



MANCHESTER  
CITY COUNCIL

# **Looked After Children Multi-Agency**

**GUIDELINES FOR FOSTER CARERS,  
PROSPECTIVE ADOPTERS AND SUPPORTED  
LODGINGS PROVIDERS FOR SUPPORTING  
LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND YOUNG  
PEOPLE WHO SELFHARM**

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## **SELF HARM THE VOICE OF YOUNG PEOPLE**

**“When I cut myself things which are overwhelming in your daily life aren’t, just for five minutes, or an hour, however long.”**

**“Everything like big situations, exams, boyfriend, and the bastard that can’t go to prison became far less important. A few hours break and I may sleep for, a few hours.”**

**“A way of putting situations “on hold” I suppose in a way it got me through the exams because it was a way of not thinking about stuff what’s happened, the situations, because the more I cut the less I think about it, that definitely true. I didn’t want to think about it at all. After a few months, once I wasn’t thinking about it so I didn’t need to cut as much to stop me thinking about it.”**

**“I just wanted to be warm and blank, to go to sleep and stay there. I just wanted to go to sleep until things were different. I don’t know until when or whatever.”**

**“I started cutting I found it ok so did it more but I was careful, it wasn’t suicide more the opposite, it was more wanting to stop it ending up in suicide. To keep you in check, to keep you going.”**

**“It’s like a mad feeling in your stomach, it’s like pressure all building up and if you don’t release it out, you would, I don’t know blow up.”**

**“Cutting myself creates a haven, just a pain instead of actual feelings. Thinking about it or doing something about it is more painful than actually doing it.”**

**“Doing it is painful but not really painful; thinking about it was the worst thing, that’s more painful so that’s why I do it again because it’s less painful than thinking about it.”**

**“I think the physical has a lot to do with it taking the pain away what’s in your head, and transferring it to your body.”**

**“Usually it doesn’t hurt but I remember once I felt it hurt, but the physical pain sort of took over the emotional hurt, so I suppose it sort of counteracted it.”**

**“With the cutting sometimes like when I’m feeling totally “off it” I just don’t know what to say I find it easier just to cut up.”**

**“It’s like absolute power seeing the blood coming out mopping it up with tissues and throwing it away is like throwing away the badness.”**

**“When I overdose just to get out of it I’ve usually told somebody that I have taken too many tablets. People don’t understand that, they think I’ve taken an overdose then you want to kill yourself, but sometimes its not, in my case its not.”**

**Ref: Who’s Hurting Who?  
Helen Spandle**

# UNDERSTANDING SELF-HARM

## DEFINITION

- Intentional injury to self.
- Includes “overdosing”, hitting, cutting or burning oneself, pulling hair, pricking skin, self strangulation, biting.
- Most who self harm do not report the desire to die although their self harming may result in accidental death.
- Extreme risk taking behaviour which is detrimental to the health and well-being of the individual should always be considered as possible self-harm behaviour.

**Always take the child seriously – act - “never do nothing”  
Lord Laming’s recommendation)**

## FACTS AROUND SELF-HARMING

- Self-harming is an indicator that something is wrong (distressing) and should always be taken seriously.
- Even if the injury from self-harm is slight, this does not mean you should not be concerned.
- Injuries and overdosing always needs emergency treatment and assessments.
- Do not just concentrate on the injury; try to look at the underlying causes.
- Afterwards, when the young person is safe and more settled ask: “what else is going on in this young person’s life which may have triggered the self-harm?”

## HOW COMMON IS SELF-HARMING?

- It is difficult to estimate the precise numbers of young people who self-harm as it often remains hidden.
- Some estimates indicate 1 in 10 teenagers Self-harm.
- Health professionals only see a small proportion of the true number – 190,000 cases; between 10–19 are referred to hospital each year (this is a national figure).

## MEANINGS OF SELF-HARMING

- There are many meanings behind self-harming and we should be cautious of generalisations.
- Self-harming should not be seen as attention-seeking behaviour. The question is why are they seeking this attention?

Self-harming may be a way for the young person to:

- Cope with difficult feelings/distract from negative thoughts
- Express their anger or feelings of self-worth
- A response to the effects of previous trauma and abuse
- Cope with being isolated and having no-one to talk to
- Feel more connected or alive, give them a “buzz” offering temporarily relief
- A response to being made to conform at school, home or within families

## YOUNG PEOPLE AND SELF-HARMING

- ❑ Self-harming may become a way to achieve control in an otherwise uncontrollable environment – a way to express feelings of powerlessness and lack of self-worth.
- ❑ .Although groups of young people known to each other may be influenced by others self-harming, foster cares should not necessarily consider this behaviour as copying.
- ❑ Many people who self-harm have been abused. However, not all people who have been abused self-harm – there **may** be a link but it may not always be the cause.
- ❑ Some young people manage trauma by numbing their feelings or emotionally cutting themselves off from the world. – Self-harming becomes a means to feel connected to reality and of coping...
- ❑ Young people may go to great lengths to conceal their self-harm.

