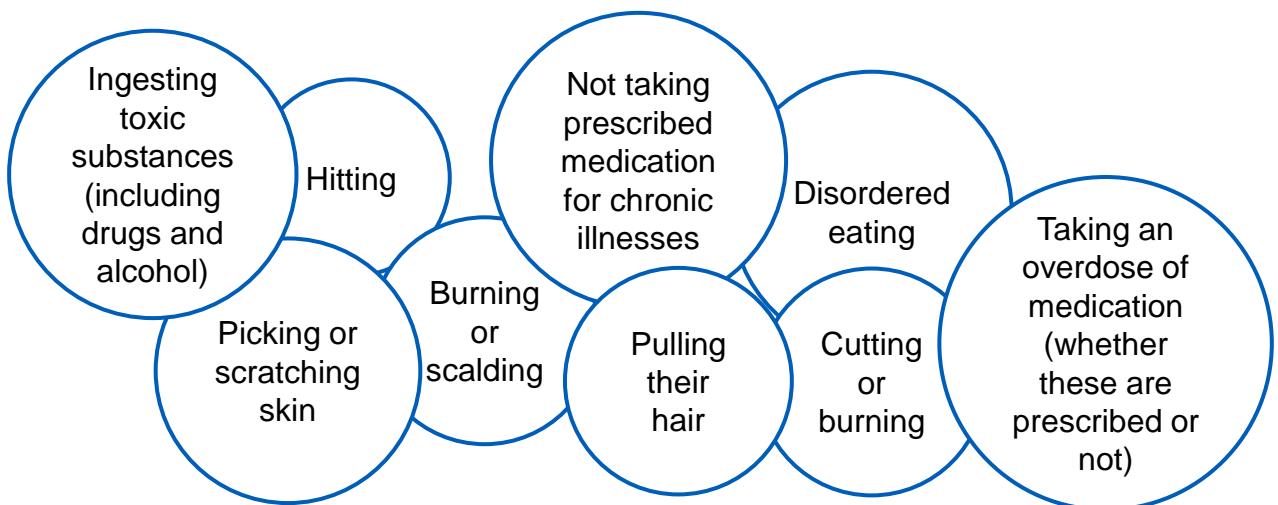
Self-harm is how some children / young people cope with difficult and distressing feelings.

Self-harm can include anything that causes an injury but can also be about taking risks. It can also involve using alcohol or drugs excessively – though many children / young people do not see this as self-harm. Recognising these behaviours can be as important as those that are obvious such as cutting.

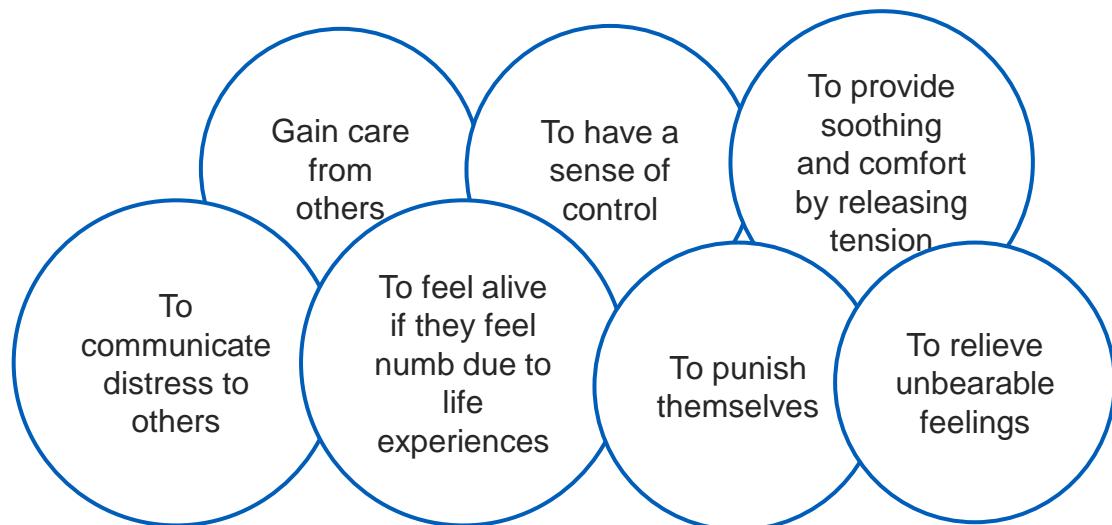
Self-harm may be on-going and well managed by the child / young person and may not be putting them at significant physical risk. One example of this is superficial cutting. This may not require immediate risk management, but it is a sign of emotional distress, and the child / young person will still need support.

Self-harming behaviours can be a way of a child / young person coping with an abusive relationship or a traumatic event or situation. All staff working with children / young people need to be aware of this and have adequate knowledge and training in safeguarding and child / young person protection.

Some examples of how children / young people may self-harm include:



It is important to understand the possible reasons why children / young people self-harm. These can include:



Pathway

Schools and settings

Workforce skills and training

Parents and carers

Children and young people

Self-harm behaviours in children / young people

Children / young people often hide their self-harm, but there can be signs that they may be self-harming.

These include:

- unexplained cuts
- burns or bruises
- keeping themselves covered
- avoiding swimming or changing clothes around others.

Signs of self-harm may be similar to signs of physical or other abuse as it is hard to know who inflicted the injury.

It is important that staff are curious when asking children / young people about an injury.

As self-harm is a potential cause for concern, staff will follow their safeguarding procedures and record and report any observations or conversations they have with a child / young person about injuries that could be self-harm or abuse to their designated safeguarding lead.

Designated safeguarding leads will follow in Kent the KSCMP guidance – [Worried about a child / young person - Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership \(kscmp.org.uk\)](https://kscmp.org.uk) and in Medway the LSCP guidance – [Medway Local Safeguarding Children Partnership \(LSCP\)](https://medwaylscp.org.uk).

For mental health concerns [Get Help Now 2023 \(kentresiliencehub.org.uk\)](https://kentresiliencehub.org.uk)



Self-harm behaviour is usually aimed at coping with life rather than ending it, however, there is an increased risk of suicide if someone already self-harms.

Pathway

Schools and settings

Workforce skills and training

Parents and carers

Children and young people

How common is self-harm?

Self-harm is more common than many people realise.

8%

28%

Eight per cent of children / young people (aged seven to 16) self-harm at some point. This figure increases to 28 per cent* for those children / young people with a probable mental health disorder.

Three per cent of children / young people (aged seven to 16) had talked about harming themselves in the last four weeks** This figure increases to 13 per cent* for those children / young people with a probable mental health disorder.

3%

13%

Self-harm is much less common in primary school age children / young people, with four per cent (aged seven to 10) reporting harming themselves.

Kent and Medway's specialist services received 51 referrals in January 2023 with 191 open service users. The total number of referrals has been rising in the last 12 months, with a record 78 in May 22, and an average of 51.

There were almost a hundred (91) A&E attendances for self-harm involving children / young people under 18 in Kent and Medway in June 2023

In primary school age children / young people, we avoid using the label 'self-harm' and reframe a child / young person's behaviour as a demonstration of distress and/or help seeking behaviour.

* as identified in the Mental Health of children / young people (MHCYP) survey commissioned by NHS Digital in May 2022. Data is from NHS Kent and Medway and is based on coding.

** At the time of the survey

Pathway

Schools and settings

Workforce skills and training

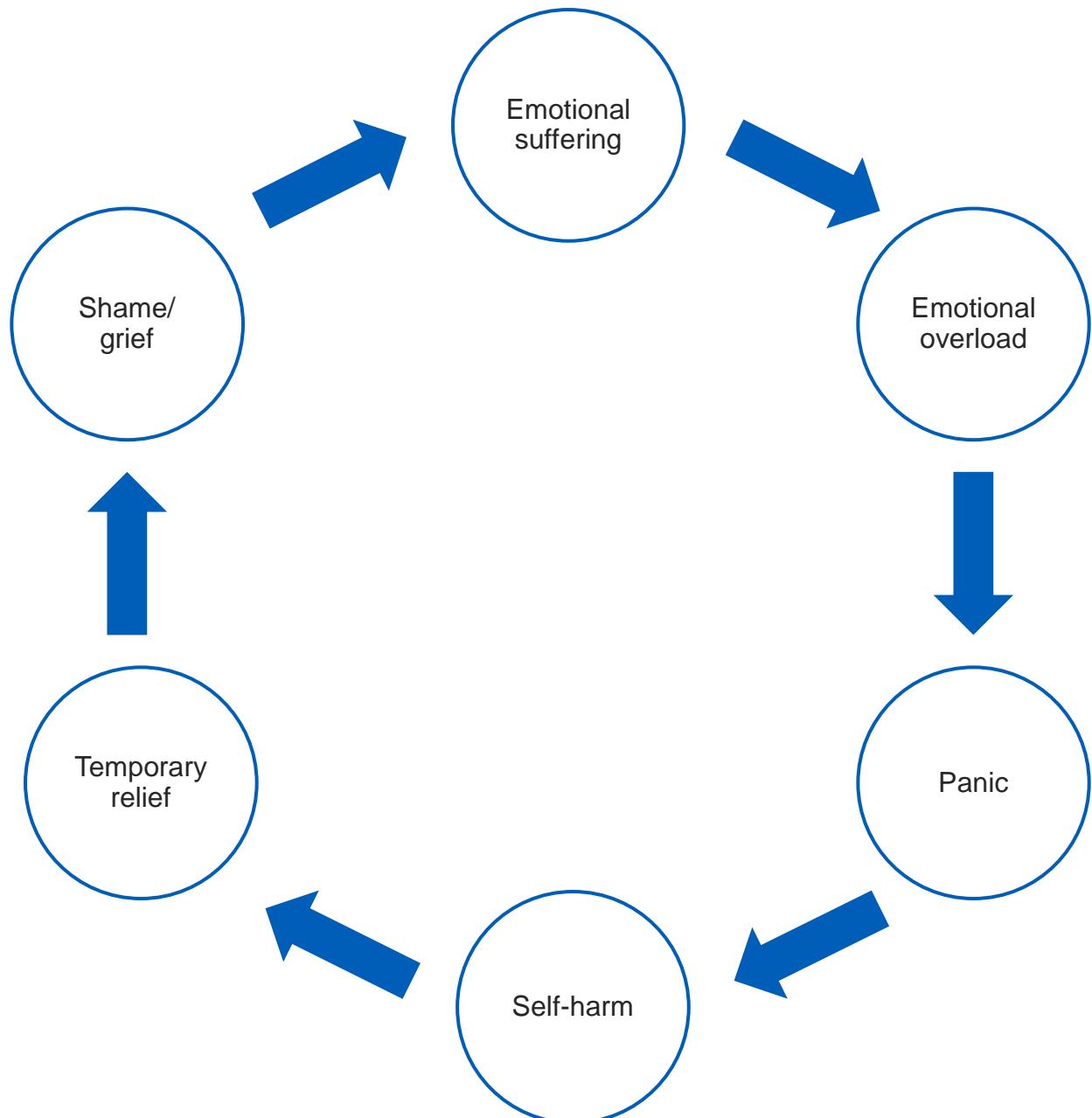
Parents and carers

Children and young people

The cycle of self-harm

Because self-harm can reduce tension and help control mood, it can be self-reinforcing and habit forming.

