

Participant Information Sheet

Name of department: Department of Psychological Sciences and Health

Title of the study: Sleep and Self-Harm in Young People's Daily Life

This sheet contains details about a research study that discusses self-harm and sleep difficulties. If you find any of the topics distressing, please know that there is a list of support resources at the end of this document.

Introduction

You are invited to participate in a research study investigating how sleep patterns relate to thoughts and behaviours of self-harm. Before you decide, it is important to understand why the study is being done and what it involves. Please read this sheet carefully and discuss it with others if you want.

This research is being carried out by Bethany Martin, a PhD Student at the University of Strathclyde. She is working under the supervision of Dr Susan Rasmussen, Dr Kirsten Russell and Dr Megan Crawford. Scott Thomson and Spence Whittaker, post-graduate students, will also be supporting this study. If you have any questions regarding the study, the contact details for the researchers are included at the end of this information sheet.

What is the purpose of this research?

Young people sometimes go through difficult times that might make them think about or engage in self-harm. Self-harm means when someone intentionally hurts themselves or takes something to cause harm, for any reason. We believe that sleep problems could play a role in self-harm thoughts and behaviours, but we need more information to understand how these are connected on a day-to-day basis.

This study aims to explore whether sleep is linked to self-harm thoughts or behaviour over a short period of time. To do this, we are going to use a method called Ecological Momentary Assessment (EMA). EMA involves completing multiple short surveys (like a diary entry) through a smartphone app in your day-to-day life.

We designed this study together with young people who have lived experience of self-harm. Their input helped shape the study so that it is more accessible, relevant and sensitive to exploring difficult topics like sleep and self-harm.

After the EMA surveys, you will be invited to take part in an interview, where you can share your experience of taking part in the study. This will give us a better understanding of what it was like to be a participant in an EMA study and whether the method worked well for you. This feedback is really important for improving future research.

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Who can take part?

You can take part in this study if you are aged between 18 and 24 years old, have self-harmed in the past year, live in the UK and own a smartphone.

However, you won't be able to take part if you're currently staying in a mental health facility, you're getting treatment for a sleep problem or have been diagnosed with a sleep disorder (other than insomnia or nightmare disorder). If you're unsure whether any of these apply to you, feel free to get in touch and we'll help decide with you.

Do you have to take part?

No, you don't have to take part if you don't want to. Involvement in this research is completely voluntary, and it's your decision whether you want to be involved or not. If you choose not to participate, it won't affect anything else, such as the way you are treated by the research team or from any organisations that shared information about this project.

You have the right to stop participating in the research at any time, or to not answer questions you are uncomfortable with, even after you've started. If you choose to withdraw from the study, you can do so without any consequences. If you also want to remove your data, this can be done within one month of completing or leaving the study. After that point, your data will have been fully anonymised and it will no longer be possible to remove it as it won't be identifiable.

Your well-being and comfort are our top priority, so you are free to make the decision that feels right for you.

Hear from the young people who helped co-design this research:

Before you read the rest of this sheet, we wanted to highlight that this study wasn't designed by the researchers alone. A group of young people with lived experience of self-harm have shaped the project to make sure it was designed with care and real people in mind. Below, you can hear from some of these young people.

"As someone with lived experience of both sleep problems and self harm I felt it was really important to include our voices in designing and testing the study. I felt really valued throughout the process and our ideas were listened to and acted upon. Often research is done to young people not with us, but I was really pleased that this felt like a collaborative process and to see our feedback help in designing something so meaningful in helping to understand the connection between these issues more, for us and future generations. I would recommend being involved if you can, I found it to be quite a therapeutic process :)"

Alex, 24

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“Working on this project has been great, it’s been brilliant seeing my thoughts and feedback actually being considered and used. Felt very valued throughout”

Theo, 18

“As someone with lived experience of self harm, I appreciated the opportunity to get involved in this project and make sure it was well-suited to young people. It is vital that research methods are informed by what works for young people and that we get involved to inform future research and assist in shedding a light on the factors impacting self harm. We need to remove some of the secrecy around self harm so we can better support those struggling with it.”

Eliza, 22

What will you do in the project?

Part 1: EMA

If you agree to take part, we will begin with an initial call (lasting around 45 minutes to 1 hour) to explain how the study works. During this call, we’ll also make a well-being plan together – this is a short document that lists things you find helpful when you’re struggling. For example, distraction techniques, people you feel comfortable talking to when you’re struggling and emergency contacts to get support. You will also complete a baseline survey, which asks about mental health symptoms, sleep and self-harm. This first questionnaire helps give us an overview of how you have been feeling recently, before the daily surveys start.