## HOW CAN WE RESPOND TO YOUNG PEOPLE WHO SELF-HARM?

**For all incidents immediately secure the young persons safety and seek medical attention if necessary.**

**Telephone 999 for Emergency Services or NHS Direct on 0845 4647 for advice**

When you have assessed the situation and the young person is calmer or while you are waiting for services to arrive, inform the social worker, your supervising social worker or the Emergency Duty Service (If out of hours):

**Telephone 0161 234 5001**

- ❑ The reaction a young person receives when they disclose their self-harming can have an influence on whether they go on to accept support or treatment services.
- ❑ Acknowledge your own feelings and limitations. If you are not sure how to respond in an appropriate way reassure this young person you will find someone who will help them.

When talking to the young person:

- Be honest about who you are going to involve or call.
- Avoid being judgemental, blaming or dismissive.
- Offer Compassion and respect.
- Let them know that self-injury is okay to talk about and can be understood.
- Help them to avoid feeling guilty.
- Treat the injury in an appropriate way– remembering to be sensitive and supportive to the young person at all times.
- Listen to them- they may want to talk about aspects of their life other than self-harming.
- Discover means for future attempts i.e. access to drugs, blades etc

## WHAT TO DO NEXT

- ❑ The Young Person should be seen by the Social Worker within 24 hours of the self-harm being notified.
- ❑ The onus is on the social worker or duty worker to agree the degree of urgency they may need to consult with others for support and guidance.

It is the young person's social worker's responsibility to inform all relevant personnel and arrange a multi-agency strategy meeting. Health professionals and a suitably qualified adolescent psychiatric specialist with access to the Legal Department should always be invited.

Ask the social worker or your supervising social worker for guidance on coping strategies to help the young person to manage the urge to self-harm. These strategies may be discussed and agreed at the strategy meeting.

## **SELF HARM ADVICE FOR ALL PROFESSIONALS AND CARERS**

### **SAFETY**

- Make sure the young person and others around the young person including members of your family are safe; there may be blades or glass around.
- Try not to panic.
- Give the young person something to treat the injury with e.g. bandage or bandage the wound yourself. All foster carers should fully comply with blood guidance policy when dealing with spillages of body fluids; this includes wearing disposable gloves when dealing with cuts or blood spillages of any sort. Appropriate training should be available.
- Ensure safe disposal of self-harming objects such as, blades etc by wrapping any sharp pieces in protective covering and dispose of them safely.
- All overdoses or suspected overdoses are considered an emergency regardless of the young person's presentation and require an emergency assessment at Accident and Emergency
- If unsure ask for advice from the GP or NHS Direct – 0845 4647 or your supervising social worker.
- Consider your own family's health and safety in these circumstances in addition to the safe care of the young person.
- Any diagnosis of a blood borne viruses, such as Hepatitis and HIV will need to be taken into consideration and responded to appropriately and safely

**MULTI-AGENCY GUIDELINES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE WHO SELF-HARM THEIR CARERS AND PROFESSIONALS**

**YOUNG PERSON HAS SELF-HARMED**

**URGENT**

**NON URGENT**

**HAS THE YOUNG PERSON....**

- Ingested harmful liquids
- Cuts that are deep and or bleed profusely
- Burns that are blistering and red
- Taken overdose
- Swelling that is painful or looks worrying

**ARE YOU UNSURE**

**HAS THE YOUNG PERSON...**

Superficial

- Burn
- Bruises
- Scratches
- Cuts

**URGENT MEDICAL ATTENTION REQUIRED CONSIDER:**

- Emergency First Aid
- 999/Ambulance
- A & E Urgently

**ALWAYS INFORM:**

- Social Worker – if not available - Team Manager/ Emergency Duty Service

**IS MEDICAL ATTENTION REQUIRED - CONSIDER:**

- First Aid
- GP
- NHS Direct
- School Nurse/LAC Nurse
- A & E
- Walk in Centre
- Offer support and refer as required (The severity of injury does not always reflect the level of concern)

A & E  
Self-harming Protocol  
Mental Health Assessment  
By Psychiatrist on call

**SOCIAL WORKER INFORMS:**

- Relevant Professionals/ Parents and oversees the multi-agency strategy meeting.
- The YP should be visited within 24 hrs of notification

- Referral following the incident to CTLAC or other support agencies
- Follow up/Involvement.
- For a leaving care YP consider a referral to Barnardo's Counselling Service
- UASC refer to CT/LAC or other relevant agencies

**CAMHS/CTLAC**  
Follow up/Involvement  
Counselling

The social Worker co-ordinates the e multi-agency strategy meeting within 10 working days