Adults need to understand that it is difficult to break the cycle of self-harm.



Pathway

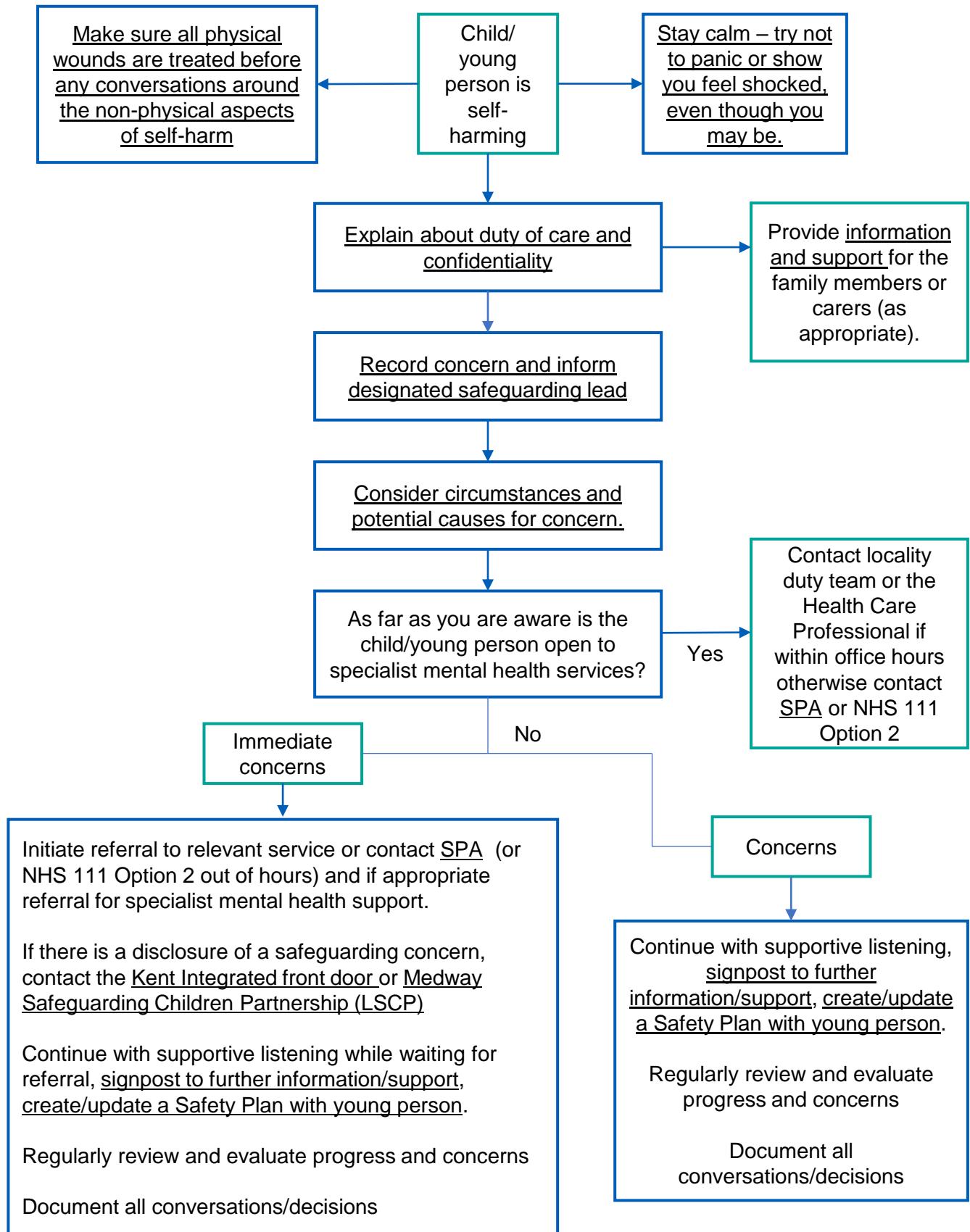
Schools and settings

Workforce skills and training

Parents and carers

Children and young people

Quick guide flow chart



Pathway

Schools and settings

Workforce skills and training

Parents and carers

Children and young people

If a child / young person shows signs and symptoms of self-harming

Stay calm – try not to panic or show you feel shocked, even though you may be.

Make sure all physical wounds are treated before any conversations around the non-physical aspects of self-harm.

Do not ignore, punish or criticise the behaviour.

Trying to make them stop self-harming immediately can be dangerous

Listen to them non-judgmentally and try to understand.

Explain about duty of care and confidentiality.

Record concern and inform designated safeguarding lead.

Have an awareness of your own feelings and need for safe support.

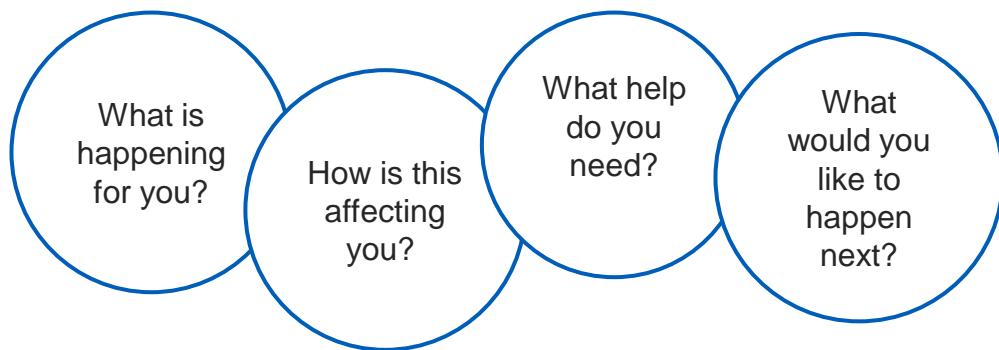
Be aware that the exposure of self-harm among peers may impact the wellbeing of others.

Stay calm – try not to panic or show you feel shocked, even if you are

As a professional you are seen as a safe person by children / young people and by parents and carers.

If a child / young person has come to you, or you think they may be self-harming, then talking about the subject can feel harder than talking about other risk-taking behaviours such as unsafe sex or alcohol use. However, many of the same principles apply.

Questions you could ask include:



Pathway

Schools and settings

Workforce skills and training

Parents and carers

Children and young people

It might be useful to get the child / young person to think of a time when they felt like self-harming but had not done so. What did they do instead? Try to help the child / young person come up with things that might work for them. If this is not possible [some suggestions](#) could be made.

2. Make sure all physical wounds are treated before any conversations around the non-physical aspects of self-harm.

- If a child / young person has self-harmed, there are steps you can take to help.
- Keep calm and follow [first aid guidelines](#) for cuts, wounds or burns.
- If you have immediate concerns about the effect of serious physical injuries emergency services should be called.
- If an overdose is suspected the child / young person will need to be taken to hospital straight away for tests and possible treatment.
- Always ask the child / young person if they are in pain – they may have needed to feel physical pain at the point of self-harm but this doesn't mean they want to feel pain afterwards.
- Involve the school nurse or first aider

3. Do not ignore, punish or criticise the behaviour

There are lots of myths attached to self-harm. This isn't surprising – myths and misunderstandings often arise when a problem like self-harm is poorly understood. Negative stereotypes can be powerful.

They need to be challenged because they stop people talking about their issues and asking for help. These myths also mean that staff, family and friends can misunderstand people who self-harm.

MYTH: 'Only girls self-harm'

It is often assumed that girls are more likely than boys to self-harm, however it isn't clear if this is true. Boys and girls may engage with different self-harming behaviours or have different reasons for hurting themselves, but this doesn't make it any less serious.

MYTH: 'Self-harm is a goth thing'

Self-harm has been stereotyped to be seen as part of youth subcultures such as "goth" or "emo". While there is some research suggesting a link, there is no conclusive evidence of this with little or no evidence supporting the belief that self-harm is part of any particular child / young person subculture.

MYTH: 'Self-harm is attention-seeking'

One of the most common stereotypes is that self-harm is about 'attention seeking'. This is not the case. Many people who self-harm don't talk to anyone about what they are going through for a long time and it can be very hard for them to find enough courage to ask for help.

MYTH: 'People who self-harm are suicidal'

Self-harm is sometimes viewed as a suicide attempt by people who don't understand it. For many people self-harm is about trying to cope with difficult feelings and circumstances. Some people have described it as a way of staying alive and surviving these difficulties. However, some people who self-harm can feel suicidal and might attempt to take their own life, which is why it must always be taken seriously.

MYTH: 'People who self-harm must enjoy it'

Some people believe that people who self-harm take pleasure in the pain or risk associated in the behaviour. There is no evidence that people who self-harm feel pain differently than anyone else. The harming behaviour often causes people great pain. For some, being depressed has left them numb and they want to feel anything to remind them they are alive, even if it hurts. Others have described this pain as punishment.

4. Trying to make them stop self-harming immediately can be dangerous

Nobody wants to see someone else in pain or hurting themselves, and it is natural to want to make them stop, however, this is not a helpful first approach for someone self-harming. It is important to understand the reasons why they are self-harming through an open conversation, to help them find alternative coping mechanisms and develop a plan to work towards ending the self-harm.

5. Listen to them non-judgmentally and try to understand

Children / young people have reported that the first time they speak to a professional they want to be treated with care and respect, but sometimes the response can make their situation worse. Creating a supportive and non-judgmental atmosphere will make it easier for children / young people to seek help.

6. Explain about duty of care and confidentiality

Everyone is entitled to confidentiality even if they are under the age of 18. The decision whether to share the information depends on the degree of current or potential harm. Remember to let the child / young person know your confidentiality procedures.

Sometimes concerns of significant harm may lead you to make a referral or share information with their GP without consent, however it is highly recommended to seek consent where possible. Seeking consent should not delay any urgent action required. Seek support from your manager for this process.

