

# Safeguarding 7 minute briefing: Self-harm

## Responding to an incident

If you discover or are informed about suspected or actual self-harm:

- \*Deal with medical requirements
- \*Talk to the child/ young person and **inform designated safeguarding lead**
- \*Continue conversation and log incident

## What is self-harm?

The term “self-harm” describes a wide range of behaviours. It can be seen as an intentional act of damaging or injuring one’s body, irrespective of apparent motivation. It is usually a way of expressing or coping with overwhelming emotional distress. Self-harm is not a new phenomenon, but it appears to be growing in frequency. Whilst both teenagers and adults, male and female, self-harm, it is most prevalent in teenage girls. However, boys who self-harm tend to cause more damage to themselves

## Signs of self-harm cont...

\*blood stains on clothing, or finding tissues with blood in their room \*becoming withdrawn and spending a lot of time alone in their room \*avoiding friends and family and being at home \*feeling down, low self-esteem or blaming themselves for things \*outbursts of anger, or risky behaviour like drinking or taking drugs.

## Signs of self-harm

It can be hard to recognise the signs of self-harm in children and teenagers. Signs to look out for can include:

- \*covering up, for example by wearing long sleeves a lot of the time, especially in summer
- \*unexplained bruises, cuts, burns or bite-marks on their body



## Forms of self-harm

Some more well-known forms of self-harm include cutting, burning or pinching, but there are many forms of self-harm, including drug and alcohol abuse or struggling with an eating disorder.

## Why do children and teenagers self-harm?

The reasons children and teenagers can self-harm are often complicated and will be different for every child or young person. Sometimes a child or teenager may not know the reasons they self-harm. For many young people, self-harm can feel like a way to cope with difficult feelings or to release tension.

## Why do children and teenagers self-harm? cont.....

The physical pain of hurting themselves can feel like a distraction from the emotional pain they're struggling with. Some difficult experiences or emotions can make self-harm more likely in children: \* experiencing depression, \* anxiety or eating problems \*having low self-esteem or feeling like they're not good enough \*being bullied or feeling alone \*experiencing emotional, \*physical or sexual abuse, or neglect \*grieving or having problems with family relationships \*feeling angry, numb or like they don't have control over their lives.

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