



## **Suicide Prevention Youth Advisory Group**

### **Reflections on the One Good Adult Resource**

**September 2023**

Children in Scotland has been working in partnership with the University of Stirling since May 2022 to deliver the Suicide Prevention Youth Advisory Group. The Youth Advisory Group is working with Suicide Prevention Scotland to ensure the views of young people with lived experience are heard in policy making.

Across 2023, members of the Youth Advisory Group have identified that they wanted to work on issues relating to training and learning for adults working with young people experiencing suicidality. As part of this work the group decided they wanted to consider the One Good Adult resource.

The One Good Adult resource was developed and refined by NHS Education for Scotland, Scottish Government, Children in Scotland and a group of children and young people.

Children in Scotland worked with the group of children and young people and listened to their views on how to be a good adult when supporting them with their mental health. As a result, the group created a Microsoft Sway resource with information on how to be a good adult. This included a job description which is now being rolled out across several areas of Scotland based on what the group said.

[Click here to access these resources.](#)

Members of the Suicide Prevention Youth Advisory Group were keen to explore what being a good adult meant in the context of young people experiencing suicidal crisis. They felt they could add additional evidence that could support practitioners. This evidence is summarised in this paper. It will be submitted to the team working on the One Good Adult resource to support its development and will also be shared more widely across Suicide Prevention Scotland to inform suicide prevention work.

#### **Being a One Good Adult when a young person is in crisis.**

Members of the YAG identified that the 'good adult' during a crisis for one person may differ from that of another person and may be different depending on where you live. In general, members of the group felt they were more likely to approach people they have good relationships with when they were in a crisis, rather than the most relevant professional. There was a feeling they could be more approachable.

The group also identified the wide range of skills, qualities and knowledge that a good adult should possess when supporting a young person in crisis.

A key aspect of this was approachability. The group highlighted that the supporting adults should create opportunity for communication and offer children and young people their time so that they can feel more confident and comfortable talking to them. The group also want people to be invested in their wellbeing; they outlined that this is shown through genuine compassion and empathy.

The importance of body language and active listening was also highlighted as being a key consideration for adults when supporting young people in crisis. A good adult needs to make eye contact, have open and welcoming body language and actively engage with what people are telling them.

The group were also able to describe what they do not want in this situation. A 'good adult' does not have their arms folded, does not just stare at the screen or a piece of paper and does not have a blank expression.

The group also highlighted some complexities a 'good adult' faces when a young person is in crisis. This included recognising that what is being shared can be emotive and challenging for the child or young person. The Advisory Group want a good adult to engage in this and show empathy. However, they also identified that when an adult is overly shocked or worried, it can make them feel unwelcome and more reluctant to share. They also described that these types of responses could put people off seeking help in the future.

The group also highlighted the importance of being informed, but also being honest when you don't have all the answers. However, in this context they were clear that a good adult would offer support by looking to find the answers.

We also heard from members about the importance of not trying to 'fix' young people. They emphasised that they want to be treated as people, not problems to be solved. They also highlighted that even when in crisis, they do not always want answers, they sometimes just want people to listen to them.

*"Sometimes you don't want a solution you just want someone to listen" (YAG Member)*

The group also spoke about the importance of a 'good adult' being reflective in their work. After a good adult has provided support to a child or young person, it is important that they think about their approach and consider what worked well and what could be done differently.

#### *Giving young people agency*

Members of the Youth Advisory Group also spoke regularly about how they felt a good adult ensures that young people continue to have agency over their support and care, even when they are in crisis. They recognised that this cannot always mean they have complete control over decisions as they need to be kept safe. However, they identified that they need to have some control and should be informed about what is going to happen even if they can't make decisions for themselves.

They spoke about how a good adult should talk directly to them as a young person, rather than discussing with their parents and carers. They also said that a good adult

should have an awareness of the potential difficulties around an individual's family relationships. With all of this in mind, the members feel a good adult will allow them to tell their own story, rather than have it come from someone else.

#### *Confidentiality and sharing information*

We also discussed how a good adult should share information when a young person is in crisis. The group understand that when a young person is in suicidal crisis, adults may not be able to keep things confidential. However, they want to be made aware of how information is being shared and what will happen when it is. They are clear that a good adult should know their organisational processes and will explain this so that young people are informed.

#### *Looking after yourself*

Members of the Suicide Prevention Youth Advisory Group were also clear on how providing support to young people in crisis can have an impact on the adults who provide this support. They feel that a good adult is able to look after themselves.

The group want supporting adults to have good emotional regulation and demonstrate this to the young people they are supporting. They also want them to practice good self-care and ensure they take time to support their own mental health and wellbeing.

### **Summary**

The Suicide Prevention Youth Advisory Group's work on being a good adult adds further evidence around what young people want from adults when they are in crisis. These findings echo their previous work on Time, Space, Compassion and further demonstrate the need for trauma-informed, relationship-based support.

Broadly, what the group have told us is in line with what is included in the One Good Adult job description at present. This is extremely positive and suggests there is consistency in what children and young people want from adults in their lives when they seek support for their mental health. However, we believe that this additional detail relating to how young people feel a good adult can support them when they are in crisis is of value. It continues to add to the evidence base of what young people need when they seek support at this stage.

The Advisory Group is keenly aware of the impact that getting the right support when you are in crisis can have and this short summary paper provides a clear understanding of how to do this. We believe it provides a valuable resource for partners across Suicide Prevention Scotland as we continue to develop work to reduce the number of suicides in Scotland.

**For more information please contact Chris Ross**, Policy, Projects and Participation Manager, [cross@childreninscotland.org.uk](mailto:cross@childreninscotland.org.uk)