

Self-Harm

A GUIDE FOR
PARENTS & CARERS



Children &
Young People's
Emotional
Wellbeing Plan

2020

Health and Wellbeing
SUFFOLK



 **Suffolk**
County Council

This guide has been produced for parents and carers of young people that self-harm. It is designed to provide helpful information and suggestions at a time when parents and carers may feel confused, powerless or uncertain about how to make sense of their child's self-harming. This guide will provide an understanding of what to do and how to get help quickly that will support recovery.

It includes information on the nature and causes of self-harm, how to support a young person who is using self-harm as a means of coping with life and other sources of help that might be available.

WHAT IS SELF HARM?

Self-harm is when someone does something to intentionally hurt themselves, often as a way of expressing deep distress of a kind that they sometimes cannot put into words or even clear thoughts.

Self-harm could include hair-pulling, repeated scab picking or scratching the skin. It could also include life-threatening injury such as deep cutting parts of the body. Self harm can also be seen as risky behaviours and Eating Disorders too.

OVERDOSES

In the event that your child takes an overdose they should attend a hospital Accident and Emergency Department as quickly as possible.

Try to find out what they have taken and tell emergency medical staff. If your child won't tell you, look around for empty bottles or packets.

COMMON FORMS OF SELF HARM

- injuring oneself by scratching, cutting or burning the skin
- hitting oneself against objects
- taking a drug overdose
- swallowing substances or objects
- Eating Disorders

You may experience shock, disbelief and confusion to find that your child is self-harming, along with a multitude of other feelings including anger, guilt and anxiety. These reactions are commonplace and natural, but what the person you care about really needs is support from you.

Your child needs you to stay calm and to listen and help them cope with very difficult feelings that build up and cannot easily be expressed. They need to find a less harmful way of coping. Seeking professional advice (for example, from your GP initially) can be beneficial.

Getting the help promptly will support the issue around self harm and is key to a quicker recovery.

You can gain support from the:

- **Emotional Wellbeing Hub** - for advice about children's wellbeing and mental health services if you live in East & West Suffolk.
- **Ormiston Families Point 1 Service** - for advice about children's wellbeing and mental health services if you live in the Lowestoft and Waveney area.
- **Wellbeing Service** - for support and self-help advice on common emotional wellbeing issues, such as low mood, anxiety, depression or stress.

Why do Young People Self-Harm?

WHY DO YOUNG PEOPLE SELF-HARM?

Many different events or situations can trigger self-harm, including:

- family tensions or arguments
- concern over, or break-up of, a relationship
- bullying at school
- feeling under pressure to achieve
- anxiety about exams
- the desire to fit in with and be accepted by a group of friends
- the need to feel a sense of control when other things in life might feel very much out of control
- feeling neglected or isolated
- experiences of physical violence, emotional or sexual abuse
- a bereavement

Young people who have social or emotional problems or a low sense of self-worth can be particularly at risk from self-harm.

It is important to recognise that people typically self-harm as a way of coping with feelings of stress and distress in their lives and that self-harming can therefore be viewed as a symptom of their underlying problems.

Sometimes young people may try to escape these problems by using drugs or alcohol; this however may make the situation worse.

Some people use the same type of self-harm all the time, others hurt themselves in a variety of ways at different times. It's usually a way of coping with or expressing overwhelming emotional distress. Although some people who self-harm are at a higher risk of suicide, many people who self-harm don't want to end their lives¹.

Further information on Self-harm can be found on the NHS Choices website: www.nhs.uk/conditions/self-harm

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

- Be gently curious if you notice cuts or injuries and most importantly, listen to them
- Take their self-harm seriously but try not to let it become the focus of your relationship with your child
- Try not to be judgemental, dismissive or to make assumptions about why they self-harm
- Stay calm, be sensitive and thoughtful
- Let your child know their emotions are real and important
- Ask the young person how they are feeling and what you can do to help
- Help the young person by problem solving together
- Give things time.

Helplines, Support and Online Information

Emotional Wellbeing Hub

Call 0345 600 2090 or Visit

www.emotionalwellbeinggateway.org.uk

If you are concerned about the mental health of a child or young person. (Weekdays, 8am-7.30pm)

Ormiston Families - Point 1 Service

Call 0800 977 4077 or Visit www.point-1.org.uk

Emotional wellbeing problems for those based in the Lowestoft and Waveney area.

(Weekdays 8am-7pm, Sat 8am-1pm)

Wellbeing Service

Call 0300 123 1503 or Visit

www.wellbeingnands.co.uk/suffolk/

Wellbeing Suffolk offer help and support to improve peoples wellbeing and manage stress, low mood and anxiety. (9am-5pm)

Emotional Wellbeing Gateway

www.emotionalwellbeinggateway.org.uk

Information, advice and guidance for parents and carers on common mental health issues in children and young people.

SENDIASS

www.suffolksendiass.co.uk

Suffolk SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service) provides confidential and impartial information, advice and support on issues related to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).

Kooth

www.kooth.com

A free online counselling and emotional wellbeing support service for young people.

Suffolk Family Carers

www.suffolkfamilycarers.org

Available 7 days a week to provide Information, Advice and Guidance on how to access the services available.

PACT

www.parentsandcarerstogether.co.uk

Parent and Carer Together supports parents and carers of children and young people with mental illness, diagnosed or not; empowering and advising with experience and empathy.

Suffolk Parent Carer Network

www.spcn.org.uk

Voluntary organisation of parents and carers of children and young people with additional needs and/or disabilities in Suffolk.

Suffolk Young People's Health Project (4YP)

www.4yp.org.uk

local charity, which provides and coordinates services that improve the social, emotional, and physical health and wellbeing of young people in Suffolk, aged 12-25.

The Source - for young people

www.thesource.me.uk/wellbeing

Information, advice and support for young people in Suffolk on a range of health and wellbeing topics.

ChatHealth Service

Available to young people throughout Suffolk aged 11-19, to text a Suffolk school nurse to ask for confidential health advice. Text: 07507 333356 (Weekdays, 9.30am to 4.30pm).

HELPLINES, SUPPORT AND ONLINE INFORMATION:

www.youngminds.org.uk

(Parents Helpline: 0808 802 5544)

www.papyrus-uk.org (0800 068 41 41)

www.samaritans.org (freephone: 116 123)

www.mind.org.uk

(Info line: tel. 0300 123 3393 or text: 86463)

www.childline.org.uk (0800 1111)

www.rethink.org

www.harmless.org.uk

www.selfharm.co.uk

www.lifesigns.org.uk

www.familylives.org.uk

www.thewishcentre.org.uk

www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk