

EDINBURGH SELF HARM PROJECT (ESHP) REPORT APRIL 2007- MARCH 2008

The Penumbra Edinburgh Self Harm Project (ESHP) is one of six Penumbra run services, which tackles self harm issues for young people aged 16-25 yrs. The ESHP, funded by Choose Life, Edinburgh, Scotland's national suicide prevention strategy, began taking referrals in March 2005. It is a community based service with a city wide remit and aims to provide young people who have self harmed with a safe and non-judgemental environment in which they can explore their feelings and worries in confidence. The ESHP assists young people to explore issues around their self harm thereby reducing their higher risk of suicide.

The service can be accessed in the following ways:

- Self-referral or through family, Penumbra website, press etc.
- Referrals from agencies such as the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh (Ward1A), Royal Edinburgh Hospital, community medical services (G.P.s, C.P.N.s), LGBT Youth, homeless hostel accommodation, young carers etc.

Two Project workers and a Support Manager currently staff the Edinburgh Self harm Project. It offers one to one support for young people by telephone or face to face (often this means dealing with crisis interventions). The Project also offers support and guidance to parents and carers of young people who self harm and agencies working with them.

In our original application in June 2004, our target objectives were:

1. Establish and support the development of individual support and support groups for young people whom self harm.
2. Explore and respond to the needs of parents/carers and professionals in relation to self harm.
3. Liaise with agencies working with groups particularly affected i.e. Looked After, Homeless, LGBT.
4. Bring together the interested groups around common issues to inform the future development of services to young people who self harm.
5. Establish links with and keep appropriate planning groups informed of developments.
6. Promote good practice in this field across all agencies.
7. Promote the involvement of young people who self harm in informing future planning in this field.
8. Make accessible and available resource material for organisations and individuals.
9. Liaise with other interested groups locally, nationally and internationally.
10. Collaborate with local press and media to reduce stigma and inform the general population on the needs of this group.

Detailed reports have been produced annually, and below are some extracts from the data collected in meeting these targets, with updates from this year.

1. Establish and support the development of individual support and support groups for young people who self harm

One-to-one support

Following an assessment process each young person who accesses the service receives one-to-one support on a weekly basis from one of two Project Workers. The support sessions last a maximum of one hour and the period of support is set at 12 weeks, (variable according to need, some may require more than and others less than 12 weeks' support), with a review at the 8-week stage in order to monitor progress. Additional support (one-to-one in person, or telephone) may be offered where appropriate but on a short-term basis.

One-to-one sessions primarily involve helping the young person to recognise the triggers to their self harm and explore how self harm meets their needs; to understand and work through the root causes and underlying issues that lead to their self harm; and supporting them to look at strategies and interventions they can use. One of the early, unexpected issues to arise was the numbers of young people being referred, or presenting who had recently attempted suicide or were presently indicating suicidal ideation. For example, the ESHP 2005-2006 Annual Report indicated that of 36 young people who were using the project at that time, 25 of them had attempted suicide at least once. Ongoing figures indicate that around 75% of our service users are in a suicidal space when they first come into contact with our service.

Furthermore, Dawn Greisbach's research, funded by the Scottish Executive National Programme for Improving Mental Health and Well-being, which explored the links between self harm and suicide, found that there was an average of a 4-5 year window of opportunity from when the young person began self harming to their first attempt at suicide. Increasingly serious episodes of self harm and repeated overdoses may be an indication that the young person is moving closer to suicidal risk. Things young people indicated which help were:

- Having someone to talk to, whom they could trust, and who truly listened...
- Drop-in services
- Self harm support groups
- One-to-one sessions with a trusted project worker or CPN
- Creative pursuits (writing, music, art, etc)

Below is a breakdown of interventions provided by the ESHP:

No of one-to-one Sessions:

Year 1 – April 2005 – March 2006

Total of 393 one-to-one support sessions

Year 2 – April 2006 – March 2007

Total of 498 one-to-one sessions

Year 3 – April 2007- March 2008

Total of 579 one-to-one support sessions of which 427 were face to face and 149 were telephone support.

Internal Review Summary of one-to-one support

A recent review of services provided by ESHP showed that:

- 100% of young people reviewed found the one-to-one support sessions helpful.
- 87% of young people reviewed said that one-to-one support sessions helped them to find or develop other ways of coping.
- 67% of young people reviewed said that one-to-one support sessions had helped them either to stop self harming or to reduce markedly their incidence of self harm.

