

Responding to suicide risk

Fife multi-agency protocol - updated September 2023 (18 years and under)

Talking to someone about suicidal thoughts and feelings can be extremely difficult. If you are unsure whether someone is suicidal, the best way to find out is to ask them if they are thinking about suicide. This shows you care and they are not alone. It allows the other person to talk about their feelings and plans - the first step to getting help.

Communicating suicidal intent can sometimes be a way of communicating distress.

Using the principles of Time, Space, Compassion; children and young people can be moved from a high or raised risk of concern to a lower risk with identified supports in place.

When a child or young person is expressing distress

Step 1: Create a compassionate space to pause and reassure



Step 2: Start a conversation

A helpful way to start the conversation is by checking in on them:

“I’m really worried about you, it must have been hard to share this with me, thank you.”

“I wanted to check in with you because you haven’t seemed yourself lately.”

“I am really worried about you and need to ask you if you have been thinking about suicide.”

Step 3: Enquire to inform level of distress

Sometimes people can say things like:

“I’ve had enough”

“I can’t take this any more” or

“I wish I didn’t feel like this any longer”

This can be an expression of despair without intending or thinking about self-harm or suicide.

If someone does not have any active suicidal thoughts, it is still important to offer support and referral services.

Questions to assist assessing presence of active suicidal thoughts:

Are you thinking about attempting suicide?

Do you have a suicide plan?

Have you identified a method?

Have you identified when you might act on a suicide plan?

If the person answers YES to any of the above, determine low, raised or high risk and take appropriate actions.

Step 4: Reflect/confirm

- consider whether you have the answer to the 5 GIRFEC questions

LOW

Link to indicators in case study document

Risk factors may be present

This is an opportunity for early intervention

Listen compassionately, ease distress

Consider additional support or therapeutic intervention

Complete documentation/assessment

Consider with child or young person who needs to know - UNCRC

Child Wellbeing Pathway

Follow up conversation

RAISED

Active suicidal thoughts are present. No clear plan, method or timeframe.

Consider individual risk and protective factors.

Consider other services that can support in the area eg third sector organisations

Choosing the right support alongside the child or young person.

Consider Child Wellbeing Pathway

HIGH

Active suicidal thoughts are present. This may include a plan, method and timeframe.

Consider individual risk and protective factors

Phone CAMHS

Consultation line Mon-Fri 9am - 5pm
01334 696019

Urgent referral: 01334 696250

[Submit CAMHS referral form](#)

Safety planning - supported by parents/carers (if appropriate) and informed by **Child Protection Procedures**

If young person continues to have active suicidal behaviours phone 999 or take them to A&E

Step 5: Check back and review