



TRIGGER WARNING:

This fact sheet includes information about self-harm, suicide, and suicidal thoughts, which some people may find distressing.

If this topic feels difficult, you may wish to pause reading or seek support.

Details of support services are included below:

HELP AND SUPPORT

Emergency:

- Call **999** if someone is in immediate danger
 - NHS: Telephone **111**
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Services:

- **Open Mental Health:** Somerset's Mental Health Alliance
www.openmentalhealth.org.uk
- **Your Local GP**
- **Talking Therapies Online Referral:** NHS Somerset Talking Therapies
www.somersetft.nhs.uk/somerset-talking-therapies/online-referral-form/
- **CMHT:** Community Mental Health Service (CMHS), Somerset NHS Foundation Trust
www.somersetft.nhs.uk/community-mental-health-service-cmhs/
- **CAMHS:** Somerset CAMHS
www.somersetft.nhs.uk/camhs/
- **Mind:** Mind in Somerset
www.mindinsomerset.org.uk

What is Self-Harm?

Self-harm is when a person intentionally injures themselves as a way of coping with difficult emotions, overwhelming distress, or situations that feel unmanageable.

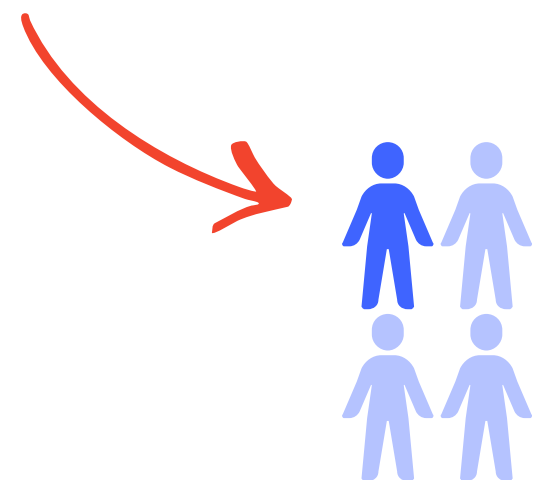
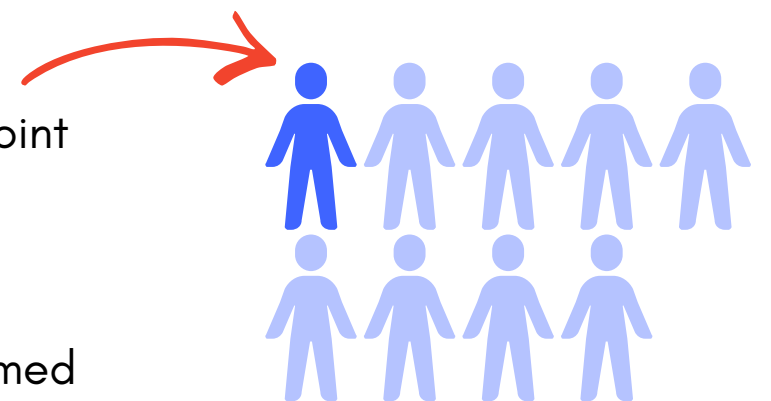
Self-harm can take many forms, including but not limited to:

- Cutting, scratching or burning the skin
- Hitting or punching oneself
- Head banging
- Overdosing or misusing medication
- Pulling hair out (*trichotillomania*)
- Interfering with wound healing
- Restricting food or overeating
- Extreme physical activity
- Having unsafe sex
- Risky behaviour – such as driving recklessly

Self-harm can affect people of all ages, genders, cultures and backgrounds.

Self-Harm (England, NHS 2023-24)

- About 1 in 9 adults in England have self-harmed at some point
- Women report self-harming more than men
- Among 16-24-year-olds, nearly 1 in 4 people have self-harmed
- **Self-harm was more common among people who are:**
 - Younger
 - Unemployed or not working
 - Facing financial difficulties
 - Living with a long-term health condition
 - Experiencing mental health difficulties



What is Suicide?

Definitions:

- **Suicide:** Death caused by self-directed injurious behaviour with intent to die.
- **Suicide attempt:** Self-directed behaviour intended to cause death, which may not result in death or injury.
- **Suicidal thoughts/ideation:** Thinking about, considering, or planning suicide.

There is no single reason why someone dies by suicide. Risk may be influenced by social, psychological, and cultural factors. Learning about risk factors and prevention may help save a life – someone else's or your own.

Key Facts (UK / England, 2023-24)

Suicide (ONS 2024, House of Commons Library)

- Every year, thousands of people in the UK die by suicide
- Men are more likely to die by suicide than women
- Suicide is most common among middle-aged adults (around 50-54 years old)
- Rates are higher in areas with social and economic disadvantage
- Suicide rates fell for many years but have started to rise again



**Photo Source: Our Somerset Walk for a Life*

Why People Self-Harm or Experience Suicidal Thoughts

Everyone's experience is different. However, here are some factors someone could be experiencing:

- Depression, anxiety, or other mental health conditions
- Trauma, abuse, discrimination or loss
- Feeling trapped, overwhelmed or hopeless
- Shame, guilt or low self-worth
- Substance or alcohol misuse
- Major life changes or crises
- Loneliness or lack of support

Reminder: Self-harm and suicidal thoughts are coping responses, not attention-seeking behaviours.



Under-Researched & High-Risk Populations

Trans and non-binary people experience disproportionately high levels of distress.

According to Stonewall, **46%** of trans people have thought about taking their life in the past year (*Stonewall LGBTQ+ Health Report, UK*).

This statistic represents real people, not numbers, and the profound impact extends to families, friends, colleagues, and communities.

Importance of Connection and Belonging:

Feeling connected, valued, and included can play a powerful role in protecting mental health and reducing distress.

- A sense of belonging can reduce feelings of loneliness, shame, and isolation
- Feeling seen, heard, and accepted can make it easier to ask for help
- Supportive relationships can buffer against stress and emotional overwhelm
- Knowing that someone cares can help people feel safer during difficult moments

Connection does not have to mean large social networks. For many people, one trusted person, a supportive team, or a welcoming workplace can make a meaningful difference.

In the workplace, fostering connection through inclusive practices, kindness, and understanding can help create an environment where people feel able to be themselves and seek support when they need it.



The Importance of Language:

The words we use when talking about suicide and self-harm matter. Language can reduce stigma, encourage openness, and help people feel understood and supported.

- **Avoid** phrases like “**committed suicide**”, which can imply blame or criminality
- **Use “died by suicide” or “took their own life”** instead
- **Use person-first language**, such as “**a person who self-harms**” rather than labels
- **Avoid** judgemental or dismissive terms such as “**attention-seeking**”
- Using respectful, compassionate language helps create safer spaces where people feel able to talk about their mental health and access support.

Physical Activity & Wellbeing:

How being active supports your mental wellbeing:

- Regular physical activity can reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Exercise releases endorphins and other “feel-good” chemicals in the brain
- Can improve sleep quality, which supports emotional regulation
- Helps manage stress and tension, making distress easier to cope with
- Boosts self-esteem and confidence
- Encourages social connection when done with others



Practical tips: Even short walks or light activity can improve mood!

Find something you enjoy: dancing, gardening, swimming, yoga



Combining physical activity with other support (talking therapy, peer support) can support your mental health



Small daily habits (stretching, stairs, cycling) add up



Note: Physical activity is not a replacement for professional support, but it can be a helpful part of regulation and recovery.

Other ways to support your mental wellbeing:

There are a number of ways people can cope with distress and support their mental health:

- Talk to someone you trust – a friend, family member, colleague, or mentor
- Access professional support – such as a GP, counsellor, therapist, or mental health service
- Build routines or hobbies – small daily activities can help create structure and purpose
- Connect with others – joining a group, club, or support network can reduce isolation
- Combine regulation skills – physical activity, creative outlets, mindfulness, and peer support

Note: Everyone's experience is different. What works for one person may not work for another. The most important thing is finding safe ways to emotionally regulate and ask for help when needed.

So What Adjustments Can Be Made in the Workplace?

- Workplaces can play a vital role in prevention, safety and support:
- Creating a compassionate, non-judgmental culture
- Taking disclosures seriously and responding with empathy
- Offering flexible working arrangements or adjusted workloads
- Allowing time off for appointments and recovery
- Providing regular wellbeing check-ins
- Ensuring clear signposting to internal and external support
- Training managers in suicide awareness and mental health
- Provide trained mental health first aiders

What helps most? Listening, believing, and asking what support looks like for them.

What to Do If You're Worried About Someone:

Listen without judgement



Don't promise secrecy



Encourage professional support



Stay connected and follow up



In an emergency, seek immediate help



Note: Asking someone about suicidal thoughts does not put the idea in their head, it can reduce risk and help them feel less alone.

Training available for staff:

Zero Suicide Alliance:

www.zerosuicidealliance.com/suicide-awareness-training



Orange button training:

www.healthysomerset.co.uk/starting-well/orange-button/

- Suicide Alertness training
- Mental Health First aid training

