

Postvention support for young people in North Ayrshire

Introduction

This practice story describes how North Ayrshire addressed a gap in support for young people (up to 18 years old) who had made a suicide attempt but were not currently open to a social work services.

“We needed a pathway that didn’t rely on a young person already being known to services. Every child deserves support, especially in crisis.”

North Ayrshire Social Work Team

The challenge

The challenge taken on by North Ayrshire was to establish a clear, multi-agency pathway that could respond to suicide attempts, including non-fatal overdoses, acts of self-harm requiring medical intervention, or other deliberate suicidal behaviours, among young people not already engaged with services.

This required coordination between North Ayrshire's Health and Social Partnership, CAMHS, School Nursing Service, and Education Services.

What they did

A short-life working group was formed to design a robust postvention process.

The pathway begins at the Emergency Department and ensures timely, compassionate follow-up through social work and education channels.

Key features of the Suicide Prevention Pathway:

- ♥ Emergency Department staff treat and discharge the young person, then notify School Nursing and CAMHS
- ♥ Where permission has been given by the young person, CAMHS informs the Service Access team of any young person under 18 presenting at an Emergency Department
- ♥ Trigger emails are sent to the Named Person Service and School Nurse mailbox
- ♥ The Named Person Service identifies the Child Protection Coordinator for the establishment the young person attends and notifies them of the ED presentation
- ♥ Education Child Protection Coordinators provide in-school support



- ♥ Within 24 hours, a Service Access/Multi Agency Assessment Screening Hub worker is allocated
- ♥ Within 48 hours, contact is made with the family and a visit is arranged
- ♥ Follow-up includes packs with service information, guidance on suicide/self-harm, and tailored resources. As well as clarity on next steps, and a final outcome letter
- ♥ Young people are seen with sensitivity, and their right to privacy is respected
- ♥ Education staff working with the young person are equipped with guidance and early intervention tools

What they have learned

On reflecting on this work North Ayrshire have highlighted the principles of Time, Space, Compassion outlined below as being key:

Following through

Follow-up visits by Service Access staff provide clarity and continuity. Young people and families know what support is available and how to access it.

Being clear and consistent

Support is communicated clearly – who is involved, what will happen, and when. Written materials and template letters ensure consistency across support.

Making connections

The pathway connects young people to trusted professionals and services. Information sharing is done with care, and young people are supported to explore new possibilities for help and recovery.

“Young people’s voices have been heard. GPs are now informed alongside education services.”

Evaluation summary

The impact

An evaluation in 2022 highlighted several positive outcomes:

- ♥ Clear design and implementation
- ♥ Increased staff confidence
- ♥ Improved multi-agency collaboration
- ♥ Consistent sharing of materials
- ♥ Greater confidence among families

Areas for development:



- ♥ More consistent feedback from young people and families
- ♥ Improved quality and tracking of shared information
- ♥ Better GP engagement
- ♥ Wider sharing of the pathway's success

Reflections from members of the Youth Advisory Group on Fife's practice

What they liked:

Members spoke about how this case study showed how an effective multi-agency approach can support good practice as it can ensure that young people are less likely “to fall within the gaps”. They welcome seeing an example of good communication and said they would like to learn more on how the team make sure this happens in practice.

What they found interesting:

Members spoke about discharge support pathways being an area of interest in their locality and that it would be interesting to learn from the work undertaken by North Ayrshire to avoid duplication and build on practice.

More information

More information on the pathway developed [can be downloaded here](#).