Pathway

Schools & settings

Workforce skills & training

Parents & Carers

Children & Young people

All staff working with children / young people have to be accountable if they decide to share information and break confidentiality by showing that the decision was in the child / young person's best interest. If this happens, a child / young person can expect:

- to be told the information is being shared, with whom and why.
- to be kept informed.
- to be offered appropriate support.
- Make sure you record any discussions or actions related to self-harm or suicidal intent in line with your organisational policies.

Competency and consent

In assessing competence, you need to make sure they can understand the information and advice that you are giving them and give informed consent. If unsure speak with your designated safeguarding lead and follow the procedures, you have in your establishment. If a child / young person is judged as not competent and does not understand their situation, you will need to work sensitively as you may have to break their confidence. Inform them of your requirement to do this, how this will be done and what is expected to happen. Your aim is to make sure they are safe and have access to any help which is required.

Role of parents and carers

It is important to consider the supportive role that parents or carers can play in keeping a child / young person safe. This may be a supportive relationship, but it is important not to assume so. It is good practice to discuss with the child / young person whether or not they wish to tell a parent or carer about how they are feeling. A child / young person's wishes must be respected as they have a right to confidentiality and autonomy. The only time you should break this confidence is if there is a serious risk of harm to the child / young person in not doing so.

7. Record concern and inform designated safeguarding lead

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) coordinates and oversees safeguarding concerns and procedures, as well as acts as the first point of contact for anyone with concerns. They will have an in-depth knowledge of safeguarding guidance (such as [Keeping children / young people Safe in Education](#) and [Working Together to Safeguard children / young people 2018](#)) and related pieces of [legislation](#) (The Children Act 1989). They are responsible for ensuring effective organisation policies, providing advice, training and leading on reporting and recording systems.

8. Have an awareness of your own feelings and need for safe support

Supporting people who self-harm or experience suicidal thoughts is emotionally demanding and requires a high level of communication skills and support. You may experience strong emotions, so it is important that you have the space and support to reflect on how this impacts on you.



9. Be aware that the exposure of self-harm among peers may impact the wellbeing of others

One child / young person's self-harming behaviour can sometimes affect others. This can occur particularly with self-cutting and is more common in females. When talking to a child / young person about their self-harm, staff should ask about their friends and who knows about their self-harm.

Addressing the impact

If more than one child / young person has self-harmed, it is important not to panic, but to be observant and raise awareness of how they can get help when struggling with difficult emotions. Separate support for individual children / young people is preferable to raising the issue in large groups such as an assembly. As a setting, you should treat all children and young people with the same level of concern.

The following suggestions may help friends or peers of a child / young person who has self-harmed:

- emphasising that it is normal and okay to sometimes experience strong emotions
- encouraging care for each other and telling a staff member if they have concerns about their peers
- encouraging positive ways of managing stress/distress
- signposting to support that is available
- sharing useful resources with the children / young people such as [The Mental Health Friends handbook](#).

Risk of self-harm and suicidal behaviour is likely to increase in the rare event that a student takes their life. If a suicide occurs, it is very important that the wellbeing and safety of other children / young people is considered.

Pathway

Schools and settings

Workforce skills and training

Parents and carers

Children and young people

Online activity

Talking about online activity is important when supporting children / young people around suicide and self-harm. Many children / young people will have accessed information online, and it is important to understand what motivates their online activity, and how it can affect their mood.

Children / young people may use online resources to:



You can learn more about how to support children / young people with their online activity, how to have conversations, and how to encourage safer choices by visiting [How can I help people reflect on their online activity around suicide and self-harm? \(samaritans.org\)](https://www.samaritans.org/How-can-I-help-people-reflect-on-their-online-activity-around-suicide-and-self-harm)

When you add the R:pple extension to a web browser, any searches related to self-harm or suicide will prompt an automatic pop-up. This will show a message of hope and direct users to free resources such as helplines, text services and webchats for them to get support. All resources are from mental health charities and are available 24/7.

Risk assessment

It may not be part of your job role to carry out formal risk assessments, however, all adults have a responsibility to talk to a child / young person who is experiencing difficulties to help them to access the support that they need.

This is done by considering all the different factors for each individual. However, there are no hard and fast rules. If in doubt you should contact mental health professionals for advice via the Single Point of Access 0800 011 3474

Definitions of need

THRIVING is when a child / young person understands the who, what, why, when and how of their everyday needs so it is important all children / young people or children / young people have access to education around self-harm and risk-taking behaviours.

This should include PSHE lessons and information and advice that is freely available at any time.

SEEKING ADVICE is when a child / young person recognises they may need support so can seek advice independently or can be guided through advice and act on it.

They may approach a trusted adult so it is important that you always have an open-door policy and recognise that if a child / young person approaches you they have a need and time should be made for them. They may not have undertaken risk-taking behaviours at this time but exploring coping strategies can be beneficial.

Having a conversation, accessing websites or using text or online services may be sufficient to meet their needs.

GETTING HELP is when a child / young person would benefit goal-based support. They recognise they need help and are willing to have someone to help them reach their goals through receiving advice and guidance at each step.

Goal based support can be offered in school or through a service depending on the individual needs of the child / young person.

For some children / young people the need here is to feel confident in themselves, so to be able to take control and to take the lead. Safety planning will be beneficial to ensure that children / young people are equipped to take control.

Pathway

Schools and settings

Workforce skills and training

Parents and carers

Children and young people

FURTHER SUPPORT is when a child / young person has had a significant ongoing or unexpected challenge in their life. This may mean they need evidence-based specialist support to get back on track and rejoin activities in their normal day to day lives.

Further support enables a process of addressing the root causes of why a child / young person is undertaking risk taking behaviours while also providing robust safety plans.

GETTING RISK SUPPORT is when a child / young person needs to be 'held' in order to keep them and those around them safe. Risk support does not provide help or advice, it's about waiting until the child / young person can express what their needs and wishes are and is able to explore how they will achieve them safely.

Safety planning is critical and should involve multiple trusted adults such as at school, in the home and other places the child / young person may attend.

Safety planning

A safety plan should be made/ updated with the child / young person. The focus is on reducing harm and increasing coping strategies.

Making a safety plan should be led by the child / young person. Ideally it should include staff, adults and parents/carers, and should consider the risks associated with the behaviour and how best to reduce and manage the risks.

It may be the first time the child / young person considers and acknowledges these risks. It allows discussion between the member of staff and the child / young person whilst the emphasis of the work should be on how the child / young person is coping.

Agreeing a self-harm safety plan

The plan should establish the means of self-harm and recognise the triggers and warning signs of increased distress, further self-harm or a suicidal crisis.

The plan should be in a written/pictorial format appropriate for the age, level of comprehension, and maturity of the child / young person – this can be, for example, on a card or pamphlet, and both the staff member and child / young person should have a copy. If consent is given it should also be shared with family or carers that have been identified.

It should also contain details of any other universal or specialist services staff the child / young person might be seeing.

An online safety plan is available at [MIND and BODY: EXAMPLE SAFETY PLAN \(Activity - 8.3.23\)](https://kentresiliencehub.org.uk) (kentresiliencehub.org.uk)

As part of the plan, the child / young person and member of staff should consider other coping strategies, which will reduce harm and increase resilience.

Replacing the self-harm with other safer activities can be a positive way of coping with the tension, what will work depends on the reasons behind the self-harm.

Examples of coping methods:



When identifying and considering individualised coping strategies, you should consider any factors that may act as a barrier.

Everyone is different with their own set of needs. This list is not exhaustive, and it is important to explore with the child / young person what they think will work for them.

School / setting policy

When working with young people it is good practice to make sure your team has a consistent approach to dealing with difficult issues. Many staff aren't sure what to do with a disclosure, and many have questions such as:

- Q. Do I have to tell their parents?
- Q. Do I have to tell the head teacher?
- Q. Should I get them referred somewhere for counselling?
- Q. How much of what they tell me should I write down?
- Q. Is it a safeguarding issue, because we have a policy for that?
- Q. How much can I keep confidential?

A good policy will cover all these issues, and more, making sure everyone involved has clarity and direction about how best to support the young person concerned as well as ensuring good practice from a safeguarding perspective.

Some things to consider when creating a policy:

Your policy needs to be accessible and appropriate for all. It may be beneficial to write this through a steering group which ideally includes young people.

There will be difficult issues you need to discuss for you to know how you will approach them including:

- Who are you going to tell?
- Who should you tell?
- What support can you offer?
- What resources do you need?
- What should you be documenting?
- When should you be documenting?

Be specific about everyone's roles and responsibilities when managing self-harm, and outline expectations consider:

- Senior teachers / leaders support/pastoral support
- All other staff
- Young people
- Parents / carers

On the following pages is a template for a school policy. This is an example which you may want to use, amend or adapt depending on what you already have in place in your organisation and in line with your existing organisational policies.

School / setting policy template

Name of organisation:

Name of self-harm lead:

We want to support any young person experiencing difficulties with self-harm, including young people who are affected by the self-harm of a friend or sibling. This document gives a brief overview of how we intend to achieve this. More detailed information may be available on a separate document.

As an organisation we recognise that self-harm can be defined by the following behaviours:

Intentional self-poisoning or self-injury, irrespective of the apparent purpose of the act

In the event of one young person reporting concerns of self-harm about another, the following steps must be taken:

1.

2.

3.

In the event of a young person making a disclosure, the self-harm lead must be notified as soon as possible and offer support and advice to the staff concerned. Our procedure on informing parents is:

As an organisation we have identified that we can offer the following support:

The following support can be offered to siblings/friends of someone who is experiencing self-harm:

Within the organisation the following people are appropriately trained in first-aid:

A large rectangular area of the page is filled with a light blue color, indicating that the list of trained personnel has been redacted.

As an organisation we will notify other agencies (such as Children Young People Mental Health Services, social services) in the following circumstances:

A large rectangular area of the page is filled with a light blue color, indicating that the list of circumstances for notification has been redacted.

Including self-harm within a taught Personal Social Health Education (PSHE) programme

Schools have a statutory duty to promote children and young people's wellbeing.

Actively promoting health and wellbeing helps the connection between children and young people's physical and mental health, their safety and their educational achievements.

Key to the successful promotion of health and well-being is a [whole school approach](#) underpinned by the support and commitment of a school's leadership and management.

The most effective PSHE education employs a wide range of active learning and assessment approaches and provides frequent opportunities for children / young people to reflect on their own and other people's experiences so they can use and apply their learning in their own lives.



