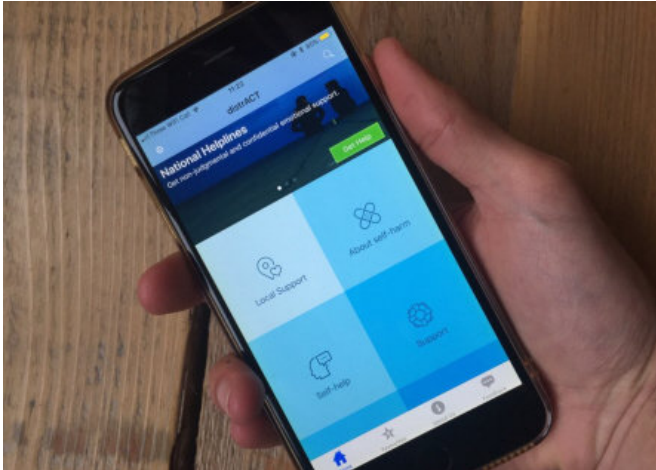


New app to prevent self-harm and suicide launched

7 December 2017



Credit: University of Bristol

A new app to help people who are considering self-harm or having suicidal thoughts is now available to download from the Apple App Store and [Google Play](#). The distrACT app which has been designed by doctors with young adults and University of Bristol researchers to provide easy, quick and discreet access to general health information and advice about self-harm.

Nationally, there are around 200,000 hospital emergency department cases of [self-harm](#) reported every year. The number of people who self-harm in Bristol alone is around 25,000. It is the highest predictor of suicide, with self-harm patients 35 times more likely to end their own lives.

Through distrACT, people will find reliable answers to their questions in plain language – anywhere, anytime, in private.

Expert Self Care Ltd, who developed the app, is a UK social enterprise certified by the NHS England Information Standard as a provider of reliable [health](#) information. It is led by practising NHS

doctors, and aims to give people at different stages in their lives access to reliable, clear and useful [health information](#) - 'on-the-go' and without the need for an internet connection.

The distrACT app has been created by doctors together with [young adults](#) and experts in self-harm and suicide prevention, including Bristol Health Partners and the Improving Care in Self-Harm Health Integration Team (STITCH HIT), University of Bristol and University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust, as well as other local and national organisations. Self-Injury Support and Self-Injury Self Help helped involve young people with experience of self-harm in the design.

Dr Knut Schroeder, a GP and founder of Expert Self-Care, said: "This app is designed for people when they're at their most vulnerable. It can be hard to seek help, so distrACT aims to make that process as easy as possible. The young people we worked with have informed the content and design, so we hope that it can become a reliable source of [support](#) during difficult times.

"We named it distrACT for two reasons. People wanted it to be discreet, so we deliberately didn't use the term 'self-harm'. And distraction from thoughts about self-harm can help people avoid actually going through with it."

Designed to work for people of all ages in the UK, it will be helpful to English speakers anywhere who are struggling with self-harm. Its aims include:

- Suicide prevention: Help reduce the risk of suicides in people who self-harm
- Crisis support: Advice on how to access help in an emergency, lists of useful emergency numbers and support sites, and tips for safety planning
- Signposting: Guide people who self-harm to further sources of support
- Self-care: Encourage self-monitoring

strategies and self-management of symptoms

- Health literacy: Increase knowledge and understanding of self-harm and related issues
- Practical support: Give practical tips and provide ideas for safer alternatives to self-harm
- Stigma: Reduce stigma and dispel myths about self-harm
- Resilience: Help people develop skills to build resilience and increase well-being
- Accessing health services: Support decisions around accessing health services and other means of support

The app is available to download in both the [Apple App Store](#) and [Google Play](#).

Provided by University of Bristol

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