



Scottish Borders Self Harm Awareness Guide for Parents

Self-harm can be really hard to understand but it's a lot more common than you think. It is estimated that 14% of Scottish 14-15 year olds have self-harmed, with girls four times more likely to self-harm than boys.

Is my child self-harming?

Self-harming is usually a sign that something is wrong. Young people talk about a feeling of 'release' having self-harmed, and gaining some control of the issues that are concerning them. There are many reasons why young people self-harm: they tell us it's a way of communicating distress to others. This distress can be triggered by feeling anxious, depressed or stressed for various reasons, and the feeling that they don't have a support network or way to deal with these problems.

If your child is self-harming, they may be cutting or burning themselves, pulling out hair, picking skin excessively, self-trolling, or developing an eating disorder. It can also include taking drugs or excessive amounts of alcohol. Self-harm is very different from suicide. A basic understanding is a person who self-harms seeks to feel better, whereas, a person who truly attempts suicide seeks to end all feelings.



How would I know?

As one young man put it:

“Most people who self-harm do not want people to find out. However, it can be a nice feeling for people to ask about it because it feels like they care”

There may not be any obvious signs that your child is self-harming as young people tend to be very secretive about their self-harming behaviour. Warning signs may be one or more of the following:

- Unexplained cuts, bruises, burns or other injuries
- Missing sharp objects, medication or plasters
- Wearing long sleeves at inappropriate times
- Previously self-harming
- Overly-cheerful following a period of low mood
- Social withdrawal – not joining in with activities or giving up hobbies or interests
- Noticeable changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Spending more time in the bathroom
- Alcohol or substance misuse
- Self-defeating language
- Failure to take care of personal appearance
- Running away from home
- Low mood/mood swings





Talking to your child

- Don't panic
- Give reassurance
- Be yourself, listen, don't judge
- Provide opportunities for support

Ask your child if they are ready to talk, it is important that you choose a time and place where you are unlikely to be interrupted or distracted. If you have concerns, do not be afraid to ask directly about self-harm, whilst difficult, this can often provide reassurance that you are open-minded about discussing this topic.

If your child is at risk of self-harm, try asking them why they feel like this, and listen to what they say. It can be helpful to simply re-phrase their words or nod to show that you have heard them and will do your best to support them in finding the right help/support. If they don't want to talk, then you could suggest that they write their thoughts and feelings down in a letter or email, visit their GP or talk to their teacher.

As one young woman put it:

"My teacher was very helpful because he just came across as if he really cared, and he said he had a lot of respect for me talking to him, which boosted my confidence with talking to people"

Advice on Keeping Safe

Seek professional support around:

- Basic first aid kit and wound care
- Safe places to cut
- If it is safe to ask your child to stop self-harming
- Any changes in the method/severity of self-harm

Alternative coping strategies

It is important to try to highlight any positives that arise from the conversation and focus on your child's strengths. You could also suggest alternative coping strategies to self-harming behaviours such as:

- Draw, paint, or sketch out thoughts and feelings
- Listen to upbeat/happy music
- Write out thoughts or feelings in a journal
- Write down a list of strengths or talents
- Wear an elastic band round the wrist and ping it against the skin
- Call or arrange to meet up with a friend in person
- Take up a new hobby or interest
- Create a list with a close friend of positive things
- Spend time with people who love and value them
- Write down negative feelings, then rip up the paper
- Carry a safe object such as a precious stone or stress ball
- Create a distraction box containing a list of the good things in their life, achievements, and photographs of happy times, playlist of their favourite music or other items mentioned above.