You will then answer three brief surveys per day for 14 days using an app on your smartphone. Each survey will take approximately 3 minutes and will ask questions about your mood, sleep, daily context, and any thoughts or behaviour related to self-harm. We will schedule these surveys based on your usual daily routines.

Around day 7 of the study, a researcher will check in with you to discuss how things are going and to address any concerns. You can also reach out to the team at any point with questions or issues.

As a thank you for your time and effort, participants that engage with the daily surveys across the study period will be entered into a prize draw to win a £40 One4all gift voucher.

Part 2: Interview

After completing the 14-day EMA period, or earlier if you choose to withdraw your participation, we would like to invite you to participate in a follow-up interview lasting between 30 and 60 minutes. In the consent form, you will specifically be asked if you are happy to be contacted about this interview. Saying yes doesn’t mean you have to take part, you can still decide later whether or not you’d like to do the interview.

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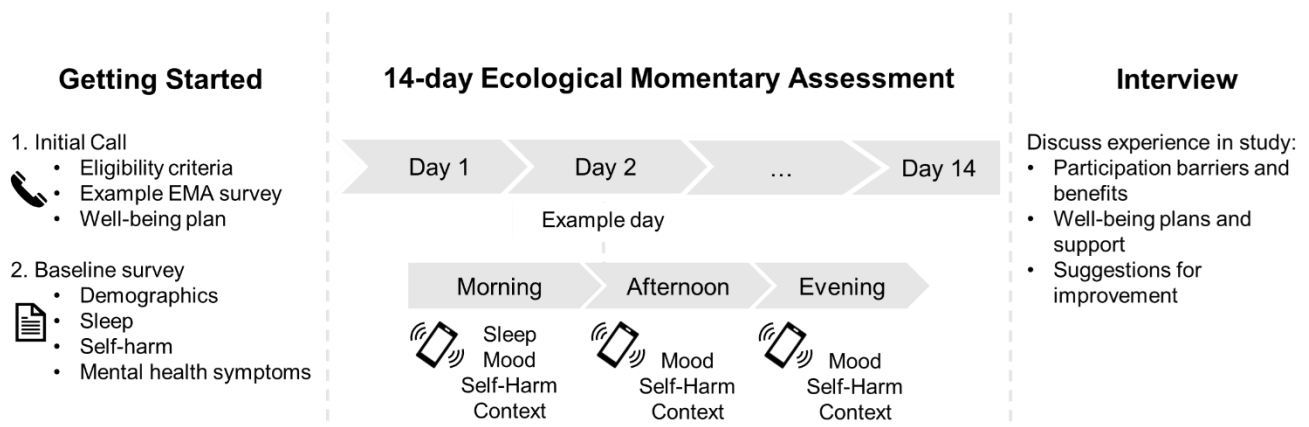
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This interview would be via video call, using Zoom or Microsoft teams, at a time that suits you. The interview will explore your experience of taking part in the EMA study, including what aspects were easy or difficult, how the surveys made you feel and any suggestions you have for improvement.

We will audio record the interview so we don't miss anything you say. The recording will be deleted as soon we've typed it up (within one month).

See the figure below for a summary of the study process.

Figure 1: Study Outline



What are the potential risks to you in taking part?

The questions we will ask are personal, and some may be upsetting, especially those related to sleep issues or self-harm. You will work with us to create a well-being plan before starting the EMA surveys. This plan will help outline what you find helpful if you are struggling and will be included with every survey. You can skip or stop any survey at any time. A list of the researchers contact details and support resources are provided to you in this information sheet and the EMA surveys too.

Your responses to the EMA surveys will be monitored daily by the research team. If we see answers that suggest you are finding things particularly difficult, one of us will get in touch by text or email to check in. There will also be a mid-point check-in during the study, as a chance to talk about how you are finding things. These steps are in place to help keep you safe and supported during the study. Previous research shows that asking about self-harm does not increase risk and we don't expect this study to make anyone feel worse; however, support is available if you find participating difficult or upsetting.

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What information is being collected in the project?

During the EMA phase, we will collect your responses about your sleep, mood, daily activities, and any self-harm related thoughts or behaviours. We will also collect basic demographic information (such as age, gender and race) and baseline information on medications and diagnoses, mental health symptoms, sleep and self-harm at the start. To be able to use your data in the analysis, at least two days of surveys are needed to be able to look at changes over time.

A copy of your well-being plan will be stored securely for one month and then deleted. This is just in case we need to refer back to it for your well-being, but it will be stored separately from the other information recorded in this study to ensure your privacy is maintained.

