

**Embargoed 00:01 Friday April 25th**

## **New survey reveals almost one in three young females have tried to self-harm**

A new survey out today has found that 32% of females aged between 11 and 19 in the UK have tried to harm themselves.

The survey, commissioned by mental healthcare specialists Affinity Healthcare to mark the launch of the 'Young People and Self-Harm' conference in Manchester, found that a total of 22% of males and females aged 11-19 had admitted to self-harm, whilst 56% of all respondents admitted to knowing someone who has. It also found 73% of young people who self-harmed admitted to cutting, 48% to punching themselves, 14% to burning and 10% to self-poisoning.

Of those who admitted to self-harm, 43% said they did it because they were depressed, 17% because they were angry, 10% because of relationship problems and 10% because they were stressed.

Mental health experts will today (Friday) meet to discuss self-harming amongst young people in response to a major Government focus on the mental health and well being of young people in the UK.

Affinity Healthcare, which operates one of the largest Young People's inpatient services in the UK, have helped to organise the "Young People and Self-Harm" conference at the Manchester Conference Centre.

Affinity Healthcare's lead consultant adolescent psychiatrist Dr David Kingsley said: "This survey highlights that self-harming amongst young people is becoming an increasing problem.

"Young people self-harm for a number of reasons. They may be depressed, have relationship problems with partners, friends or family or have suffered physical or sexual abuse. Much self-harm is not suicidal in intent, but is rather a way of seeking relief from emotional pain. However, this relief is only temporary and does not deal with the underlying issues.

"Many young people who self-harm are afraid of how others will react if they find out, so they keep it secret. They need to be taken seriously and offered the help they need.

“As a society we need to sit up and take notice when one in five young people and a third of girls are admitting to feeling so bad about themselves that they need to self harm. We need to ask ourselves what it is about modern living that is causing such stress for our youngsters. The massive increase in family breakdown and the extra pressure that is put on our young people in schools may be part of the explanation but more research is urgently needed to understand this better.”

The mental health and well being of young people is a major focus of the work of the Department for Children, Schools and Families’ Children’s Plan. The Secretary of State Ed Balls has made it a priority following several national and international research projects that have raised concerns about the mental health of young people in the UK.

The aims of the conference are to help delegates:

- understand the government’s approach to the mental health of young people
- hear from young people about their experiences to help shape future decision making
- connect with the projects operating to develop Child and Adolescent Mental Health Teams
- learn about different therapeutic approaches to working with young people who self-harm

Results show that self-harming affects more young females than males and many cases go unnoticed as many types of self-harm such as cutting, are generally kept secret and concealed. As many as 30% of adolescents who self-harm report previous episodes, many of which have gone unnoticed by the medical profession.<sup>1</sup>

Self-harm describes a wide range of things that people do to themselves deliberately, from taking an overdose, cutting themselves, burning their body, punching themselves, throwing themselves against something hard or swallowing inappropriate objects. Self-poisoning makes up about 90% of the cases referred to hospital.<sup>2</sup> Deliberate harm is often the result of emotional issues to help relieve anxiety and anger. A small minority of cases use self-harm to get attention.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families’ objective over the next decade is to concentrate on issues that affect the youth of today and to find solutions to help better young lives. It will review the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service to see how support services can be improved for the growing number of children and young people with mental health needs.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hawton K and James A, BMJ 2005 Suicide and deliberate self harm in young people <http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/330/7496/891?ehom>

<sup>2</sup> Hawton K and James A, BMJ 2005 Suicide and deliberate self harm in young people <http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/330/7496/891?ehom>

<sup>3</sup> Children’s Plan [http://www.dcsf.co.uk/publications/childrensplan/downloads/The\\_Childrens\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.dcsf.co.uk/publications/childrensplan/downloads/The_Childrens_Plan.pdf)

Affinity Healthcare operates Cheadle Royal Hospital in Manchester, which offers a dedicated Young People's Mental Health Service with three inpatient facilities that offer help to young people with the most serious mental health difficulties including self-harm. The service provides a comprehensive inpatient mental health service for both male and female patients aged 13 – 18. A specialist multi-disciplinary team of over 100 professionals offers a broad therapeutic programme including Family Therapy, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Psychotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Music Therapy, Art Therapy and Medication.

To arrange an interview with Dr Kingsley or a case study please contact Emily Fozard on 0113 306 0077/ 07793 387 582 or email [emily.fozard@geronimocommunications.com](mailto:emily.fozard@geronimocommunications.com) or Sophie Beckingham on 0113 306 0053 or email [sophie.beckingham@geronimocommunications.com](mailto:sophie.beckingham@geronimocommunications.com)

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For help and advice on self harm contact Childline [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) or ring 0800 1111

If you're a worried parent, call the YoungMinds Parents Information Service on 0800 018 2138

**Notes to Editors:**

- The survey commissioned by Affinity Healthcare and carried out by Q Research Ltd, questioned 818 young people aged between 11 and 19 across the UK on April 21st
- Affinity Healthcare operates two growing hospitals, Cheadle Royal Hospital near Manchester Airport and Middleton St George Hospital in Darlington, and provides a full range of complex mental health services to the NHS. Following significant investment we are developing new services on both hospital sites providing a whole system pathway of care for patients with mental health problems.
- Services currently include:-
  - Male-only Psychiatric Intensive Care
  - Female-only Psychiatric Intensive Care
  - Low Secure Rehabilitation
  - Rehabilitation in a 'step-down intensive' therapeutic environment for men
  - Female specific rehabilitation and complex care
  - Complex low-stimulus rehabilitation for men
  - Community-based rehabilitation
  - Eating Disorders Services
  - Young People's Services
  - Primary Care Therapy Services
  - Dual Diagnosis Service

[www.affinityhealth.co.uk](http://www.affinityhealth.co.uk)