



Self-Harm Policy

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1. Introduction

Students across all year groups (Years 7–13) may face a wide range of issues and seek support from different sources. One of the behaviours staff may come across or hear about is self-harm. This policy provides guidance to staff on how to best support a young person who may be self-harming.

2. Definition of Self-Harm

Self-harm is an umbrella term covering a range of behaviours, broadly divided into two categories:

- **Harming Behaviour:** Actions that may result in long-term harm (e.g., over/under-eating, drug misuse, binge drinking, smoking).
- **Self-Injury:** Deliberate acts of physical harm or injury (e.g., cutting, burning, hair pulling, self-mutilation).

3. Responding to Concerns

3.1 Suspecting Self-Harm

If you suspect a student may be self-harming:

- Provide an opportunity for them to disclose if you feel able.
- If not, raise concerns with the Safeguarding Team, Pastoral Team, or a trusted adult.

Guidelines if engaging directly with the student:

- Give opportunities to disclose.
- Start gentle conversations around the subject.
- Be open and responsive.
- Only ask directly if your relationship allows it.
- Avoid pushing; support can still be given without disclosure.

3.2 Disclosure of Self-Harm

If a student discloses self-harm:

- Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy, who will decide whether parents/carers should be informed, in line with current guidance.
- Make students aware that if safeguarding concerns arise, the information must be shared with the Safeguarding Team.
- Where possible, explain this before disclosure, so the young person understands the boundaries.
- Ask the student if they consent to others in the team knowing, to allow wider support.
- Set clear boundaries to maintain trust.

3.3 After Disclosure

Assess immediate risk:

- Is there an urgent medical risk (e.g., overdose, recent incident)?
- How is the student feeling now?
- What support do they need to move forward?
- What support are they already receiving?

If the student is at risk of significant harm (to themselves or others), follow the school child protection procedure.

4. Supporting a Young Person Who Self-Harms

The type of support depends on your role and relationship with the student. If you are not the right person to help:

- Discuss this openly with the student.
- Identify another appropriate support person or agency.

General approaches:

- Listen – Make them feel valued and empowered.
- Be honest and consistent – It's okay not to know all the answers.
- Explore coping methods – Identify triggers and alternative strategies.
- Encourage reflection – Help them consider underlying causes.
- Don't avoid the subject – If unavailable, arrange another time.
- Don't demand they stop – Change must come from them.

5. Responding to Self-Harm Injuries

If a young person presents with a self-harm injury:

- Treat it as a first aid incident following school first aid procedures.
- Once safe, consider whether the student wishes to talk about the incident at a later stage. Inform DSL immediately.
- For further information see Appendix 1 and 2.

6. External Support Services

Staff should signpost young people to relevant support, including:

- GP
- School Nurse
- Counsellor or mental health practitioner
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) referral via school or GP
- CAMHS 16–19 Service
- Parents or family members
- Mentor or youth worker
- Visyon – www.visyon.org.uk / Tel: 0800 652 6293 (self-referral available)
- Kooth – www.kooth.com (online counselling)
- Samaritans – www.samaritans.org (online/telephone support)
- Childline – 0800 1111

7. Referral to CAMHS

A referral may be considered if the young person shows 4-5 of the following:-

- Difficulty maintaining functional relationships
- High anxiety or phobias
- Consistently unstable mood (hopelessness, depression, etc)
- Poor concentration or decision-making
- History of traumatic events

Referral process:-

- Completed via CAMHS referral form by SLT, DSLs or Pastoral Leaders
- Parents/Guardians can also refer via GP

8. Safeguarding

Where the nature or extent of self-harm raises safeguarding concerns, additional measures may be necessary.

This may include:

- Guidance from external agencies (e.g. KCSIE – Keeping Children Safe in Education).
- A risk assessment (considering risk, those affected, likelihood of harm, and control measures).
- Sharing the risk assessment with parents/carers, the students, and relevant agencies.

9. Staff Wellbeing

Supporting students who self-harm can be emotionally demanding. Staff should:

- Be self-aware – avoid burnout and acknowledge personal limits.
- Maintain professional boundaries – avoid being available on-call.
- Seek support and supervision from colleagues and SLT.