During the interview, we will record audio, using either a digital voice recorder or recording options on Zoom or Teams. These recordings will be transcribed (typed out), but any personal information that could identify you, like your name or anything specific about your life, will be removed to protect your privacy.

Who will have access to the information?

Everything you share during the study (including the initial call, well-being plan, baseline questionnaire responses, EMA surveys, and follow-up interview) will be confidential. This means that your personal details will only be accessible to the research team.

However, it's important to note that if you share anything during the study that makes us seriously concerned about your safety or the safety of someone else, we may need to break confidentiality to help keep you and others safe. When making the well-being plan, you will have the option to choose someone to be your 'trusted person'. This is someone we can contact if we believe you may be at serious risk. We would only reach out to them if we felt it was necessary to keep people safe.

We will only contact someone if you have nominated them in your well-being plan. If you do not include a trusted person, we won't contact anyone outside the research team.

At the end of the study, the findings will be written up as part of a PhD thesis and we also hope to publish the results in an academic journal and present them at research conferences. Everything will be reported in a way that protects your identity. Nothing shared publicly will make it possible to recognise you or any other individual participant.

Where will the information be stored and how long will it be kept for?

EMA data will be pseudonymised (given a study ID) and only linked to your personal details for the duration of the study. A document that links your identifiable data (such as contact information and the well-being plan) with your study ID will be kept separate from the EMA and interview data. Your identifiable data will be deleted one month after your participation ends. If you would like a summary of the project findings, we will keep a record of your email address for this purpose (separate from other study data) and delete it once we have sent the information. Interview recordings will be transcribed and anonymised within one month, after which the

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recordings will be deleted. Anonymised data will be stored indefinitely and could be used in future research or shared in an academic repository called PURE (the University's online archive for storing data securely).

Thank you for reading this information – please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written here.

All personal data will be processed in accordance with data protection legislation. Please read our [Privacy Notice for Research Participants](#) for more information about your rights under the legislation.

What happens next?

If you decide to not take part, then we thank you for your time considering this research study.

If you do wish to take part or have any questions about this research, you can contact the research team with the details below or you can continue directly to the consent form by following this link:

https://strath.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_79eOhCz0JEOQQ3Y. You will be asked to provide some initial information including your contact details, which the research team will use to organise an initial call.

If you would like a summary of the overall findings from the research project, please let the research team know and this will be emailed to you once the project is complete.

At the end of this sheet there is a list of support options, chosen together with the young people who co-designed this study. You can use them if and when they feel right for you.

Research team:

Bethany Martin – bethany.martin@strath.ac.uk

Scott Thomson – scott.thomson.2019@uni.strath.ac.uk

Spence Whittaker – spence.whittaker@strath.ac.uk

Dr Susan Rasmussen - s.a.rasmussen@strath.ac.uk

Dr Kirsten Russell - kirsten.russell@strath.ac.uk

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This research was granted ethical approval by the University of Strathclyde Ethics Committee.

If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the research, or wish to contact an independent person to whom any questions may be directed or further information may be sought from, please contact:

Secretary to the University Ethics Committee
Research & Knowledge Exchange Services
University of Strathclyde
Graham Hills Building
50 George Street
Glasgow
G1 1QE

Telephone: 0141 548 3707
Email: ethics@strath.ac.uk

Below is a short list of support options from me (Beth) and the young people who helped co-design this project. You might not need any of these, or you might prefer to talk to someone you already trust.

Emergency support

Call **111** or **999**

Talk to the research team

Beth Martin – bethany.martin@strath.ac.uk

Scott Thomson - scott.thomson.2019@uni.strath.ac.uk

Spence Whittaker – spence.whittaker@strath.ac.uk

Peer Support

Make Space - Peer-led spaces for people with experience of self-harm to share their feelings, experiences and histories.

Find more information on: <https://www.makespaceco.org/>

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National Self-Harm Network Forum – An online peer support forum to connect with others anonymously.

You can read and post here: <https://www.nshn.co.uk/>

24/7 Support

Samaritans – A free and confidential phone, email and letter service providing support to anyone struggling to cope.

Call 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org any time to talk to someone.

Or visit their website for more information: <https://www.samaritans.org/scotland/how-we-can-help/>

SHOUT! – If talking feels too hard, this is a 24/7 free and confidential text service.

Text 'SHOUT' to 85258 for support.

Visit their website here: <https://giveusashout.org/>

Childline – A free, private and confidential service to talk about anything anytime, for those under 19 in the UK.

Call 0800 1111 to talk to their trained counsellors.

Or visit <https://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/1-2-1-counsellor-chat/> for a 1-2-1 chat

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