The Whole School approach principles. [Promoting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing)

Pathway

Schools and settings

Workforce skills and training

Parents and carers

Children and young people

Effective teaching of education on self-harm within a PSHE curriculum:

- Children and young people learn about emotional health and wellbeing and network of support before having a lesson on self-harm.
- Opportunities to learn about self-harm as part of a planned programme about emotional health and wellbeing issues and managing stress, including where to access further information and support.
- Opportunities to promote their own emotional health and build up their resilience to cope with difficult circumstances.
 - Essential that a needs analysis is carried out.
 - Opportunities to discuss, explore and challenge the role of the media around body image.
 - Opportunities to discuss the relationship between body image and self-esteem.
 - Clear ground rules/working agreement should be established to provide a framework for lessons and discussions. This is particularly important when discussing sensitive issues. The learning environment needs to encourage children / young people to express views and opinions, while respecting the views of others.
 - Teaching and learning methods should make sure that children and young people take an active role in the lesson and ultimately take responsibility for their own learning.

Plenaries and lesson summaries allow children and young people to reflect on and assimilate what they have learned. Activities should provide an appropriate level of challenge and allow child / young persons to develop their knowledge, skills, attitudes and understanding.

[Mental health and emotional wellbeing teacher guidance \(pshe-association.org.uk\)](https://pshe-association.org.uk)

Pathway

Schools and settings

Workforce skills and training

Parents and carers

Children and young people

Information for services and support in Kent and Medway for young people



Young people can text [ChatHealth](#) in Kent on 07510 618849, and in Medway on 07480 624786. This is available for young people aged 11 to 19, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.



[MoodSpark](#) provides information and advice on building resilience and how to look after your emotional wellbeing and mental health.



[Release the Pressure](#) is available to everyone by texting 85158, 24-hours-a-day



[ICB MH Wellbeing Hub](#) provides information about the services and support available for young people across Kent and Medway who are struggling with their mental health and wellbeing.



For information on sexual health, including access to clinics visit the [KCC website](#). Our clinics offer a free and confidential service to everyone, regardless of age, gender or sexual orientation.



For online counselling and support, young people can access [Kooth](#) which is available for all 10 to 25-year-olds.



The [Be You Project](#) connects young people in Kent and Medway who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary or are questioning their sexual orientation and / or gender identity. We offer a safe, welcoming and non-judgemental space where young LGBTQ+ people can meet to socialise, have fun and help each other.



[Alumina](#) is a free, online seven-week course for young people struggling with self-harm. Each course has up to 14 young people, all accessing the sessions from their own phones, tablets or laptops across the UK. The courses take place on different evenings of the week and are run by friendly, trained counsellors and volunteer youth workers.

[Pathway](#)

[Schools and settings](#)

[Workforce skills and training](#)

[Parents and carers](#)

[Children and young people](#)



[Mind and Body](#) in Kent supports children and young adults who are self-harming, at risk of self-harming or struggling with their mental wellbeing. We help people find positive ways to manage difficult thoughts and feelings, working with small groups in secondary schools and in the community.



[Medway Community Healthcare](#) School Health Team is made up of qualified and specialist nurses who work in local communities and schools, providing health assessments for children, as well as advice and support for children and parents around issues such as sleep, behaviour and emotional health.

0300 123 3444



KCHFT school health team support young people throughout primary and secondary school. [The Children and Young People's Counselling Service](#) offers counselling to support the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people aged four to 19. Accessing support to explore, manage and understand difficult feelings can be helpful.



Mind North Kent provide [Short Intervention Therapy \(SIT\)](#) for children and young people in Medway aged 5-18 with a social worker supporting them and those 18 to 25 with Special Educational Needs or care leavers experiencing emotional dysregulation and associated behaviours.



[Emerge](#) trains volunteers to offer a free service supporting CYP aged 10 to 25-years-old who have self-harmed, experienced suicidal ideation or attempted suicide or are in crisis, Currently the service is in Medway Maritime Hospital, Darent Valley Hospital, William Harvey Hospital, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital, Kent and Canterbury Hospital, Tunbridge Wells Hospital and Maidstone Hospital.



Access to the children and young people's Mental Health Service (CYPMHS) is provided by North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT). If a person needs urgent or emergency mental health help and support and are not currently receiving care and treatment from the CYP Mental Health Service contact the Single Point of Access on 0800 011 3474 (diverted to out of hours provider after 6pm weekdays and at weekends and bank holidays) NHS 111 Option 2.

The [All-Age Eating Disorder Service](#) (AAEDS) for Kent and Medway is a specialist service. Our service aims to bring hope and confidence, through help and support, to those who have an eating disorder, to enable them to take back control of their life by overcoming their eating disorder.

Pathway

Schools and settings

Workforce skills and training

Parents and carers

Children and young people

Information for services and support nationally for young people

- [Young Minds](#) will help young people to understand more about how they're feeling and find ways to feel better.
- [Mind](#) has lots of information and resources to help young people when they are going through a rough time.
- [Childline](#) can help young people find ways to cope when they are self-harming. They can provide help, advice and you can speak to one of their online counsellors.
- [Building Connections](#) is an online service for young people up to the age of 19, empowering them to find a way through loneliness. Young people work with a trained befriender, who guides them and champions them each step of the way. Building Connections gives young people tools that can help them build their confidence and better equip them to manage loneliness.
- [Papyrus](#) provide a suicide prevention helpline, as well as a broad range of help and advice resources for young people to download.

Local and national services and support for schools and settings

- [Kent Resilience Hub](#) provides information and advice for supporting students in your setting, including a whole schools approach which includes information to help keep yourself, and staff in your setting emotionally well.
- If you are worried about the safety of a child or young person in Kent, please complete a request for support form via the new [Kent Children's portal](#). If you are in Medway and worried about a child or young person you can request support via [Medway Local Safeguarding Children Board \(LSCB\)](#).
- [ICB MH Wellbeing Hub](#) provides help and support for everyone who lives within Kent and Medway and are struggling with their mental health and wellbeing.
- [Young Minds](#) knows working with children and young people can be rewarding and fulfilling, but it can be difficult sometimes too. They can offer you the resources, training and consultancy you need so you can be there for the young people when they open up about their mental health.
- [Mind](#) have advice to help you support other people – and to look after your own wellbeing too.
- [Harmless](#) have a dedicated resource hub to support you to develop your awareness and understanding so that you can act as a source of help and support for young people.
- [CYPMHS](#) provide an advice line if you are unsure if a referral to the service is required. Contact them via the single point of access on 0800 011 3474. If a clinician is available, they will speak to you, alternatively a call back will be arranged.

If needed you can contact the police on their non-emergency number 101, and for out of hours support you can contact the NHS 111 service using Option 2.

Workforce skills and training

The implementation of this guidance alongside training will help to increase awareness, confidence and attitudinal approaches to children / young people who self-harm.

This will lead to an increase in confident and empathetic working relationships between staff and children / young people as well as improved inter-agency working. This will enable the early identification of vulnerable children / young people.

Two Day Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA)

This two-day [Youth Mental Health First Aid](#) course gives you:

- in-depth understanding of children / young people's mental health and factors that affect wellbeing
- practical skills to spot the triggers and signs of mental health issues
- confidence to reassure and support a child / young person in distress
- enhanced interpersonal skills such as non-judgemental listening
- knowledge to help a child / young person recover their health by guiding them to further support – whether that's through self-help sites, their place of learning, the NHS, or a mix – engaging with parents, carers, and external agencies where appropriate
- ability to support a child / young person with a long-term mental health or disability to thrive
- tools to look after your own mental wellbeing

Alumina training

This two-day [Alumina](#) course will provide you with the skills, knowledge, resources, and confidence to deliver seven weekly sessions in your setting for young people with self-harming behaviour in mainstream schools with an additional focus on supporting young people with Autistic Spectrum conditions (ASC) and Children in Care (CIC)

This course is ideal for those working in schools in a PHSE capacity, pastorally, inclusion managers, school counsellors and those in the youth service.

Aces and Trauma Informed Awareness Training

This course is intended to develop a knowledge and working practice of ACEs and Trauma informed Practice. The course is suitable for delegates who have no working knowledge of ACEs or those who want to gain further knowledge. Available for staff in Kent and Medway. For more information contact MCSC@medway.gov.uk

[Supporting People with Adverse Childhood Experiences](#) (SPACE) matters is a collaborative project across Kent and Medway to prevent and reduce the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

Pathway

Schools and settings

Workforce skills and training

Parents and carers

Children and young people

Supporting Young People who Self-harm – Professionals

Mind and Body recognise that we can often be left with questions around mental health and may feel unsure how to deal with some situations, particularly those in relation to self-harm. The aim of this session is to help increase your confidence in these areas, learn how to manage risk as well as providing an opportunity to explore strategies to best support your young person.

Managing suicidal ideation and self-harm

Bite size training developed by Sarah Richards, Project Lead and Joy Wright, CEO, Emerge Advocacy Service <https://vimeo.com/883228281?share=copy>

Youth Mental Health and Suicide Awareness Training

This course delivered by Mid Kent Mind is suitable for anyone who supports, encounters or cares for a young person including family members, teachers and youth group leaders.

You will learn about the factors which might affect a young person's mental health including stress and how to help them manage this. We will explore which groups are statistically at greater risk of taking their own life and the relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences, self-harm and suicide. You will learn how to identify the warning signs that a young person might be struggling and what might cause them to experience thoughts of taking their own life.

We will cover the different levels of suicidal ideation and the tools that can be used to help assess the level of risk and what support is needed. This will include how to create a safety plan with a young person and where to get additional support from locally and nationally.

Everyday Mental Health Training

Developed in partnership with the Kent and Medway ICS Suicide Prevention Programme Team, Mid Kent Mind deliver Everyday Mental Health which aims to help people better understand their own mental health and wellbeing, and then how to apply that improved knowledge to the steps they can take to support others.

Self-harm training

Kooth offers free staff training on self -harm delivered face-to-face, usually on staff training days. If you are interested in booking, email casher@kooth.com, or call on 07411188841.

Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership and Medway Public Health Workforce offers a variety of free multi-agency courses for all professionals working with children / young people in Kent and Medway.

Pathway

Schools and settings

Workforce skills and training

Parents and carers

Children and young people



Self-harm guidance for parents and carers

If you would like to provide feedback on how this guidance can be improved, please complete our feedback form <https://forms.office.com/e/iJVjDJibcS>

What is self-harm?

Self-harm refers to when a person purposefully hurts themselves. The National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) defines self-harm as 'intentional self-poisoning or self-injury, irrespective of the apparent purpose of the act'.

