

Self-Harm Network Scotland Impact Report Executive Summary

April 2024 - March 2025



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Penumbra is a charity (SC 010387) and a company limited by guarantee (SC 091542) registered in Scotland.

Executive Summary

Self-Harm Network Scotland (SHNS) is part of Penumbra Mental Health, a pioneering charity providing dedicated services for people with mild to serious and enduring mental ill health. In November 2023, the Scottish Government and COSLA published their self-harm strategy and action plan for Scotland, of which SHNS is a key delivery partner. SHNS began providing its services in August of 2022, and it has grown and developed since then, expanding our activities and services, supporting hundreds of people affected by self-harm, and training thousands of professionals.

This Executive Summary provides an overview of the key findings presented in the full 2024/2025 impact report.



One-to-One Support

Our one-to-one support service received 318 referrals, with 212 of those people referred entering active support. A total of 1,805 support sessions were provided, averaging seven to eight sessions per supported person.

Of the 52 supported people who completed our end of service survey, the majority reported that they felt in control of what and how support was provided, service staff did what they said they would do, and that they felt heard and genuinely cared about. Feedback suggests that supported people find the support to have been effective, with respondents rating the overall service as 9.5 out of 10.

Feedback from the survey also demonstrates that supported people gain practical and emotional support that helps to manage any distress they are experiencing, and gain strategies and tools that support them to reduce or stop their self-harm and use other ways to cope. Furthermore, among supported people who complete our IROC/YROC tool, an increase in overall wellbeing is evidenced.

**I now know why I was doing it; I understand more about my cycle of self-harm and the trigger for this and now feel much less likely to self-harm.
The increased understanding has helped me to cope and to prevent self-harm.**

Live Chat and calls with Loved Ones

Our web-based Live Chat support was accessed by 1,339 people, with 599 of those going on to have a supported conversation with a Peer Practitioner. While our Live Chat is there to provide immediate support to those experiencing distress, we also aim to help develop the supported person's knowledge and understanding of their self-harm and introduce them to tools and techniques that will help them to manage their distress and self-harm urges. Analysis of 30 randomly selected support conversations that took place found that in 87% of chats, knowledge and information had been shared, and/or tools and techniques shared, discussed and in some instances tried during the chat.

Our end of chat survey asks supported people to rate the helpfulness of the chat, with 86% of 198 respondents to the survey rating it as 'Very helpful' or 'Somewhat Helpful.' Additionally, 55% of respondents also reported that they had used the Live Chat before, which would suggest that they trust the service and find value in the support they have received.

During 2024/2025, 46 calls with parents/loved ones took place, where the Peer Practitioner provided the parent/loved one space to share their queries, concerns and worries, and provide a compassionate response.



Self-Harm Awareness Training and our Train the Trainer programme

A total of 180 1-hour, 3-hour, or full-day Self-Harm Awareness Training sessions were delivered to 2,137 professionals. This included specific sessions for 67 organisations ranging from local authorities, health boards, education establishments, and a range of third sector organisations.

1,251 participants completed our end of training survey, with responses demonstrating that our trainers create a safe environment that is conducive to learning. The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the trainer encouraged discussion and reflection, was respectful of participants' views and created a supportive environment for participants to share experiences.

Feedback also demonstrates that participants develop their knowledge and understanding of self-harm as a coping strategy, different types of self-harm, functions of self-harm, and the stigma associated with self-harm, and how it can act as a barrier to support. Findings suggest that participants feel more able and confident to respond compassionately and offer support to someone who is self-harming.

“
Excellent quality and level of training, very insightful and a lot to take away. I certainly can use this in my day-to-day work activities and it has provided me with a deeper understanding and perspective of the holistic factors contributing to and resulting from self-harm.”

We have also been developing our 'Train the Trainer' programme, which will provide people from organisations who work with communities affected by self-harm the opportunity to be equipped to deliver our Self-Harm Awareness Training. The programme has been developed in collaboration with a development group made up of staff from SHNS, local self-harm support services, Public Health Scotland and the Scottish Government, with the first programme due to be delivered in summer 2025.

Loved Ones Support Groups



Our Loved ones self-harm support groups aim to provide a safe space for parents and loved ones of people who self-harm to develop their understanding of self-harm, and gain knowledge, resources and tools that help them to look after themselves and provide their loved one with compassionate support. Six groups have run during 2024/2025, with 25 loved ones attending all four sessions.

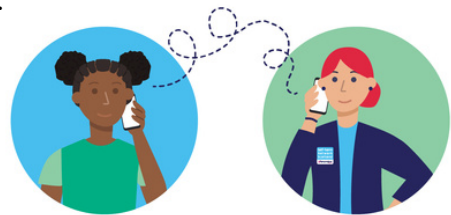
Of the 15 participants that completed a feedback survey, all agreed or strongly agreed that the group facilitator was knowledgeable about the subject, was respectful of participants' views and experiences, and created a supportive environment.

The majority of respondents also agreed or strongly agreed that their understanding of the different aspects of self-harm were improved and that they are able to identify tools and resources that they can use to support their loved one. Most respondents also reported that they felt more confident about offering support to their loved one, and have a better understanding of how to look after themselves while supporting their loved one with self-harm.

“It has already helped a great deal with my own situation. I feel more confident in coping and helping with self-harm issues with my [loved one]. More importantly, I don't feel so alone, and I now know of some places I can reach out to or encourage [loved one] to reach out to, if and when needed.”

Community Capacity Building activity

SHNS Community Capacity Building (CCB) activity has organically evolved in response to bespoke support requests received from organisations. To date, this has included working with the Scottish Prison Service to develop a training package that can be rolled out to staff and is relevant and effective in a prison environment. We have also been working with the Scottish Ambulance Service to develop resources that ambulance service staff can share with people that they are called to see regarding self-harm. This work will continue during 2025/2026, but we will also focus our CCB activity on two priority communities agreed with the Scottish Government - the LGBTQ+ and Neurodiverse communities.



Provider Network

Our Provider Network is a national network of professionals who have an interest in or deliver services that support people who may be affected by self-harm, including statutory and third sector organisations. It aims to develop relationships and identify opportunities to deepen understanding of Self-Harm, reduce stigma, discrimination and promote compassionate responses while providing a forum for members to share learning, data and evidence, and resources and tools. The focus of 2024/2025 has been to work with members to explore how the network could best operate to meet the overarching aims. This has informed our plans for the 2025/2026 which will see webinar sessions and a face-to-face conference over the course of the year, with the first of our webinars delivered in June 2025, with the theme of 'Looking after yourself while supporting people who self-harm'.



Conclusions

This year has seen continued demand for SHNS services, as well as a continuation of the successes generated in the previous year. Our One-to-One support service continues to support people on their recovery journey and making a positive difference to their lives. Evidence also suggests that people accessing our Live Chat find it to be helpful, and experience compassionate, person-centred support.

Our Self-Harm Awareness training continues to see strong and increasing demand from organisations, delivering to almost 500 more professionals than in the previous year. Participants' experience of the training remains overwhelmingly positive and with evidence suggesting that the training is helping to increase knowledge and understanding of self-harm.

2024/2025 saw the launch of our Loved Ones Support Groups, and while only a relatively small number of groups have been delivered, they have been very well received by the loved ones who have participated, enhancing their knowledge, understanding and ability to support their loved one.

Overall, the evidence presented in this report demonstrates the significant contribution that SHNS activity is making towards achievement of the Scottish Government and COSLA's Self-Harm Strategy.

