Clinical Toolkit
Clinical Tips: Assessing Risk of Suicide and Self-Harm

Assessment of risk involves making enquiry into the extent of the young person’s thinking, intent and behaviour around self-harm or suicide, including those listed below:

If thinking about self-harm or suicide is present, how frequent, distressing and persistent is it?

If the person has a plan, how detailed and realistic is it?

What method has the person chosen, and how lethal is it? It is also important to clarify the young person’s understanding of the lethality (e.g., they may not understand that a paracetamol overdose may be lethal).

It is important to ask about the young person’s intention to carry out the plan including their intention to die.

Does the person have the means to carry out the method?

Has the person ever planned or attempted suicide or self-harmed? If so:

- What was the context (stressors, planned or impulsive, substance use)?
- What was their intention?
- How were they prevented from acting (did they ask for help, were they discovered acting)?
- How do they feel about that attempt now?
- Has someone close to the person attempted or completed suicide?