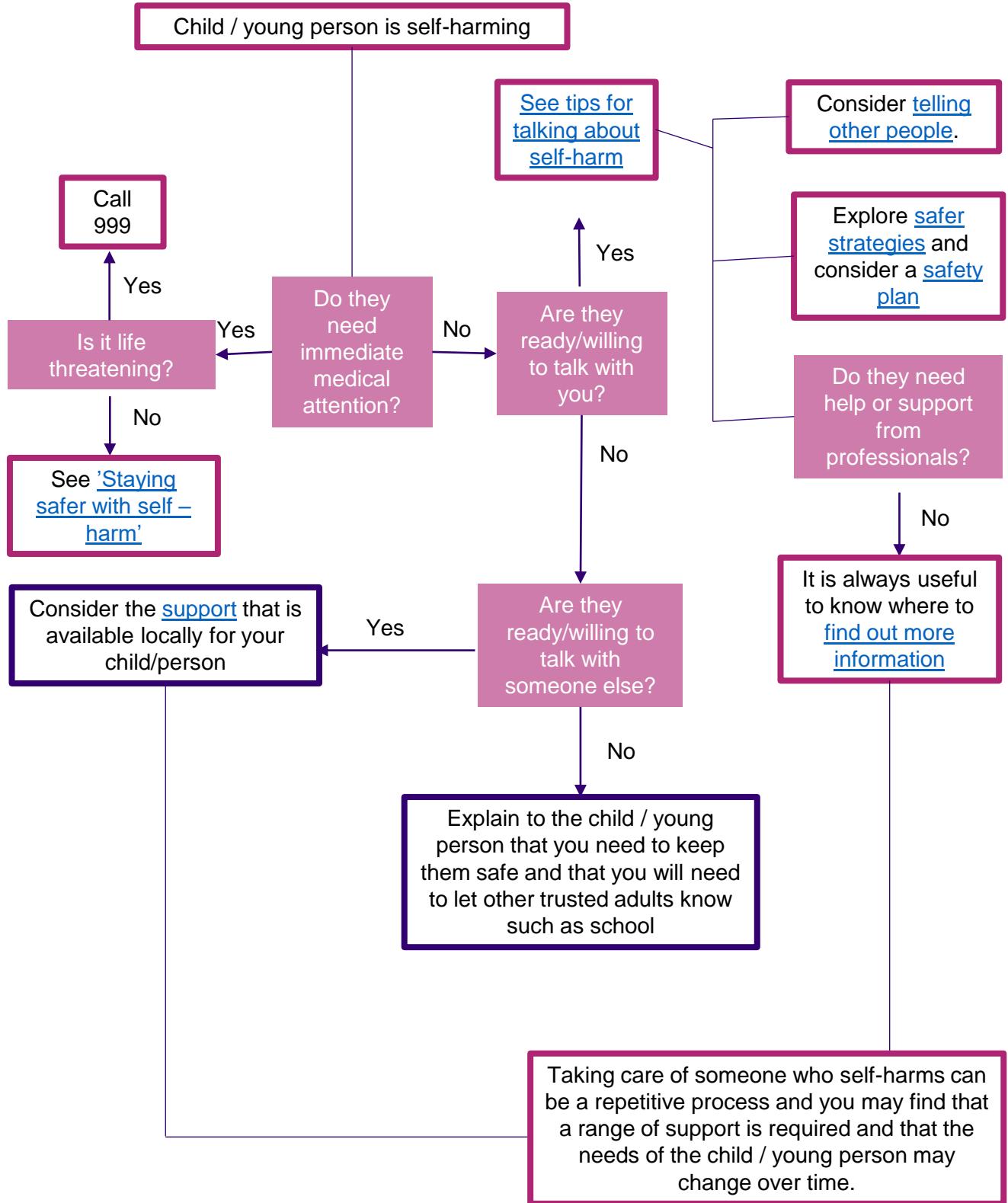
If a child / young person is self-harming, this is often a sign that they need support. It is sometimes a way of coping when feelings or situations feel too overwhelming.

It can be difficult to tell if someone is self-harming.

There are not always warnings, but these signs might suggest someone could be self-harming however they could be a sign of something else.



Flow chart for parents and carers



What to do if you are worried about someone

If you are worried that someone you know is self-harming, it can be difficult to know what to do but it is important that you do not wait.

Waiting and hoping they will come to you for help might lose valuable time in getting them the best support and treatment to help them.

They might not feel ready or able to talk about their self-harm. Let them lead the discussion and don't put pressure on them to tell you details that they aren't ready to talk about.

It takes a lot of trust and courage to open up about self-harm. You might be the first person they have been able to talk to about this, or they might not want to talk to you.

Try not to take this personally: telling someone they care about can be difficult and they might be worried they are hurting you.

It is important that you respond in a non-judgemental, caring and respectful way.

You may find it difficult to understand why someone would hurt themselves, however you should try to see the person and reasons they have harmed themselves rather than focusing on the behaviours.

Tips for talking about self-harm

Make time to talk when you will be free from interruption and can give the child / young person your full attention.

Remove distractions such as computers and phones. This will allow you to give your full attention, letting them know you are there to listen to and support them.

Don't ask them to tell you details about specific injuries or behaviours. Instead talk about how they are feeling and what they are going through.

Try not to react shocked or disgusted. It can be difficult to understand why someone would harm themselves, but negative reactions may put them off talking to you.

Know your limits. The person might tell you to keep it a secret. If they are in danger or have injuries that need medical attention, you need to make sure they are safe.

Reassure them that you are there for them and that you will support them to access any further help they need.

Avoid giving ultimatums; for example, 'stop or else...' as these rarely work. This may stop them talking to you and you might not get the chance to discuss the topic again.

Offer them help in seeking professional support. You might want to offer to go the GP with them or talk to a trusted adult. Try not to take control and allow them to make decisions.

Be positive and let them know that things will get better, and recovery is possible!

Safer strategies

When the urge to self-harm does build in the moment, having a list of other things they can do straight away can also help your child / young person to 'ride the wave' of their intense feelings without self-harming.

Remember that different things will work for different people, and that what helps will usually depend on the feelings your child / young person is trying to manage. Some children / young people will want to do something soothing like wrapping themselves up in a comfy space, while others might want to do something very active to burn off the energy in their body.

Talk to your child / young person about different strategies they could try, while also giving them space to find their own ways of coping and figure out what works for them. Strategies could include:



Your child / young person might want to use an app like Calm Harm so they have something on their phone that suggests different techniques they can try when they feel the urge to self-harm

Attending to your own needs

It is normal for parents and carers to experience strong emotions and it is important that you look after yourself as well as your child / young person.

Recovery from self-harm may be a long process, so try to find time for relaxation. Pay attention to the physical signs of stress, such as stomach aches, difficulty sleeping, or depression.

Helpful things to put in place are:

- having clear boundaries about how much and what sort of support you can offer your child / young person
- finding out what other support is available for your child / young person
- getting support and information for yourself – Young Minds offers support for parents and carers, and Sane and Self-injury Support run support services for people concerned about someone else's mental health
- you may find it helpful to try a talking therapy if you are finding things difficult

Take time for yourself when you are upset. Do things you enjoy, such as going out with friends, exercise, hobbies.

Give yourself permission only to do things that really need doing and don't worry about less important tasks. Take time off work if you are able and accept help from family and friends.

Learn to identify and accept your own feelings. It may help to write them down.

Find an outlet for your emotions, such as talking to a friend, relative or therapist. You may find other emotions coming out as anger – be careful that your child / young person does not think this is directed at them.

Telling others

It is not essential for you to share with your support network about your child/young person's self-harm – and it may be that they do not want you to share with anyone.

However, being open about it, can mean that you and your child/young person has a wider support network which may be beneficial. This is a personal choice.

Think carefully about who to tell and their possible reactions, balancing your child / young person's need for privacy with your need for support.

You might consider speaking to a counsellor or calling a helpline to work through your feelings.

You and your child / young person can think together about how much you want to tell other family members, including siblings, about the self-harm.

- Explain to close family that your child / young person is going through a difficult time – you do not need to give details
- Siblings may feel angry or that their sibling who is self-harming is being selfish and causing distress in the family
- You are still the parent: don't be afraid to set boundaries on your child / young person's behaviour (how they treat siblings)
- Remember your other children / young people need your attention and support as well
- Try to help them manage their feelings
- Watch for similar behaviours in your other children / young people
- Listen to them and remind them that you love them

The wider family may or may not understand why a child / young person would self-harm, so you and your immediate family will have to think about how they might react and how you want to manage this.

It can help to be open with your child or young person's school or college with what is going on and explore the support available.

You can speak with any member of staff, such as the class teacher, head of year, designated safeguarding lead or Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO). Speak with your child or young person first, ask them who they would feel comfortable you sharing the information with, and what information they are happy to have shared.

You might want to ask the school to:

- arrange for a named member of staff that your child or young person can chat to when times are difficult
- consider developing a safety plan with your child or young person to make sure they have clear coping strategies and have written down where they should seek support from
- support you and your child or young person in making a referral to a local mental health organisation, or Children Young People Mental Health Services. This should be based on your child or young person's needs and how they would prefer to be supported

What is a safety plan?

Your child/young person's school or setting where they are accessing support will develop a safety plan with your child/young person. A safety plan is simply a quick access guide for your child/young person to consider when they feel the urge to self-harm.

Through the development of the safety plan, they will identify what their triggers are for self-harm, so what situations or conversations make them feel a need to act. They will explore what coping strategies they think may help, this may initially be something to try, or it may be activities they already know help. They will list people they know they can talk to, or perhaps list alternatives such as text or online services. It will also include contact details for those identified.

There is no right or wrong approach to a safety plan – it can be on a scrap piece of paper, or on an app, the important thing is that it is bespoke to your child/young person and if it needs to change and be updated, then that should happen to. It should also be shared with those that support your child/young person so that everyone is aware of the agreed approaches.

Information for services and support in Kent and Medway for young people



Young people can text [ChatHealth](#) in Kent on 07510 618849, and in Medway on 07480 624786. This is available for young people aged 11 to 19, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.



[MoodSpark](#) provides information and advice on building resilience and how to look after your emotional wellbeing and mental health.



[Release the Pressure](#) is available to everyone by texting 85158, 24-hours-a-day



[ICB MH Wellbeing Hub](#) provides information about the services and support available for young people across Kent and Medway who are struggling with their mental health and wellbeing.



For information on sexual health, including access to clinics visit the [KCC website](#). Our clinics offer a free and confidential service to everyone, regardless of age, gender or sexual orientation.