10. Further Guidance

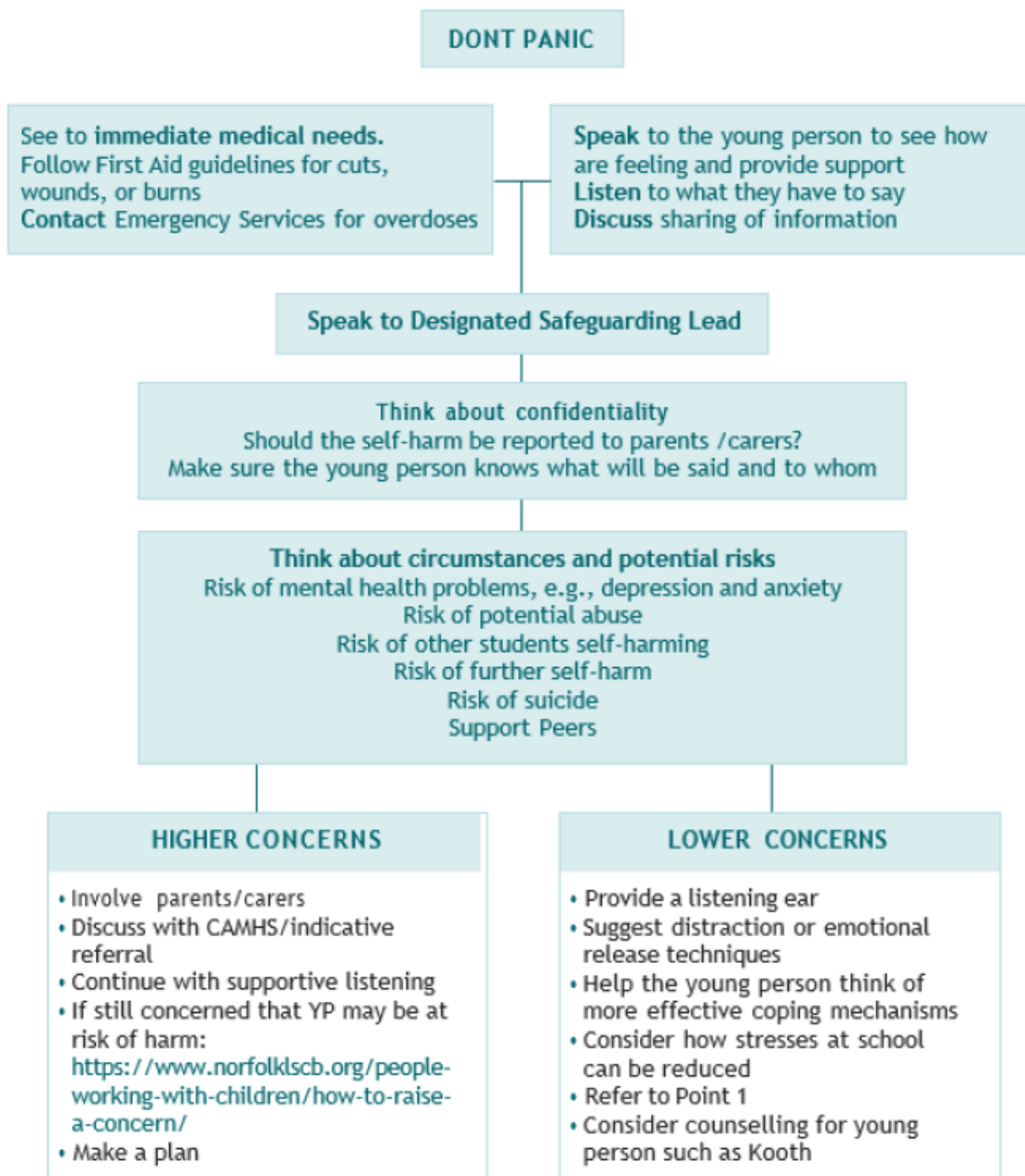
For more information:

- www.selfharm.co.uk
- www.youngminds.org.uk
- Calm Harm App

If in doubt, speak to your line manager, DSL or a member of SLT.

Appendix 1: Sample Flowchart

Self-harm at school: What to do?



Based on young people who self-harm: A guide for school staff (2018)

NSCP guidance: <https://norfolkscp.org.uk/people-working-with-children/how-to-raise-a-concern>

Appendix 2: Conversation tips about self-harm

These may be helpful questions or statements:

“You must be feeling very upset about something. I’d like to help if I can; would it help to talk about what’s troubling you?”

“I wonder if you’re using self-harm as a way of coping with something that is troubling you?”

“I wonder what are the sorts of things that make you feel like harming yourself?”

“Sometimes people self-harm as a way of managing strong and difficult feelings or emotions. I’m wondering if that might be why you hurt yourself?”

“I know that people self-harm for many different reasons and that they often experience a range of different emotions. I wonder if you are able to help me understand what leads you to self-harm?”

“It can feel that self-harm is the only way to cope, but there are other ways. Can I show you some leaflets/websites that suggest helpful ways of coping?”

“Before you go I’d like to give you some information about people you can contact if you feel like self-harming again.”

https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/docs/default-source/improving-care/nccmh/suicide-prevention/wave-1-resources/young-people-who-self-harm-a-guide-for-school-staff.pdf?sfvrsn=e6ebf7ca_2

Conversation prompts about coping strategies and support:

“Is there anything that you find helpful to distract you when you are feeling like self-harming? Perhaps listening to music, playing on your phone, texting a friend, spending time with your family, reading or going for a walk? “

“I can see that things feel very difficult for you at the moment and I’m glad that you have felt able to talk to me. Is there anyone else that you have found helpful to talk to before or is there anyone that you think maybe good to talk to? How would you feel about letting them know what’s going on for you at the moment? “

“How could we make things easier for you at school? “

“What feels like it is causing you the most stress at the moment?”

“What do you think would be most helpful? “

[Managing Self-harm](#) – download a practical guide and toolkit for schools (reference Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly)