



# Risks and Strengths Assessment to Support Self-harm and or Suicidal Thoughts & Behaviours in Children & Young People

A collaboration between London Borough of Newham, East London Foundation Trust (ELFT) and Voluntary Sector Partners

Understanding Self-Harm and Suicide  
[Healthy Mind](#) | [Well Newham](#)



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## Consent and Confidentiality

- Confirm level of confidentiality with the child before completing this assessment. “Everything you share during this chat will be kept between us, or shared with whoever we agree, unless I feel there is significant risk of harm to yourself or others.” Sharing directly with healthcare professionals can prevent the child having to retell their story.
- Parents or carers should ideally be actively involved in the planning, monitoring, and review process for consistent support. However, if the child has the capacity, they have the right to decline their involvement or limit the information shared unless there is risk to life. If involving parents or carers might make the child or young person less safe (e.g. concerns about home life or increased risk), their involvement may not be appropriate.

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## Responsibility

- Providing a safe space and trusted adult for a child to share their struggles with is very beneficial to their wellbeing. You do not have to be a healthcare professional to listen to the young person, and this assessment offers a conversation guide.
- Ideally you will be able to discuss the child’s needs with other trusted adults in your organisation, and make sure your own wellbeing is considered throughout.

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## How to complete the Risks and Strengths Assessment

- The adult should complete this assessment with a child in a safe, quiet space. There should be no judgement of what is discussed, and a reassuring approach to topics of self-harm and suicidal thoughts.
- Not every topic listed needs to be discussed, the child may be comfortable leading the conversation.
- If they have capacity, the child is welcome to decide what gets written on this form and what is just discussed but not written.
- You can call **HOPELINE247** on **0800 068 41 41** for free support before or during the completion of this assessment

## Example questions and statements when talking about self-harm

Sometimes people self-harm as a way of managing difficult feelings, thoughts or life struggles. I'm wondering if that might be why you hurt yourself?

I know that people self-harm for many different reasons and that they often experience a range of different emotions. I wonder if you are able to help me understand what leads you to self-harm?

Before you go I'd like to give you some information about people you can contact if you feel like self-harming again.

I wonder if you're using self-harm as a way of coping with something that is troubling you. It can feel that self-harm is the only way to cope, but there are other ways. Have you ever tried anything instead of self-harm that has helped?

## Helping the child feel comfortable

- Allow the child to bring a comfort item (e.g a toy, blanket, or favourite object) or conduct the assessment in a familiar setting.
- Offer fidget toys, pens and paper for doodling or writing down feelings.
- Sit at the child's level to avoid appearing intimidating and create a sense of safety.
- Take regular breaks if the child is struggling to focus or becomes emotionally distressed.
- Start the session with light conversation, games, or questions about their interests to help the child relax and build rapport

## Risks and Strengths Assessment Child Information

For professional support to debrief  
after completing this assessment, call  
**HOPELINE247** on **0800 068 41 41**

Child Name:

Date of Birth:

Date of Assessment:

Information provided by:

Risk Assessor:

Date of Review:

This form is designed to help you better understand the level of need to inform an appropriate support plan.

Please use this form alongside the **Self-Harm and Suicide Prevention Pathway** to determine an appropriate needs-based grouping and support options.  
**(This Risks and Strengths Assessment should not be used to predict future self-harm or suicide risk or who should or should not receive support)**

The needs-based groupings are:

**Getting Help**

**Getting More Help**

**Getting Risk Support**

If you have an immediate concern that requires an immediate response

### Life threatening condition

If you are concerned that there is an immediate risk to the young person's physical health.

#### Response:

**Call 999 in an emergency.**

If unsure, call 111 and they will call you an ambulance if needed, or direct you to the most appropriate support.

### Mental Health Crisis

If you are concerned that there is an immediate risk to the young person because of significant emotional distress.

#### Response:

**Call 111**, and press 2 to be directed to the All-Age Crisis Line.

### Safeguarding Concern

#### Response:

**Contact the Newham Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH):**

- **Online referrals:** Complete the Newham Child Protection Referral Form
- **During office hours** (Monday to Friday, 9:00 am to 5:15 pm): Call 020 3373 4600 or email [triage@newham.gov.uk](mailto:triage@newham.gov.uk)
- **Outside office hours** (Emergency Duty Team): Call 020 8430 2000

## Risks and Strengths Assessment

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### Step 1:

**Discuss consent, confidentiality and what conversation topics might come up**

### Step 2:

**Current mood scale assessment**

Worst I have ever felt



1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10



Best I have ever felt

### Step 3:

**Context setting**

**Understanding what might be causing their low mood or distress**

Please remember to remain sensitive and non-judgemental as the child shares their personal experiences. Consider the young person's emotional state as you complete this assessment and ensure regular breaks to help minimise distress and help regulate emotions.

Example topic areas:

- Home life and pressures
- Bereavement
- Relationships and friendships
- Body image and self confidence
- Past trauma / traumatic event
- Bullying and discrimination
- Identity (gender, sexuality, culture)
- Engagement with school
- Substance use or risky behaviour
- Money or housing concerns
- Stress for upcoming exams / jobs
- Exclusion or suspension from school
- Life transitions (e.g. moving house, moving schools)

**Description:**

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### Step 4:

#### Understanding self-harm behaviour

**Allow the child to describe how they self-harm, using the below prompts if needed**

- Method of self-harm
- Frequency of self-harm
- What triggers their self-harm
- Have they ever had to seek medical attention for their self-harm injury
- Do they have suicidal thoughts

#### Description:

### Step 5:

#### Is Risk Support required?

**If yes, refer to 'Getting Risk Support' in the pathway**

Consider the below prompts:

- A previous attempt to take their own life
- Drug or alcohol dependency
- History of going missing
- High severity of self-harm
- Safeguarding concerns

#### Description:

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"If tomorrow was better, what would that look like?"

"It's great that you've found a really healthy way to cope with that difficult emotion"

### Step 6:

**Identify positive behaviours and healthy habits currently used**

**Description:**

#### Examples include:

- Acknowledge how opening up today is a really positive step
- Awareness of triggers and how to get help
- Good physical health (diet, sleep)
- Enjoys activities (hobbies, has a goal, has future plans)
- Uses positive coping strategies such as exercise, music, journaling
- Supportive personal relationships
- Supportive community / faith group
- Has identified a trusted adult
- Using resources to help their wellbeing
- Accessing services to support them
- Is having counselling or accessing psychological support

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"What has helped you cope in the past when things felt overwhelming? How can we build on that?"

### Step 7:

#### Support plan

**Consider ways to reduce risk, aim to complete full Support Plan document.**

#### Support plan measures:

- Plan another catch up in the near future to reflect on progress
- Identifying safe spaces
- Providing techniques to avoid or reduce triggers
- Increase communication between key support staff
- Listen to child's ideas for support they want to try
- Online support services, such as Kooth, Good Thinking, Calm Harm
- In-person support such as Time Hub, youth zones, clubs, mentoring
- Identify self-help resources, assist with counselling referral if needed
- Share crisis information with child, such as 111, 999 and Samaritans

"Who or what in your life gives you even a little comfort or hope right now? How could that be part of your plan?"



### Step 8:

#### Communication of Risks and Strengths Assessment and Support Plan

Please ensure the child is aware and consents to the sharing of this assessment if they have capacity.

Examples of who to share with:	Name and contact information:	Child consented? Y/N	Date actioned, by whom:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The child has their own copy</li> <li>• Parents or carer</li> <li>• A professional that helps the child (teacher, youth worker, faith leader, social worker)</li> <li>• School (Designated Safeguarding Lead)</li> <li>• A healthcare professional (counselor, GP, mental health nurse)</li> <li>• CAMHS</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Duty of care:</b></p> <p>As a trusted adult, you have a duty of care to safeguard children from harm. Continue to respect the child's consent for sharing their story with others, unless there is risk of harm to the child or others.</p>			

### Communication of Risks and Strengths Assessment and Support Plan (Cont'd)

**Changes or additions  
to support plan:**