For online counselling and support, young people can access [Kooth](#) which is available for all 10 to 25-year-olds.



The [Be You](#) Project connects young people in Kent and Medway who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary or are questioning their sexual orientation and / or gender identity. We offer a safe, welcoming and non-judgemental space where young LGBTQ+ people can meet to socialise, have fun and help each other.



[Alumina](#) is a free, online seven week course for young people struggling with self-harm. Each course has up to 14 young people, all accessing the sessions from their own phones, tablets or laptops across the UK. The courses take place on different evenings of the week and are run by friendly, trained counsellors and volunteer youth workers.



[Mind and Body](#) in Kent supports children and young adults who are self-harming, at risk of self-harming or struggling with their mental wellbeing. We help people find positive ways to manage difficult thoughts and feelings, working with small groups in secondary schools and in the community.



[Medway Community Healthcare](#) School Health Team is made up of qualified and specialist nurses who work in local communities and schools, providing health assessments for children, as well as advice and support for children and parents around issues such as sleep, behaviour and emotional health.

0300 123 3444



KCHFT school health team support young people throughout primary and secondary school. [The Children and Young People's Counselling Service](#) offers counselling to support the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people aged four to 19. Accessing support to explore, manage and understand difficult feelings can be helpful.



Mind North Kent provide [Short Intervention Therapy \(SIT\)](#) for children and young people in Medway aged five to 18 with a social worker supporting them and those 18 to 25 with Special Educational Needs or Care leavers experiencing emotional dysregulation and associated behaviours.



[EMERGE](#) trains volunteers to offer a free service supporting CYP aged 10-25 years old who have self-harmed, experienced suicidal ideation or attempted suicide or are in crisis. Currently the service is in Medway Maritime Hospital, Darent Valley Hospital, William Harvey Hospital, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital, Kent and Canterbury Hospital, Tunbridge Wells Hospital and Maidstone Hospital.



Access to the Children & Young People's Mental Health Service (CYPMHS) is provided by North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT). If a person needs urgent or emergency mental health help and support and are not currently receiving care and treatment from the CYP Mental Health Service contact the Single Point of Access on 0800 011 3474 (diverted to out of hours provider after 6pm weekdays and at weekends and bank holidays) NHS 111 Option 2.

The [All-Age Eating Disorder Service](#) (AAEDS) for Kent and Medway is a specialist service. Our service aims to bring hope and confidence, through help and support, to those who have an eating disorder, to enable them to take back control of their life by overcoming their eating disorder.

Information for services and support nationally for young people

- [Young Minds](#) will help young people to understand more about how they're feeling and find ways to feel better.
- [Mind](#) have lots of information and resources to help young people when they are going through a rough time.
- [Childline](#) can help young people find ways to cope when they are self-harming. They can provide help, advice and you can speak to one of their online counsellors.
- [Building Connections](#) is an online service for young people up to the age of 19, empowering them to find a way through loneliness. Young people work with a trained befriender, who guides them and champions them each step of the way. Building Connections gives young people tools that can help them build their confidence and better equip them to manage loneliness.
- [Papyrus](#) provide a suicide prevention helpline, as well as a broad range of help and advice resources for young people to download.

Local and national services and support for parents and carers

[Kent Resilience Hub](#) know that as a parent or carer there will be many times during your child's life when you will observe your child's resilience being tested. This site provides you with tools and information for you to support your child, as well as a free webinar to support building resilience.

[ICB MH Wellbeing Hub](#) provides help and support for everyone who lives within Kent and Medway and are struggling with their mental health and wellbeing.

[Young Minds](#) can support you, whilst you support your children. They also have a dedicated Parents/Caregivers helpline 0808 802 5544 (9.30am to 4pm on weekdays)

[Mind](#) have dedicated information parents, carers, family members and guardians supporting a young person with their mental health and wellbeing.

[NSPCC](#) provide support and guidance online for parents and carers, and you can contact their Parents/Caregivers helpline on 0808 800 4900 or text 88858

[Harmless](#) have a dedicated resource hub to support you to develop your awareness and understanding so that you can act as a source of help and support for your child. They also provide an [assessment tool](#).

[Kent and Medway children / young people's Mental Health](#) Single Point of Access (SPA) 0800 011 3474 or call NHS direct on 111 using option 2 out-of-hours.

For general information on self-harm visit the [NHS website](#).

If needed, you can contact the police on the non-emergency number 101, and for out-of-hours support, you can contact NHS 111 using option 2.

Training

Supporting your child

Mind and Body offer [free training sessions](#) to help parents and carers support a child / young person who is self-harming

Youth Mental Health and Suicide Awareness Training

This course delivered by [Mid Kent Mind](#) is suitable for anyone who supports, encounters or cares for a young person including family members, teachers and youth group leaders.

You will learn about the factors which might affect a young person's mental health including stress and how to help them manage this. We will explore which groups are statistically at greater risk of taking their own life and the relationship between adverse childhood experiences, self-harm and suicide. You will learn how to identify the warning signs that a young person might be struggling and what might cause them to experience thoughts of taking their own life.

We will cover the different levels of suicidal ideation and the tools that can be used to help assess the level of risk and what support is needed. This will include how to create a safety plan with a young person and where to get additional support from locally and nationally.

Everyday Mental Health Training

Developed in partnership with the Kent and Medway Integrated Care System Suicide Prevention Programme Team, [Mid Kent Mind](#) deliver this session which aims to help people better understand their own mental health and wellbeing, and then how to apply that improved knowledge to the steps they can take to support others.

Online parent/carer forums*

It may be beneficial to speak with other parents/carers who have been through similar experiences. Some examples of forums available include:

- [Parent Support Page - Children/Teens who self-harm](#)
- [Self-harm - Parents | Facebook](#)
- [National Self-harm Network online forum](#)

"It's not that I want anybody else to be in similar situations, but it's just great to know that you're not on your own."

* Although forums are a great place to connect with people, these are not always managed or overseen by professionals and therefore are not endorsed locally and are shown for illustrative purposes only.



**Self-harm guidance for
children and young people**

What is self-harm?

When someone hurts themselves on purpose, this is called 'self-harm'. This can include physically hurting ourselves, causing ourselves emotional harm, or deliberately putting ourselves in dangerous situations.

Self-harm can often be a way to cope when things feel overwhelming, and it is usually a sign that we need support.

If you, or someone you know, is struggling with self-harm, just know you are not alone, there is plenty of help and support.

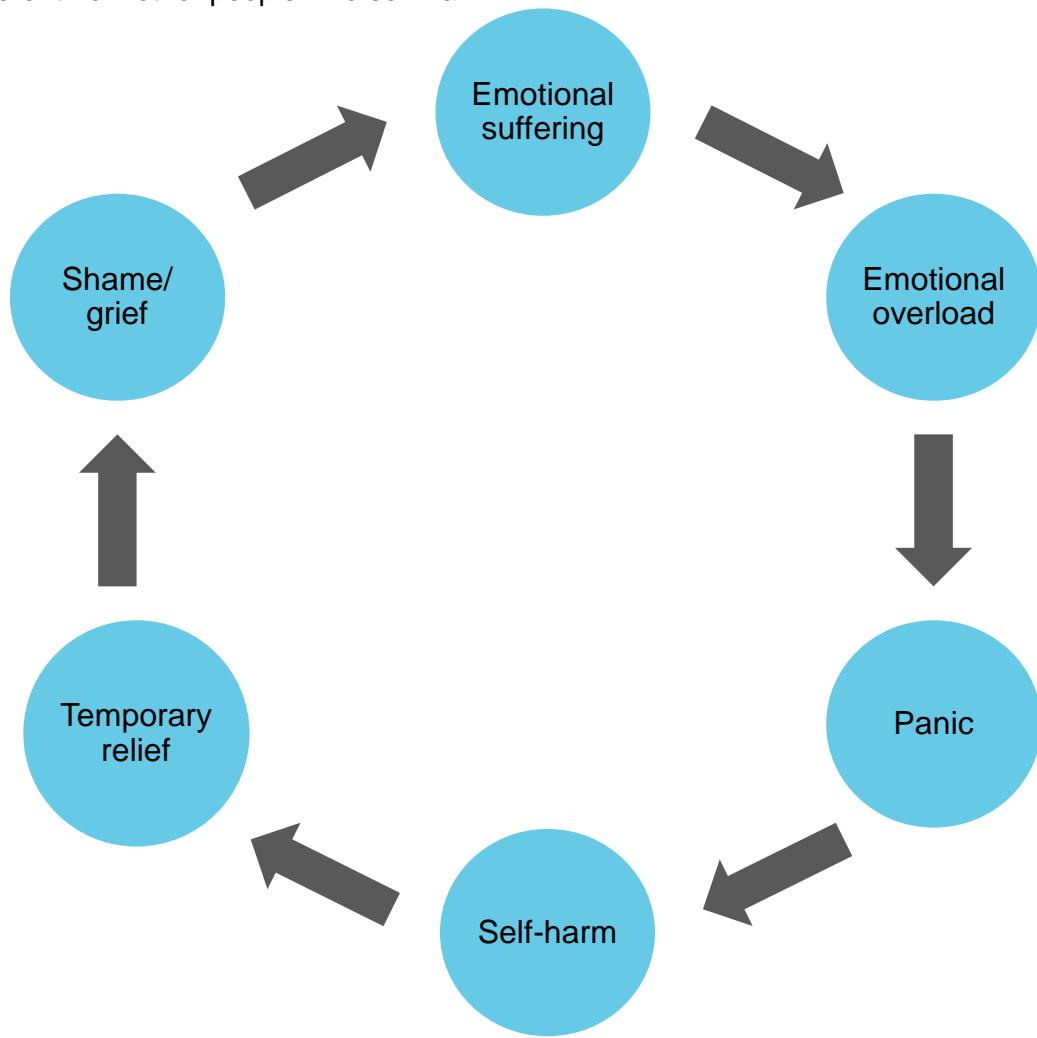
We all go through difficult times in our lives, and we all cope in different ways. Sometimes it is assumed that self-harm is always a sign of suicidal behaviour, but anyone can be affected by self-harm.



The cycle of self-harm?

Everyone has things in their life that can cause stress and worry them. Some people can manage these troubles by talking to friends and family, while others may find these difficulties overwhelming. When we don't express our emotions and talk about the things that make us distressed, angry or upset, the pressure can build up and become unbearable. Some people turn this in on themselves and use their bodies to express the thoughts and feelings they can't say aloud. People often harm themselves when this all gets too much.

