**For immediate release**

**Suicide and self-harm prevention app launches in Bristol**

A new app to help people who are considering self-harm or having suicidal thoughts is launching in Bristol on 30 November. The [distrACT app](http://www.expertselfcare.com/health-apps/distract/) is designed to give 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](http://www.expertselfcare.com), 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](http://www.bristolhealthpartners.org.uk/) and the [Improving Care in Self-Harm Health Integration Team](http://www.bristolhealthpartners.org.uk/health-integration-teams/improving-care-in-self-harm-hit) (STITCH HIT), [University of Bristol](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/) and [University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust](http://www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/), as well as other local and national organisations. [Self-Injury Support](https://www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk/) and [Self-Injury Self Help](https://www.sishbristol.org.uk/) helped involve young people with experience of self-harm in the design.

Jack Payne, who will be speaking at the app launch and is one of Bristol’s two Youth Mayors, said:

“Young people’s mental health is rightly getting more and more attention. Self-harm and suicide aren’t an inevitable result of reaching crisis point. Sometimes distraction, reassurance and giving hope are enough to help people manage their thoughts and impulses. It’s great that the new distrACT app can offer easy access to support and guidance when it’s needed most - discreetly and sensitively.”

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

**Download the app**

The app is available to download in both the [Apple App Store](https://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewSoftware?id=1225176329&mt=8&ign-mscache=1) and [Google Play](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.expertselfcare.selfharm&hl=en_GB).

**Come to the launch**

The [distrACT official launch is at Bristol Energy Hub on the harbourside at 5.30-7pm on Thursday 30 November](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/launch-of-the-distract-app-with-health-information-advice-about-self-harm-tickets-39451669004). See the app being demoed and hear from the people involved in creating the app and other speakers, including:

* Sal Ball, Support Service Manager for Self Injury Support
* Jack Payne, Bristol Youth Mayor
* Dr Knut Schroeder, GP and founder of Expert Self-Care
* Dr Dominique Thompson, GP and young people’s mental health expert
* Salena Williams, Psychiatric Liaison Nurse at University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust

**-ENDS-**

**Notes to the editor**

**Media opportunities**

Journalists are invited to attend the [launch event](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/launch-of-the-distract-app-with-health-information-advice-about-self-harm-tickets-39451669004) at **5.30-7pm, Thursday 30 November, at the Bristol Energy Hub**, 1 Canon's Road, The Waterfront, Bristol BS1 5UH (no booking required for journalists)

**Dr Knut Schroeder, Salena Williams, Dr Dominique Thompson** and others involved in distrACT’s development are available for interview. Contact Zoe Trinder-Widdess (zoe.trinder-widdess@bristolhealthpartners.org.uk or 07712 390 549) to arrange an interview.

**About Expert Self-Care Ltd**

Expert Self-Care Ltd is a social enterprise based in Bristol led by practising NHS doctors and certified by the [NHS England Information Standard](https://www.england.nhs.uk/tis/about/description/) as a producer of reliable health information. They aim to make it really easy for people at different stages in their lives to access reliable, clear and useful health information - 'on-the-go' and without the need for an internet connection. Find out more at [www.expertselfcare.com](http://www.expertselfcare.com/).

**About Bristol Health Partners**

Bristol Health Partners exists to improve the health of those who live in and around Bristol and to improve the delivery of the services on which they rely, and to act as a mechanism for change in our health and care community and our city region. It is a strategic collaboration between the city’s three NHS trusts, three clinical commissioning groups, two universities and its local authority. It aims to maximise Bristol’s health research, and to transform the understanding, prevention and treatment of key health problems in Bristol. The nine organisations involved have formed Bristol Health Partners voluntarily, and it is funded by contributions from the partners. Find out more about the partnership at [www.bristolhealthpartners.org.uk/about-us/](http://www.bristolhealthpartners.org.uk/about-us/).

**About Health Integration Teams**

Bristol Health Partners Health Integration Teams (HITs) are focused on a specific topic or condition, and bring together all the local players in the field, regardless of organisational affiliation. HITs tackle health priorities by working in new ways, harnessing the best research, innovation, care and education to make a difference to people's health. HITs must evaluate, involve patients and the public and have a 'whole system' approach. Nowhere else is doing research, health service and public health integration quite like this. Find out more about HITs at [www.bristolhealthpartners.org.uk/health-integration-teams/](http://www.bristolhealthpartners.org.uk/health-integration-teams/) and the Improving Care in Self-Harm HIT at [www.bristolhealthpartners.org.uk/stitch/](http://www.bristolhealthpartners.org.uk/stitch/).

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