Support Services

Organisation	Service	Contact
Childline	Free and Confidential Help for Young People – available 24 hours a day.	0800 1111 www.childline.co.uk
Quarriers Resilience for Wellbeing Service	Quarriers provide a holistic model of support for children and young people across the Scottish Borders to improve and promote their emotional health and wellbeing.	Tel: 01896 668411 Text: 07937986558 Email: borders@quarriers.org.uk
YoungMinds	YoungMinds, offer information to children & young people about mental health and emotional wellbeing. YoungMinds also provides information and advice to parents & carers about young people's mental health & wellbeing.	0808 802 5544 (Parents Helpline) Monday to Friday 9.30am-4pm parents@youngminds.org.uk www.edva.org
Head Meds	A website supported by YoungMinds: provides accessible and useful information about mental health conditions & medication.	www.headmeds.org.uk
Choose Life	Scottish Borders Choose Life suicide prevention programme. The Scottish Borders, suicide prevention staff are members of the Joint Health Improvement Team in the Public Health Department, located in the headquarters of Scottish Borders.	01835 825 970 http://www.chooselife.net/Inyourarea/localactionplansscottishborders.aspx#localactionplan
Breathing Space	Breathing Space specifically, but not exclusively, targets young men who are experiencing difficulties and unhappiness in their lives. The focus is to provide skilled assistance at an early stage and prevent problems escalating. Family members, partners and friends who are concerned about their own wellbeing and that of people they care about can also seek support.	0800 83 85 87 info@breathingspacescotland.co.uk www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk
AyeMind	AyeMind: making better use of the internet, social media and mobile technology to support young people experiencing mental health issues and those working with young people.	ayemind.com
Youth Borders LGBT	LGBT Youth Borders works with and supports young people between the ages of 13 and 25 who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. We provide one to one and group support.	01896 753 873 0131 555 3940 david.shields@lgbtyouth.org.uk www.lgbtyouth.org.uk
LifeSIGNS	Self-Injury Guidance & Network Support is an online, user-led voluntary organisation founded in 2002 to create understanding about self-injury and provide information and support to people of all ages affected by self-injury.	07950705258 info@lifesigns.org.uk www.lifesigns.org.uk
Borders Sexual Health	We offer advice on contraception and services, sexual health advice, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections and HIV care throughout the Scottish Borders. Phone: Mon-Fri between 9am and 1pm. There is no charge for any of our services.	01896 663700 http://www.nhsborders.scot.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/our-services/general-services/borders-sexual-health/
School Nursing Service	Supporting children & YP who self-harm, offering support and guidance. Health Zones drop - in high schools for young people to gain advice/ information about a wide range of health related issues including sexual health & substance use.	Monday - Friday. Young people can also self-refer - school drop-in or with support from their teacher/guidance. https://www.nhsborders.scot.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/our-services/children-young-peoples-services-directory/school-nursing/
Borderline	Borderline is a free phone telephone support line for anyone suffering from emotional distress, isolation or depression.	Lines open every evening 7-10pm Call: 0800 027 4466

Organisation	Service	Contact
ParentLine Scotland	The national, confidential helpline provides advice and support to anyone caring for or concerned about a child.	0800 28 22 33 parentlinescotland@children1st.org.uk www.children1st.org.uk
NHS24	NHS24 provides comprehensive health information and self-care advice to the people of Scotland.	111 www.nhs24.com
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	We are a team of specially trained workers whose job it is to improve the mental health of children and young people by helping them with the things that make them worried, upset or angry. CAMHS Teams provide a multi-disciplinary outpatient service for children and young people who have moderate and severe mental health problems. We see children, young people and their parents from age 5 or sometimes younger up to the age of 18.	Referrals to CAMHS via your GP, School Nurse or Health Professional
Educational Psychology Services	Psychological Services can offer assessment, advice and support to parents and teachers where there is a concern about child development, learning or behaviour. Every educational establishment has an identified educational psychologist.	0300 100 1800 http://www.scotborders.gov.uk
Children & Families Social Work	Should there be Child Protection concerns, Social Work should be contacted.	01896 662787 01896 752111 (outwith office hours)
Cruse Bereavement Scotland	Offers support to people who have experienced the loss of someone close.	0845 600 2227 support@crusescotland.org.uk
Selfharm.co.uk	A project set up by people who have been affected by self-harm. It provides a confidential online chat forum, downloadable resources and training.	www.selfharm.co.uk
The Site	Online 'guide to life' for 16-25 year olds. It provides non-judgmental support via moderated discussion boards, real-life stories and a rich database of articles.	0800 838587 www.thesite.co.uk
Harmless	A user led organisation that provides a range of services about self-harm including support, information, training and consultancy to people who self-harm, their friends and families, and professionals.	www.harmless.org.uk
Share Aware	A resource for parents to help keep their child safe on-line. Offers helpful tools and tips.	NSPCC 0808 800 5000 net-aware.org.uk
The Cybersmile Foundation	Provides support to young people who experience on-line bullying. Support is available for those who engage in bullying behaviour.	0207 241 6472 info@cybersmile.org www.cybersmile.org
Mindreel	Mindreel is an initiative to create a valuable learning resource using educational films about mental health.	0141 559 5059 admin@mindreel.org.uk www.mindreel.org.uk
A.D.A.M.	Is a website for young people who are concerned about, or may be affected by, another person's drinking.	www.chatresource.org.uk/adam
TESS - Self Injury Support	TESS - Self Injury Support for women in the UK affected by self-harm.	Text 0780 047 2908 www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk
No Panic Youth Helpline	Offers support to people who suffer from Panic Attacks, Phobias, Obsessive Compulsive Disorders and other related anxiety disorders.	0330 606 1174 www.nopanic.org.uk
Scottish Borders Rape Crisis Centre	Support, information and advocacy for all woman and girls in the Scottish Borders who have experienced rape or sexual violence.	01896 661 070 M: 07584 149 691 For general information: info@sbrc.org.uk For support: support@sbrc.org.uk Rape Crisis Scotland National Helpline: 08088 01 03 02 (daily: 6pm - 12 midnight)
Children 1st	We work to improve the quality of life of children, individuals and families throughout the Scottish Borders whose lives have been, or are at risk of being affected by abuse, neglect or family breakdown.	01750 22892 ettrick@children1st.org.uk www.children1st.org.uk



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CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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