If you self-harm, you might find that when you feel angry, distressed, worried or depressed, you feel the urge to hurt yourself even more. Someone's reason to self-harm can be very different from other people who self-harm



After harming yourself, you may feel better able to cope with life again, at least for a short while. Although self-harm can be a way of coping, this might be short-lived, and it is important you are able to find healthier coping methods

Reasons for self-harm

Self-harm is often a way of trying to cope with painful and confusing feelings. Difficult things that people who self-harm talk about include:

Being hurt by others: Physically, sexually or emotionally	Arguments with friends or family
Not feeling very good or confident about themselves	Break up of a relationship
Feeling under a lot of pressure at school or at home	Failing (or thinking you are going to fail)
Feeling sad or feeling worried	Being bullied
Losing someone close: This could include someone dying or leaving	

Sometimes, things build up until you feel you cannot cope anymore. Self-harm can be a way of trying to deal with or escaping from these difficult feelings. It can also be a way of showing other people that something is wrong .



Coping methods

While self-harm may be a way to help you cope, and it might feel too difficult to stop right now, it can be helpful to have other coping strategies that help you.

Talk to friends or family about how you feel	Turn your music up	Keep a diary	Have a bath	Ring someone – maybe a helpline?
Watch a film	Read a book	Spend time with a pet	Go where there are people	Scribble on or rip up paper



Sometimes you may find it helpful to release your emotions in a less harmful way. Some ideas include:

Clenching ice cubes in the hand until they melt or rubbing them on your skin

Hitting a pillow / soft object

Physical exercise

Clenching your muscles and then relaxing

Writing or drawing on the area you want to harm

Going into a field and screaming

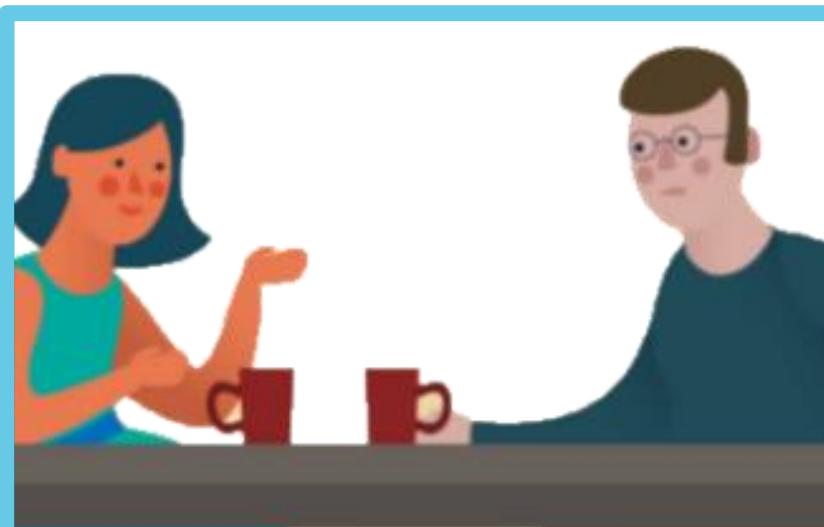
Coping methods

Everyone is different, what works for you is unique, and you may need to change your approach at different times. It is important to keep returning to alternative coping mechanisms if you are not finding your chosen ones to be effective.

You need to understand and deal with the causes of the stress that you feel.

The support of someone who understands and will listen to you can be very helpful in facing difficult feelings.

- At home parents, brother/sister or another trusted family member.
- In school counsellor, school nurse, teacher, teaching assistant or other member of staff.
- Family doctor: You can talk to your GP about your difficulties, and they can make a referral for counselling.



What happens if you attend A&E or a minor injuries unit for your mental health...

You should always seek help in the community for your mental health so from your home or maybe your school, but if you have a serious injury, or you are at serious risk, you may find yourself in an A&E / emergency department or a minor injuries unit.

Going to the hospital for mental health care might feel a bit scary, especially when hospitals can seem big and overwhelming, but understanding what to expect can make things less scary for you.

Whether you're in hospital because you want to be there, or because someone thinks it's the right thing for you, it's important to remember this: **You're not alone.**

We want you to know some important things:

There is hope

Lots of people have felt just like you do right now, and things got better for them.

You do NOT need to feel ashamed

You know how you'd go to hospital if you had a broken leg? Well, this is a bit like that, but for your feelings. Mental health is just as important as your physical health!

There's help there for you!

Even if you don't feel it right now, there are people in this world who care about you and want to help you get better.

It's okay to feel overwhelmed, scared, or unsure.

Life can be tricky sometimes, and asking for help is a sign that you're strong and brave.



When you get to the hospital, the focus is on keeping you safe right away. Here's what you might experience depending on your situation:

Registering

When you arrive at A&E, staff will ask for your information like name, address, and why you're there. They might also ask about your medical history, medications, and who's with you if you're under 16. If you can't speak, these questions may go to whoever's with you – friend, family or ambulance staff.

Assessment (sometimes called triage)

After arriving, a clinically qualified professional will assess you to understand what's going on. A team of healthcare professionals, like psychiatrists and therapists, will conduct a mental health assessment to discuss with you your immediate needs, potential risks, and the treatment options to meet your individual needs. They'll ask about your thoughts, feelings, and experiences to get things right.

Waiting

A&E can get busy, and you might wait even if you need help urgently. Ask someone you trust to wait with you if possible. It may be possible to access a private space, so have someone with you ask a member of staff if one is available.

Noise

There are lots of noises in a hospital, it is a busy environment and many beeping machines. If the noises affect you, if you can, ask someone if it is possible you can go to a quieter space.

Treatment for your physical health, before your mental health

Clinically qualified professionals might treat your physical health first, especially if there's a concern about self-harm. This could involve injections or tending to wounds.

Transfer or sent home

You may be sent home for follow up in the community or you may be admitted to a hospital bed.



Treatment decision

You and your treatment team will create a personalised plan, which may involve medication, therapy, counselling, group activities, and more. You can talk about your goals and preferences with your care team.

Length of stay

The length of your hospital stay can vary based on your individual needs and progress. Clinically qualified staff will work with you to determine when you're ready to leave hospital. Before leaving the hospital, a discharge plan will be created to help you transition back to the community. This plan may include follow-up appointments, referrals to outpatient services and other community-based services, and ongoing support.

Patient rights and privacy

You have the right to privacy and confidentiality during your hospital stay. You also have the right to participate in your treatment decisions and voice any concerns.

This information has been developed based on feedback from young people who have been through similar experiences, which may help address your concerns and make the process a little less scary for you.



My friend has a problem – how can I help?

You can really help by just being there, listening and giving support.

Be open and honest. If you are worried about your friend's safety, you should tell an adult. Let your friend know that you are going to do this, and you are doing it because you care about them.

Encourage your friend to get help. You can go with them or tell someone they want to know.

Get [information from telephone help lines, website, library etc](#). This can help you understand what your friend is experiencing.

It can be difficult to look after someone who is having difficulties. It is important for you to find an adult to talk to, who can support you. You may not always be able to be there for your friend and that's OK.

Your friendship may be changed by the learning about your friend's self-harm. You may feel bad that you can't help your friend enough or guilty if you have had to tell other people. These feelings are common and don't mean that you have done something wrong/not done enough.

Your friend may get angry with you or say you don't understand. It is important to try not to take this personally. Often when people are feeling bad about themselves, they get angry with the people they are closest to.



There is lots of information to be found online to support you and your friends. Some trusted websites to start with include:



www.MoodSpark.org.uk provides information and advice on how to look after your emotional wellbeing and mental health.



www.KentYouthHealth.nhs.uk provides information and advice on a wide range of health-related topics.



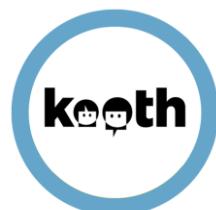
www.YoungMinds.org.uk are a mental health charity that makes sure children and young people get the mental health support they need. You can also call them on 0207 089 4949.



[Ellies Angels](#) have developed the app Better U. The app offers a free, easy and supportive way to journal, create affirmations and use self-help tools to manage your well-being – and it is advert free.

Finding information online for yourself is helpful, but speaking to someone will provide you with support, understanding and as well as guidance.

There are many opportunities for you to speak with someone whether that be through your friends, family and other trusted adults, you can also speak with support in the community via text, online chat and by phone.



Visit Kooth.com, an online community for all 10 to 25-year-olds. They offer free online counselling and support 355 days a year.



Text Chat Health – a confidential service for children / young people aged 11-19. You can text about any concerns or health issues on 07510 618849. Available Monday to Friday 9am-5pm.



Text the word 'Kent' to 85158 for confidential support, 24-hours-a-day. For more details visit releasethepressure.uk



Call 0800 1111 to talk to childline. The number will not appear on your phone bill.

You may wish to get help by accessing support through a service. These ones you can self-refer by visiting their websites



[Mind and Body](#) in Kent supports children / young people and young adults who are self-harming, at risk of self-harming or struggling with their mental wellbeing



[Kent School Health](#) can offer up to six counselling sessions for children / young people aged four to 19. These sessions can help a child / young person gain understanding and develop strategies to help them feel better. This is also available to children and young people not in school.



[Medway Young Persons' Wellbeing Service \(YWPS\)](#) work with children and young people aged up to 19 years or up to 25 with SEN needs in Medway with complex mental health difficulties. Referrals will be accepted from all professionals involved with the child or young person, family members or from the young person themselves. 0800 011 3474



If you identify as a young LGBTQ+ person, [Be You](#) have a range of support you can access.



For information on sexual health, including access to clinics visit the [KCC website](#). Our clinics offer a free and confidential service to everyone, regardless of age, gender or sexual orientation.



[EMERGE](#) trains volunteers to offer a free service supporting CYP aged 10 to 25-years-old who have self-harmed, experienced suicidal ideation or attempted suicide or are in crisis. Currently the service is in Medway Maritime Hospital, Darent Valley Hospital, William Harvey Hospital, Queen Elizabeth Queen Mother Hospital, Kent and Canterbury Hospital, Tunbridge Wells Hospital and Maidstone Hospital.



[Alumina](#) is a free, online seven-week course for young people struggling with self-harm. Each course has up to 14 young people, all accessing the sessions from their own phones, tablets or laptops across the UK. The courses take place on different evenings of the week and are run by friendly, trained counsellors and volunteer youth workers.



Access to the Children and Young People's Mental Health Service (CYPMHS) is provided by North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT). If a person needs urgent or emergency mental health help and support and are not currently receiving care and treatment from the CYP Mental Health Service contact the Single Point of Access on 0800 011 3474 (diverted to out of hours provider after 6pm weekdays and at weekends and bank holidays) NHS 111 Option 2.