Group sessions

From the outset, it became quickly apparent that the young people who attended the Project for one-to-one support, felt socially isolated and would benefit from group support and supported social activities to give respite from the issues around their self harm and to develop their social skills. The extra cost of delivering groupwork and activities to the young people using ESHP has been raised by Penumbra, with the young people themselves also doing a sponsored walk. The total amount of money we have raised since opening in 2005 for activities is over **£6,000**. In addition, in 2006, we developed a training programme specifically to meet the needs of volunteers working with young people who self harm. This enabled the Project to employ volunteers to accompany staff and young people during group sessions and on group outings to ensure there was an appropriate staffing complement. The volunteers kindly donated their skills and time at no cost to the Project.

All group activities were organised in response to the needs identified by the young people during ongoing consultation and participation.

Year 1 – April 2005 – March 2006

Social activities included:

Monthly evening pizza and DVD nights, bowling, theatre, tapas evening, Christmas Party with pamper yourself goody bags, and sampling: Massage, Indian head massage and Bach Flower Remedies on the ESHP premises.

Year 2 – April 2006 – March 2007

Summer Activities Programme 2006

8 Sessions with 9 participants

Activities included Edinburgh as “visitors” trips, sporting activities and day trips further afield.

Summer 2006 Arts Project

8 sessions with 5 participants

Penumbra negotiated a space at the City Art Centre to encourage the young people to meet and participate outside of the ESHP premises – participants explored the use of words within image making, combining writing, collage, painting and drawing, culminating in an exhibition/installation in ESHP premises.

Year 3 April 2007 – March 2008

Building on what we had previously achieved with the group activities programme, in 2007 we aimed to empower young people to take an active role in the planning and organising of key community based events and to access for themselves activities and services within the City of Edinburgh. Three young people attended a participation panel with the Lord Provost and talked about their needs for a self-harm support service. In addition, two young person participation panels were held in June and July 2007 and plans firmly put in place to proceed with the programme. A calendar of events was drafted and circulated accordingly. The Social Activities programme consisted of 18 sessions each with an average of 5 young people in attendance. Social activities included Art, Photography, Dance, Edinburgh Festival, day trips further afield, cinema trips and seasonal celebrations, e.g. Halloween and Christmas activities. A drop in 'chillout' service was also run for six weeks in January in response to requests for such a space from the young people, although it was poorly attended. Social Activities Report 2007, including evaluation, and Summer Project Newsletter 2007 are attached for further information.

2. Explore the needs of parents, carers and professionals in relation to self harm

Since the ESHP started we have explored the needs of parents, carers and professionals through consultation and evaluation. We designed a questionnaire to establish parents' and carers' needs and we took part in a series of events working with other agencies. In 2007 Penumbra Self harm Services and Parentline Scotland have established through collaborative working a monthly support group for Parents and carers of those who self harm.

In our first year in operation, we sent questionnaires to 90 agencies to explore their specific needs. This enabled us to develop training materials, information packs and leaflets and to distribute these as widely as possible. We then went on to have face-to-face meetings with 60 agencies of the 90 consulted, to deliver support and awareness raising sessions to their staff. Awareness raising sessions have been targeted and tailor made for our particular target agencies, i.e. Homeless, LGBT, and looked after children, and also adapted to enable us to deliver awareness raising sessions to a wide variety of agencies at the same time.

3. Liaise with other agencies working with groups particularly affected by self harm.

The ESHP has since it's launch been involved in collaborative working with a number of organisations in the City of Edinburgh. For example the Project has worked closely with LGBT Youth and LGBT Health and Well-Being reference

identifying appropriate referrals and arranging awareness raising sessions for staff and volunteers.

In early 2007 LGBT Youth organised a residential weekend for service users and a number of our young people who attend ESHP participated and enjoyed the weekend. The ESHP liases closely with, for example psychiatric evaluation teams, Duty Social Work Teams, hostels with regard to young people affected by self harm. The number of contacts with other agencies since April 2007 regarding young people we joint work with is 103. This includes attending Care plan meetings, accompanying young people to psychiatric appointments, link working and so forth.

4. Bring together the interested groups around common issues to inform the future development of services to young people who self harm.

Penumbra employed a Self Harm Services Co-ordinator with a national remit in January 2007. The Self Harm Services Co-ordinator sits on local and national fora. This takes the message from the ESHP to a wider audience and also enables us to be informed of the wider issues.

