



Sandbach High School

and Sixth Form College

Our Academy, Our Future

Policy on Preventing Self-Harm in School

Often students throughout the school (Years 7 – 14) are struggling with a wide range of issues and they seek support from a variety of sources. One of the behaviours that staff may come across or hear about is self-harm. This policy has been designed to guide staff in how to best support a young person who might be self-harming.

What is Self-Harm?

Self-harm is an umbrella term to describe a wide range of behaviours. These are split into 2 sub-categories:

Harming Behaviour: Behaviour which could result in long-term harm e.g. over/under eating, drug misuse, binge drinking, and smoking.

Self-Injury: To deliberately harm or injure oneself e.g. cutting, burning, hair pulling, and other acts of self-mutilation.

I think someone is Self-Harming; What Should I Do?

If you suspect that a student is self-harming, where possible you should provide an opportunity for them to disclose their behaviour to you. If you are not comfortable doing this then you may wish to raise your concerns with another person in school such as Rebecca Darlington, Deputy Headteacher, Julie Sercombe or Louise Ford, Nurse Practitioners, or the relevant Achievement Co-ordinator. In the case of a Sixth Former speak to Julie Baines, Head of Sixth Form or Kay Nicholson, Sixth Form Achievement Co-ordinator.

If you do feel confident to do so then the following guidelines may help:

- **Give the student opportunities to disclose**
- **Start conversations that touch on the subject**
- **Be open and responsive**
- **Only ask outright if the nature of your relationship will accommodate it**
- **Don't push; it is still possible to help without disclosure.**

Someone Has Told Me About Their Self-Harming, Who Can I Tell?

All of us have a duty to safeguard young people. The normal working practice after a disclosure of self-harming would be to inform parents/guardians. A professional judgement is to be made by Rebecca Darlington or the Nurse Practitioners where practical as to whether the parents/guardians should or should not be informed. This practice follows current guidance. When working with a young person you need to make them aware that if you have a reason to be concerned for their welfare or the welfare of someone else, as a result of what they tell you, you will need to speak to Rebecca Darlington, Deputy Headteacher, Julie Baines, Head of Sixth Form, Nicki Oyler, Assistant Headteacher, Julie Sercombe and Louise Ford, Nurse Practitioners who all have responsibility for safeguarding. Ideally you need to make the young person aware of this before they disclose anything to you, as it is important that they choose to talk to you knowing what the consequences of this might be.

After a student has spoken to you ask them whether they would like other members of the team to know, so that they can support them as well. Make sure the boundaries of what happens with the information are set with the young person so they do not feel their trust has been broken if they find that another member of the team knows what they have told you.

Someone Has Told Me about Their Self-Harming – What Now?

After a disclosure has been made it's essential you assess the immediate risk the student may be in.

- **Is the young person at immediate risk of themselves (e.g. have they overdosed or are they speaking of an incident that happened several days ago?)**
- **What are they feeling now?**
- **What support do they need to move forwards? What support are they already getting if any?**
- **Going over the incident doesn't change or undo it – how can they manage better next time?**

If you feel the student is at risk of significant harm, or of harming others as a result of what they have told you then please follow the school child protection procedure found in the Staff Handbook.

How Can I Help a Self-Harmer?

The type of support you are able to give a young person who self-harms will depend on your role and the context in which you work with them. If you feel someone needs support but you do not think you are the right person to help them for whatever reason, discuss with the

young person honestly about this and work together to identify someone who they could receive help from. If appropriate speak to the relevant worker or agency to arrange their involvement in supporting the young person.

- **Listen**
Listening is one of the most valuable things you can do it makes people feel empowered and valued.
- **Be honest and consistent**
It's okay not to understand. Be consistent and don't pretend you know everything.
- **Identify emotional group and explore coping methods**
Can they pin point what is driving their behaviour? Can they explore other options?
- **Encourage them to explore the underlying issues**
What has triggered this behaviour?
- **Don't avoid the subject**
If you are too busy to talk don't avoid the subject, arrange another time where you are able to meet with the person to discuss. If you wish to meet with a young person outside of your normal working context then please discuss this with your line manager first. Be realistic about how much support you can give the young person.
- **Don't ask them to stop; it needs to come from them**
Telling someone to stop means you cross the line between becoming professionally and emotionally involved with the situation. Your name gets added to the list of people they feel they are letting down each time they harm.

A Young Person Has Come To Me with a Self-Harm Injury, What Do I Do?

In the event of a self-harm incident where a young person comes to you for assistance **treat the incident as a first aid incident** and resolve the physical issue.

Follow the normal procedure for dealing with first aid incidents.

Once this has been resolved it would be appropriate to find the right time to identify whether the young person wishes to speak about the incident.

Who Else Can Help?

There are services which can support young people who may have a mental health need, or require specific self-harm support. **You are not the only person who can support them**, it is important that they understand the other people and services which may be able to help them. Part of our responsibility is to **signpost** young people to other sources of support and information.

- Their GP

- School Nurse Practitioner
- School Nurse
- School counsellor
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) referral via school or GP
- CAMHS 16-19 Service (referral via school or GP)
- Parent or family member
- Mentor or youth worker
- Visyon www.visyon.org.uk tel:0800 652 6293 (can self-refer)
- www.Kooth.com (on line counselling)
- www.samaritans.org (on line or telephone support)
- Childline 0800 1111

In some circumstances you may feel it is appropriate to make a referral. Young people who fit 4 to 5 of the following may have a more serious underlying mental health condition and it would be advisable to consider a CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health) referral:

- **Inability to maintain functional relationships**
- **High level of anxiety and phobia**
- **Consistently unstable mood – hopelessness, depression etc.**
- **Poor concentration and decision making skills**
- **History of traumatic events**

How Do I Make A Referral to CAMHS?

Referral is by letter, to be undertaken by SLT, ACs, Nurse Practitioner or School Nurse. Parents/Guardians can also make a referral through the child's GP.

What about Me?

We need to be aware that as professionals and people we have our own limitations. Self-harm can be very draining so remember to look after yourself whilst supporting someone else.

- Be **self-aware** – don't get burnt out or take on anything you don't feel comfortable with. Don't let it harm you emotionally.
- Maintain **boundaries** – don't be manipulated, for example it is unrealistic for you to be on call for someone in need all the time.
- Rely on **supervision** and **support** from colleagues and SLT.

I'm Still Not Sure about Something, What Shall I Do Now?

It's natural that you might have lots of questions and worries about self harm. Below are links to further information about the subject of self harm, mental health and safeguarding young people.

Remember that there is someone in school you can talk to, if you can speak to the person that you consider your line manager or a member of SLT or the School Nurse Practitioners.

Further information is available from:

www.selfharm.co.uk

www.youngminds.org.uk