The [All-Age Eating Disorder Service](#) (AAEDS) for Kent and Medway is a specialist service. Our service aims to bring hope and confidence, through help and support, to those who have an eating disorder, to enable them to take back control of their life by overcoming their eating disorder.

National support lines

- Samaritans: 116 123 (open 24 hours a day), email :jo@samaritans.org
- National Self-harm Network: 0800 622600 (7pm to 11pm)
- Support Line 01708 765100 (hours vary so ring for details)
- Mind call 0300 123 3383 or text 86262 (9am to 6pm on weekdays)

Kooth has produced [support guides](#) for you, offering helpful advice and information on social anxiety, eating difficulties, self-injury, suicidal thoughts, and safety plans

Do you need urgent support or help?

If you need someone to talk to and the problem isn't immediately life-threatening call NHS 111 Option 2.

If there is immediate danger or risk to life call 999



Links in document

Page number	Link text	URL
4,9	Preventing Suicide in children / young people in Kent and Medway	https://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/130968/Kent-and-Medway-CYP-Suicide-and-Self-harm-Prevention-Strategy-2021-25.pdf
4,9	Children / young people and young adults' emotional wellbeing and mental health : Kent & Medway ICS (kmhealthandcare.uk)	https://www.kmhealthandcare.uk/transformation-projects/children / young people-young-people-and-young-adults-emotional-wellbeing-and-mental-health
4,9	Self-harm: assessment, management and preventing recurrence (nice.org.uk)	https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng225/resources/selfharm-assessment-management-and-preventing-recurrence-pdf-66143737346757
7	i-Thrive Framework	https://kentresiliencehub.org.uk/i-thrive/
13	Worried about a child / young person - Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership (kscmp.org.uk)	https://www.kscmp.org.uk/guidance/worried-about-a-child
13,16, 36	Medway Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP).	https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200170/children_and_families/600/concerned_about_a_child
13	Get Help Now 2023 (kentresiliencehub.org.uk)	https://kentresiliencehub.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Get-Help-Now-Infographic-2023.pdf
17	SPA	https://www.nelft.nhs.uk/services-kent-children-young-peoples-mental-health
18	First aid guidelines	https://www.kentcht.nhs.uk/leaflet/staying-safer-with-self-harm/
20	Keeping children / young people Safe in Education	https://www.highspeedtraining.co.uk/hub/keeping-children-safe-in-education-changes/
20	Working Together to Safeguard children / young people 2018)	https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/942454/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_inter_agency_guidance.pdf
20	Legislation	https://www.highspeedtraining.co.uk/hub/safeguarding-children-legislation/
17	Kent Integrated front door	https://webapps.kent.gov.uk/KCC.ChildrensPortal.Web.Sites.Public/Default.aspx

Links in document

Page number	Link text	URL
21	Support	https://kentresiliencehub.org.uk/working-with-young-people/whole-setting-approach/school-resilience-toolkit/resources/staff-development-and-wellbeing/
22	The Mental Health Friends handbook.	https://moodspark.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/293.54-Mental-Health-Friends-Workbook-for-Young-People_A5-Booklet_Accessible.pdf
23	How can I help people reflect on their online activity around suicide and self-harm? (samaritans.org)	https://www.samaritans.org/about-samaritans/research-policy/internet-suicide/internet-safety-practitioners/helping-people/reflecting-online-experiences/
26	MIND and BODY: EXAMPLE SAFETY PLAN (Activity - 8.3.23) (kentresiliencehub.org.uk)	https://kentresiliencehub.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Mind-and-Body-example-safety-plan.pdf
32	Whole school approach	https://kentresiliencehub.org.uk/working-with-young-people/whole-setting-approach/school-resilience-toolkit/
34,49,64	Chathealth	https://family.kentcht.nhs.uk/chathealth/
34,49,63	MoodSpark	https://moodspark.org.uk/
34,49,64	Release the pressure	https://www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/health/release-the-pressure
34,37,49, 51	ICB MH Wellbeing Hub	https://www.kmhealthandcare.uk/mental-wellbeing-information-hub
34,49,65	KCC website	https://www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/health/sexual-health
34,49,63	Kooth	https://www.kooth.com/
34,49,65	Be you	https://thebeyouproject.co.uk/
35,50,64	Mind and Body	https://www.wearewithyou.org.uk/services/mind-and-body-in-kent/
35,50,64	Medway Community Healthcare	https://www.medwaycommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services/a-z-services/child-health-service/school-health
35,50	The Children and Young People's Counselling Service	https://www.kentcht.nhs.uk/service/school-health/

Page number	Link text	URL
35,50	Short Intervention Therapy (SIT)	https://northkentmind.co.uk/short-intervention-therapy/
35,50,65	Emerge	https://emergeadvocacy.com/
35,50,51	Mental Health Service	http://www.nelft.nhs.uk/
35,50	All-Age Eating Disorder Service	https://www.nelft.nhs.uk/services-kent-medway-eating-disorders
37,51	Young Minds	https://www.youngminds.org.uk/
37,51	Mind	https://www.mind.org.uk/
37,51	Childline	https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/self-harm/
37,51	Building Connections	https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/services/building-connections?utm_campaign=20230918_KIS_CASPAR_September18&utm_content=Building%20Connections&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Adestra
34,49,65	Alumina	https://alumina.selfharm.co.uk/
37,51	Papyrus	https://www.papyrus-uk.org/
37,51	Kent Resilience Hub	http://www.kentresiliencehub.org.uk/
37	Kent Children's portal	https://www.kscmp.org.uk/guidance/worried-about-a-child
37,51	Young Minds	https://www.youngminds.org.uk/professional/
37,51	Mind	https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helping-someone-else/

Page number	Link text	URL
37,51	Harmless	https://harmless.org.uk/resource-hub/
37	CYPMHS	http://www.nelft.nhs.uk/
38	Youth Mental Health First Aid	https://www.kscmp.org.uk/training/multi-agency/youth-mental-health-first-aid
37	Alumina	https://healthtraining.medway.gov.uk/
39	ACE & Trauma Informed	
39	Bite size training	https://vimeo.com/883228281?share=copy
39,52	Mid Kent Mind	https://www.maidstonemind.org/free-youth-suicide-prevention-training/
39,52	Everyday Mental Health	https://www.maidstonemind.org/everyday-mental-health-training/
39	Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership	https://www.kscmp.org.uk/
39	Medway Public Health Workforce	https://healthtraining.medway.gov.uk/
51	Young Minds	https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/
51	Mind	https://www.mind.org.uk/for-young-people/information-for-parents/
51	NSPCC	https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/childrens-mental-health/self-harm/
51	Assessment tool	https://harmless.nhs.uk/assessment/
46	Young Minds	https://www.youngminds.org.uk/
46	Sane	http://www.sane.org.uk/
46	Self-injury support	http://www.selfinjursupport.org.uk/
63	Kent Youth Health	http://www.kentyouthhealth.nhs.uk/
64	Kent School Health	https://www.kentchth.nhs.uk/service/school-health/
38	Supporting people with adverse childhood experiences	https://www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/information-for-social-care-professionals/space-matters

Page number	Link text	URL
51	Young Minds	https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/
51	Mind	https://www.mind.org.uk/for-young-people/information-for-parents/
51	NSPCC	https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/childrens-mental-health/self-harm/
51	Harmless	https://harmless.org.uk/resource-hub/
51	Assessment tool	https://harmless.nhs.uk/assessment/
51	NHS Website	https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/feelings-symptoms-behaviours/behaviours/self-harm
52	Free training sessions	http://www.wearewithyou.org.uk/services/mind-and-body-in-kent/
52	Parent Support Page - Children/Teens who self-harm	https://www.facebook.com/groups/selfharmparentsupport
52	Self-harm - Parents Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/groups/338257342865468
52	National Self-harm Network online forum	http://www.nshn.co.uk/forum
63	http://www.kentyouthhealth.nhs.uk/	http://www.kentyouthhealth.nhs.uk/
63	www.YoungMinds.org.uk	http://www.youngminds.org.uk/
63	Ellies Angels	https://www.elliesangels.org/better-u
65	Support guides	https://cloud.brandmaster.com/shared/assets/bf8f6e0df6443ccd80ee

References

National School Categorisation Guidance Refresh (gov.wales)	https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-08/responding-to-issues-of-self-harm-and-thoughts-of-suicide-in-young-people-guidance.pdf#:~:text=This%20guidance%20provides%20information%20for%20adults%20who%20work,respond%20to%20disclosure%20of%20these%20feelings%20and%20behaviours.
Overview Self-harm: assessment, management and preventing recurrence Guidance NICE	https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng225
Sample Self Harm Policy - Secondary Schools (norfolk.gov.uk)	https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/-/media/schools/files/school-management/critical-incidents/self-harm-policy.pdf
SelfHarm 24pp (oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)	https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/self-harm-guidelines-for-school-staff.pdf
children / young people who self-harm. A Guide for school staff	https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/b5791d_b3707e6a2cd623ed8b29456602afcc01.pdf
MHF-The-truth-about-self-harm-guide.pdf (mentalhealth.org.uk)	https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-07/MHF-The-truth-about-self-harm-guide.pdf
Self-harm guide - updated Sept22 (e-wellbeing.co.uk)	https://e-wellbeing.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/self-harm-support-guide_CYP-2022.pdf
Self-harm guide for parents/carers (e-wellbeing.co.uk)	https://e-wellbeing.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Self-harm-support-guide_parent-carers-2022.pdf
Self-harm & Mental Health Guide For Parents YoungMinds	https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/self-harm/#Helpingyourchild / young personwithselfharm
Self-harm: A guide for parents and carers CPFT NHS Trust	https://www.cpft.nhs.uk/self-harm-CPFT NHS Trust
The impact of self-harm on the whole family — Department of Psychiatry (ox.ac.uk)	https://www.psych.ox.ac.uk/news/the-impact-of-self-harm-on-the-whole-family
Attending to your own needs (charliewaller.org)	https://www.charliewaller.org/mental-health-resources/managing-difficult-feelings/attending-to-your-own-needs

<u>North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare Wellness Recovery Action Plans (WRAP)</u>	https://www.combined.nhs.uk/person-centredness-framework/wellness-recovery-action-plans-wrap%E2%80%8B/
<u>Staying Safe</u>	https://www.stayingsafe.net/ST/
North Yorkshire Guidance	https://www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk/shsp/

Our partners

