



Scottish Borders Self Harm Awareness Guide for Young People

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.

What is self-harm?

Self-harm is a sign that something is wrong. Young people who choose to self-harm inflict pain on themselves as a way of coping with emotional distress. There are a variety of ways young people self-harm. It can involve:

- Cutting
- Burning
- Scalding
- Banging or scratching one's own body
- Pulling out hair
- Picking skin excessively
- Self-trolling (Posting negative comments to themselves)
- Eating disorder
- Taking an overdose of tablets
- Taking drugs or excessive amounts of alcohol

Why young people self-harm

There are many reasons why young people self-harm. Self-harm is most commonly used as a way of coping with problems in their lives and to provide distraction or to escape negative emotions. Young people tell us it is often triggered by difficult life events such as:

- Exam stress
- Gender/sexuality issues
- Bereavement
- Parental separation
- Relationship difficulties
- Bullying
- Lack of support

Having self-harmed, young people talk about a feeling of 'release' and gaining some control of the issues that are concerning them.



Are you worried about a friend or others?

There may not be any obvious signs that a young person is self-harming; young people tend to be very secretive about self-harm.

Warning signs may be one or more of the following:

- Unexplained cuts, bruises, burns or other injuries
- Wearing long sleeves at inappropriate times
- Previously self-harm
- Overly-cheerful following a period of low mood
- Not joining in with activities or giving up hobbies or interests
- 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

Should I tell someone that I'm harming myself?

Yes, because this is often the first step to getting help. It isn't always easy to talk about self-harm and could be one of the most difficult things you do. Young people who self-harm usually feel very guilty and ashamed of what they do, and do not want to talk about it.

Young people have told us that the reaction they got when they first told someone about their self-harm was very important in deciding whether or not they looked for, and got further help. Within the Scottish Borders employees and volunteers in health, education and social work services working with young people have been trained in understanding self-harm.

While some young people have experienced negative attitudes when they have told someone, it is possible to get good support from people who understand self-harm, or who care about you and your feelings, and not just the behaviour itself. The stigma associated with self-harm is unhelpful and stops people getting the support and information they need to find more helpful ways of coping.



Talking about Self-Harm?

Ask the young person if they would like to talk and meet at a suitable time and place to avoid being 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 these topics.

If a young person 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 and empathise that you will do your best to support them in finding the right help. If the young person doesn't want to talk, then you could suggest that they write their thoughts and feelings down in a letter or email.

Positive Strategies

You could try alternative coping or distraction strategies to self-harming behaviours such as:

- Draw, paint, or sketch out thoughts and feelings
- Listen to uplifting music
- Write out thoughts or feelings in a journal
- Carry a safe object i.e. a precious stone or stress ball to rub or squeeze when feeling anxious or low
- Don't keep your feelings to yourself - reach out to someone you trust
- Don't do anything right now - pledge not to do anything within the next 2-4 hours, re-evaluate your feelings once the time has elapsed
- Regularly check in with a trusted adult at school
- Write down a list of your strengths or talents - aim to spend more time on these so that attention can be gained for positive achievements
- Wear an elastic band round your wrist and ping it against the skin
- Draw on yourself with a red marker pen
- Call or arrange to meet up with a friend in person
- Take up a new hobby or interest
- Create a bucket list with a close friend of positive things you want to do or achieve in the next year or before you finish high school
- Get a massage or give yourself a manicure
- Spend time with people who love and value you
- Write down negative feelings that you have towards yourself and then rip up the paper
- Create a memory box which contains a list of the good things in your life, achievements and photographs of happy times - look through this when you are feeling down.



Support Services

| Organisation | Service | Contact |
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| 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 |
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| 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@sbrcc.org.uk For support: support@sbrcc.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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