



# HSLC SELF-HARM INFORMATION SHEET

## What is self-harm?

Self-harm is where someone does something deliberately to cause pain or harm to themselves. According to the NSPCC this can include amongst other things - cutting, burning, bruising, poisoning, scratching, hair-pulling or overdosing.

## Why do people self-harm?

Evidence suggests that there are many reasons why people may self-harm. In some cases, this behaviour can be linked with difficult experiences and is a way of coping with something that is happening currently, or has happened previously.

<b>Common identified issues that can lead to self-harm:</b>	<b>Others have described self-harm as a way to</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having low self confidence</li> <li>• Being bullied</li> <li>• Failing or thinking you will fail</li> <li>• Breakdown of relationships</li> <li>• Arguments with family or friends</li> <li>• Losing someone close</li> <li>• Feeling under pressure</li> <li>• Being subject to abuse – physically, emotionally, sexually</li> <li>• Money worries</li> <li>• Confusion about sexuality</li> <li>• Illness or health problems</li> <li>• Difficult feelings, such as depression and anxiety experienced as part of emotional health difficulties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transfer emotional pain into physical pain</li> <li>• Reduce overwhelming feelings</li> <li>• Escape traumatic memories</li> <li>• Express something that is hard to put into words</li> <li>• Make experiences, thoughts or feelings that feel invisible into something visible</li> <li>• Express suicidal thoughts without wanting to take own life</li> <li>• Gain a sense of control in their lives</li> <li>• Communicate that they are experiencing severe distress – a cry for help</li> </ul>

## How many young people self-harm?

It is difficult to estimate the prevalence of self-harm as many young people may not seek support and do not tell anyone they are suffering.

However, it is believed that approximately 10% of young people will self-harm, but the figure is likely to be much higher. Around 90% of young people treated for self-harm in A&E will have taken an overdose. Yet the most favoured method of self-harming is to cut, therefore indicating that many young people have failed to come to the attention of the medical professionals.

## How can you cope with self-harm?

There can be strategies put in place to help you cope with self-harm. A positive way to do this is to try to replace self-harm with other safer, coping strategies.

- Keeping a diary or write down any negative feelings and then rip the paper up
- Finding someone to talk to, such as a close friend or family member

- Telling a member of staff at school
- Writing and drawing your feelings
- Listening to or writing music
- Taking part in exercise such as going for a walk/run
- Try figure out why you self-harm
- Engage with support and agencies who can help
- Visit GP (doctors)
- Go online to a self-help website, chat room, or message board
- Punch a cushion or mattress or scream into your pillow
- Squeeze a stress ball or squish Play-Doh or clay
- Join a club, such as Youth Club or partake in after school activities
- Make some noise (play an instrument, bang on pots and pans)

**It is important that you remember that you are not alone.**

<b>Warning signs</b>	<b>Risk Factors</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signs may include:</li> <li>• Wearing long sleeved clothes at inappropriate times</li> <li>• Unexplained cuts or bruises, or any other injuries</li> <li>• Low mood</li> <li>• Disappearance of sharp objects such as razors, scissors etc.</li> <li>• Change in time spent in bathroom, or on their own</li> <li>• Changes in mood</li> <li>• Low self-esteem and self-worth</li> <li>• Arguments with friends or family</li> <li>• Any negative events that may have initiated these feelings, such as bereavement, abuse, breakdown of relationships etc.</li> <li>• Misuse of alcohol and/or drugs</li> <li>• Changes in eating or sleeping patterns</li> <li>• Withdrawal / social isolation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Childhood experiences</li> <li>• Sexual abuse</li> <li>• Neglect</li> <li>• Emotional abuse</li> <li>• Physical abuse</li> <li>• Loss or separation</li> <li>• Parental mental health problems</li> <li>• Parental substance misuse.</li> </ul> <p><b>Current experiences:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trauma and negative experiences</li> <li>• Rape/sexual abuse</li> <li>• Domestic violence</li> <li>• Psychiatric diagnoses</li> <li>• Low mood</li> <li>• Peer influence</li> <li>• Substance misuse (both alcohol and drugs).</li> </ul>

Not everyone at risk of self-harm will go on to deliberately hurt themselves. However, research suggests that individuals who experience intense and distressing emotions, along with absence of the right kind of emotional support, are more likely use this coping mechanism.

### **Advice for Parents**

1. **DON'T PANIC** - Ensure the young person is safe. If the injury is serious go to A&E immediately. If this is not possible, ask for advice. You could contact NHS 24 on 08454 24 24 24 who are open 24 hours a day. If in injury is minor this wouldn't be necessary.
2. **LISTEN** - Show understanding, empathy and be non-judgemental. Take time to listen to their concerns and help find them different ways of coping
3. **ACT** – Seek support. Some agencies that you can contact for help, advice and support are: Family Doctor (GP) / NHS School Nurse / CAMHS / Young Minds

## Do's and Don'ts

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stay calm and do not show anxiety, disapproval or judgement</li><li>• Listen to the young person and try to understand</li><li>• Reassure the young person that they will be supported</li><li>• Make it clear you cannot guarantee confidentiality- other services need to be made aware</li><li>• Calmly ask questions</li><li>• Seek professional help as soon as possible</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Panic, panicking will not help the young person feel safe</li><li>• Don't be judgemental or refer to it as 'attention seeking'</li><li>• Disregard the young persons thoughts or feelings, or act like you know what they feel more than they do</li><li>• Don't tell them what to do. Some people self harm for control in their lives.</li><li>• Don't work alone. You need to offload to an appropriate person. You may also need to seek professional advice</li><li>• Don't send the young person away, it made have taken some time for them to seek help</li><li>• Don't promise confidentiality, as information will need to be shared</li></ul>

### IF IN DOUBT, SEEK ADVICE Local and National Help and Advice

#### Family GP

**HSLC Child Protection Coordinator / Student Support Team and School Nurse** - 01964 532727

Contact the **East Riding Early Help and Safeguarding Hub (EHaSH)** for advice and signposting to services / support - 01482 393339

**CHILDLINE** - 24 hour helpline for children and young people under 18 providing confidential counselling  
0800 1111 / [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

**YOUNG MINDS** - Information on a range of subjects relevant for young people and their emotional health and wellbeing 0808 8025544 / [www.youngmind.org.uk](http://www.youngmind.org.uk)

**PAPYRUS** - Offers a helpline for anyone who is concerned that a young person is suicidal 0870 170 4000 / [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)

**MIND** - Information on mental health 030 123 3393 / [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

**NSPCC** - [www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/self-harm/email](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/self-harm/email) [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk) / 0808 800 5000

**SAMARITANS** - Confidential emotional support for anybody who is in crisis 08457 90 90 90 / [www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

**The HSLC Self-Harm Policy is available on the school web site - [www.hslc.co.uk](http://www.hslc.co.uk) - and provides further information and advice.**