The role of Penumbra Self Harm Services Co-ordinator has contributed significantly in bringing together key individuals and groups to look at developing services, liaising with other interested groups locally and nationally.

5. Establish links with and keep appropriate planning groups informed of developments.

The ESHP sits on a variety of forums designed for this purpose including The Scottish Self Harm Forum and The Edinburgh Self Harm Forum, both of which include representatives from Choose Life and key voluntary and statutory organisations. These meetings have, to date been vital in bringing key partners together to develop services and to update and inform on current issues relating to self harm.

Penumbra's internal Self harm Services Planning Group, chaired by our Self Harm Services Co-ordinator, meets bi-monthly and brings together Penumbra self harm workers from across Scotland to share good practice.

ESHP also have bi-monthly Advisory Group meetings. The Choose Life Implementation Co-ordinator for Edinburgh attends and the purpose of the Advisory Group is to oversee the development of the service and report to the Edinburgh Choose Life Group.

6. Promote good practice in this field across all agencies.

Staff at the Project offer advice and support to a wide variety of professionals working with vulnerable young people in the City of Edinburgh. That support often consists of telephone support and the provision of available information

and resources on self harm. Equally, the Project has welcomed site visits where appropriate, from professionals looking for advice and assistance in working with individuals who self harm. Staff at the Project have received 297 calls relating to self harm from other agencies and carers, since April 2007.

In the first two years of the Project we delivered 44 Training and Awareness raising sessions to 507 individuals. The Support Manager continues to deliver awareness raising sessions to smaller audiences, allowing the ESHP to meet the needs of professional workers and focus on our target group. In 2007 the Project delivered 6 awareness-raising sessions attended by 33 professionals from a number of agencies in the city. These sessions included promoting good practice in self harm, identifying the needs of people who self harm, workers' approaches to self harm, skills development and peer support. Training sessions have been delivered predominantly to homeless agencies, the voluntary sector including LGBT agencies and also statutory sector. Please see attached Training Session evaluation from October 2007 as an example of agency feedback. The project also offered 2 one to one awareness raising sessions to First Hand befriending to enable their volunteers to work effectively with the young people we had referred. In addition, the project had a table at a recent YPU open day to promote awareness amongst staff and service users of the work of the project.

7. Promote the involvement of young people who self harm in informing future planning in this field.

Penumbra also hosts a National Participation Development Worker who works collaboratively with other agencies and recently engaged young people from ESHP in the planning, organising, speaking and attending the Heads Up Scotland conference, amongst others.

Many of the young people from ESHP also became media volunteers with the *see me* anti-stigma campaign.

ESHP staff supported 11 young people to participate in Dawn Greisbach's research, exploring the links between self harm and suicide.

As part of the SDC external evaluation of ESHP, 9 of the young people were interviewed.

8. Make accessible and available resource material for organisations and individuals.

ESHP has continued to research, produce and make resource material available online and in hard copy, e.g. a Factsheet on self harm developed for Edspace, training/awareness raising packs for organisations, booklists, web links, "A Guide to Working With Young People Who Self Harm" leaflet and inspirational cards and quotes.

9. Liaise with other interested groups locally, nationally and internationally.

We continue to liaise with other interested groups locally, nationally and internationally through the Support Manager, Self Harm Services Co-ordinator and our Youth Development Manager, who have all spoken at conferences locally, nationally and across Europe on the subject of self harm and young people.

10. Collaborate with local press and media to reduce stigma and inform the general population on the needs of the group.

We continue to liaise with the media to promote awareness and reduce the stigma attached to self harm. Central to this has been acknowledging that young people are the experts in their own lives.

11. Overview

Despite the Edinburgh Self Harm Project being made up of a small staff team of three, it has over the last three years succeeded in becoming one of the only specialist self harm resources of its kind in the city of Edinburgh. The ESHP has succeeded in building national and community links and raised awareness of the key needs of young people, parents and carers who are in contact with many of the issues relating to self harm.

What is striking, is that despite its size the ESHP has gained its success by staying true to the core values and principles as required by the Young People. Young People who access the project are adept at being part of health and social care systems and continue to state that what they need is a safe place to talk and explore their self harm in an environment where they will not be judged.

It is hoped that the ESHP can continue to adhere to such fundamental person centred principles and provide Young People in the city the opportunity to be open about their difficulties in a creative and flexible way.