

'Epidemic' of children as young as five self-harming warns charity

- **Number of girls aged 10 to 14 self-harming has also surged**
- **Records show there has been 30% rise in increase of boys self-harming**

By Anna Edwards

Children as young as five are harming themselves, in a worrying epidemic that is sweeping the country, ChildLine has warned.

The charity says that it is no longer just teenagers who are self-harming, but they are also receiving calls from five-year-olds.

The charity says that it has also seen a surge in the number of girls aged 10 to 14 self-harming and recorded a 30 per cent rise in boys who are deliberately hurting themselves.



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Chris Leaman of charity Young-Minds, told The Daily Mirror that in some parts of the UK the number of young people self-harming had reached 'almost epidemic' proportions.

Research has suggested that self-harm is most common among 15 to 19-year-olds, and those suffering from anxiety and depression, according to the NHS.

Self-harm is believed to be an expression of personal distress, rather than an illness, but it can be linked to other mental health conditions such as depression.



In some parts of the UK the number of young people self-harming has soared

Mental health charity Mind says: 'According to research, the majority are young women, although the percentage of young men seems to be on the increase.

'Self-harming behaviour is also significant among minority groups discriminated against by society. 'Someone who has mental health problems is more likely to self-harm. 'So are those who are dependent on drugs or alcohol, or who are faced with a number of major life problems, such as being homeless, a single parent, in financial difficulty or otherwise living in stressful circumstances. 'A common factor is often a feeling of helplessness or powerlessness with regard to their emotions.' Bullying can prompt self-harming and social networking sites have become a platform for bullies to round on their peers, which can lead to self-harm in some cases.

In December ChildLine reported that calls relating to self-harming had soared, the BBC said.

There has been a 68 per cent annual increase in contacts to ChildLine over self-harm, mostly from girls.

Sue Minto, head of ChildLine, said that the persistent nature of modern technology - with texting, social networking and websites - meant children found it hard to escape pressures such as bullying.

In October, mental health charity Young Minds found as many as one in 12 young people in the UK carry out self-harm, the BBC reported.

Young Minds found the majority of parents, teachers and GPs did not know how to support those who turn to them for help.

If you are self-harming, you should see your GP for help.

You can also call Samaritans on 08457 90 90 90 for support or visit mental health charity Mind for further advice.

You can also call ChildLine on 0800 1111.