

Self-harm and Thoughts of Suicide in Schools

1. Purpose

The purpose of this supplementary paper is to summarise the expectations and action schools take in relation to self-harm and thoughts of suicide in children and young people, setting out the relevant guidance, national and regional plans, the available resources, and actions already in place in schools.

This area is a core part of school safeguarding and well-being work, as school staff are in a vital position to identify concerns early, respond compassionately, record appropriately, and ensure that children and young people have access to timely support.

2. Relevant guidance

The national guidance specific to this field is Responding to issues of self-harm and thoughts of suicide in young people, which is aimed at teachers, professionals, volunteers and youth services. The guidance includes principles for early intervention, prevention, confidentiality, safeguarding and referral.

An update to this guidance is forthcoming. According to the update shared with North Wales Designated Safeguarding Persons, the updating work includes a discovery and survey workshop, updating support pathways, strengthening links with safeguarding, and considering new developments such as '111 Press 2' and CAMHS support.

Keeping Learners Safe remains a key statutory guidance for safeguarding arrangements in schools, and includes the responsibilities of local authorities, governing bodies and education settings.

The work also aligns with the Framework on establishing a whole-school approach to emotional and mental well-being, which outlines the expectation for schools to consider the well-being of learners and staff as part of the school's culture, leadership, curriculum, support and partnerships.

3. How schools operate

Schools already operate through their existing safeguarding and well-being arrangements. This includes the central role of the Designated Safeguarding Person, concern-recording systems, referral routes, parental or carer involvement where appropriate, and collaboration with services such as CAMHS, school counselling, social services, school nurses and other support services.

From the regional session for schools in north Wales, it was identified that schools needed training for all staff, clear referral routes, a tiered whole-school approach, practical resources, and a culture of trusted relationships.

Expected action	Purpose
Respond calmly, compassionately and non-judgementally	Build trust and reduce stigma.
Share concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Person	Ensure that the correct safeguarding actions are led and recorded.
Record concerns, decisions and actions	Maintain a clear trail for monitoring, review, and referral.
Consider the immediate safety of the child or young person	Ensure a prompt response when there is an immediate risk.

Involve parents or carers where safe and appropriate	Strengthen support around the child or young person.
Use local or regional referral routes	Connect the learner with the right support at the right time.
Continue to monitor, support and review	Ensure that support does not cease after the first response.

4. Webinar and recent learning

Two relevant webinars have been held and have contributed to strengthening schools' understanding and responses.

Session for north Wales secondary schools' Designated Safeguarding Persons

The session was held on 1 July 2026. It focused on suicide and self-harm in the context of schools, including resources, guidance, national updates, regional developments and the need for clear pathways to support school staff. The session also included data and evidence, the role of trusted adults, online training resources, post-suicide support in schools, and the regional response led by Educational Psychologists in partnership with CAMHS.

All-Wales education webinar

The wider webinar on self-harm and thoughts of suicide in children and young people was held for the education sector in Wales. The content included contributions from Professor Ann John on the evidence underpinning evolving guidance, and Karen Hughes on education and mental health, including the voices of children with lived experience. It also included a brief on a forthcoming update to Welsh Government guidance and the implications for safeguarding and well-being procedures in schools.

5. Resources and training

SSHP Suicide Awareness E-module

A bilingual module for staff at all levels, including volunteers. It provides an understanding of suicide and suicide prevention in Wales, raising awareness of risk factors, showing how individuals can help, and building confidence to refer for help. It is being promoted as a core resource for school staff, with a clear message about self-care as the content can elicit an emotional response.

[SSHP Cymru Training Hub](#): Access to training, resources, events and information about the prevention of suicide and self-harm.

[Papyrus](#): Support for young people and for concerned adults, including providing support for another person and a de-briefing service.

[Staff Well-being Service in Wales](#): Support for

SSHP: [Finding our words: Suicide and self-harm prevention in schools](#): Further learning on suicide and self-harm prevention in schools.

6. Implications for the Local Authority and schools

The current situation indicates that schools are already taking action, but that they need to continue to: the well-being of school staff.

Betsi Cadwaladr's early support: Information about children and young people's mental health support and early access to services.

- strengthen consistency, staff confidence and support pathways;
- ensure that schools continue to use the existing national guidance until the revised guidance is published;
- promote the completion of the SSHP Suicide Awareness E-module as part of a staff training pathway;
- continue to share resources and updates with Designated Safeguarding Persons;
- ensure that school procedures link self-harm and thoughts of suicide to safeguarding and well-being arrangements and a whole-school approach;
- work with regional partners to ensure clear pathways between schools, CAMHS, Educational Psychologists, counselling, social services and other support services;
- review local guidance following the publication of the Welsh Government update.

7. Conclusion

Schools operate as part of their safeguarding and well-being responsibilities, and recent work through webinars, the regional session for Designated Safeguarding Persons, and SSHP resources, has strengthened the foundation for a more consistent response.

The priority now is to ensure that all schools continue to operate confidently, compassionately and consistently, with staff knowing how to identify concerns, how to respond, how to record, and where to refer to for support. We will support schools to review local procedures when the revised Welsh Government guidance is published.