**ACTION PLANS AND REVIEW TIMESCALES SHOULD BE INCLUDED**

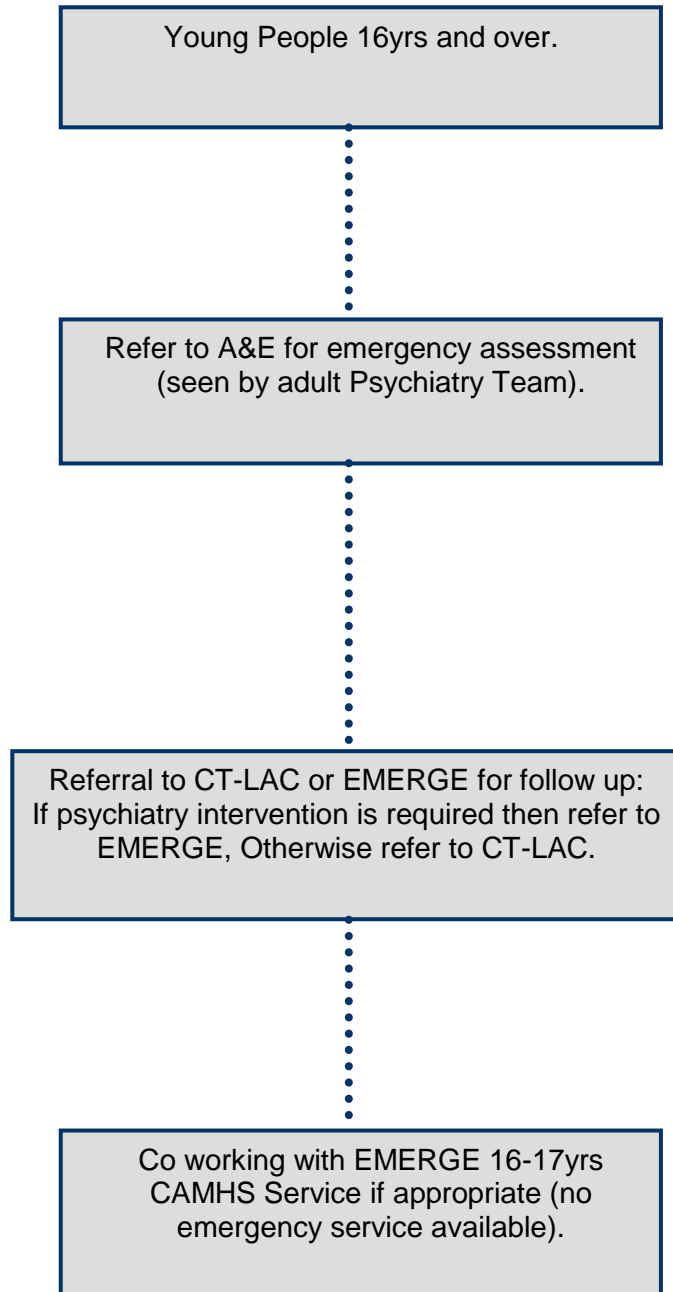
This meeting should always include health professionals  
A representative of child and adolescent psychiatry and access to legal department

**If CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service) follow up not available- SW must refer to CT LAC (Child Therapeutic Services for Looked After Children) for advice**

**LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S REVIEW**  
Must be aware if young person self-harms and check that current self-harming care plans are in place

# CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE

## MULTI-AGENCY GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONALS AND CARERS WHERE LAC/YP 16 TO 17 YEAR OLDS HAVE SELF HARMED.



- If a YP presents with an emergency and is not known to CAMHS, then emergency response is CAMHS on call if under 16 years, or adult services if over 16 years.
- If YP is known to CAMHS then the clinician involved will try to see the YP, when this is not possible the YP will be referred to CAMHS on call.
- If a YP is known to Emerge only and presents with an emergency they will need to be seen by adult services as Emerge do not provide an emergency service.

**NB: Further changes are anticipated 1<sup>st</sup> meeting Sept 10. Review date of document Dec 10.**



# INFORMATION/ADVICE/SUPPORT

## WEBSITES

### General sites with sections on Self-Harm

- ❑ Young Minds – for Children’s Mental Health  
[www.youngminds.org/selfharm/y1.php](http://www.youngminds.org/selfharm/y1.php)
- ❑ NCH – The Children’s Charity  
[www.nch.org.uk/selfharm](http://www.nch.org.uk/selfharm)
- ❑ Radio One life  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio1/onelife/health/healthy\\_mind/selfharm.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio1/onelife/health/healthy_mind/selfharm.shtml)

### Specific Sites on Self Harm

- ❑ Recover your life.com  
[www.recoveryourlife.com](http://www.recoveryourlife.com)
- ❑ Young People and Self Harm  
[www.selfharm.org.uk/default.aspa](http://www.selfharm.org.uk/default.aspa)
- ❑ The National Self Harm Network  
[www.nshn.co.uk](http://www.nshn.co.uk)
- ❑ Secret Shame – Self Injury information & support  
[www.palace.net/llama/psych/injury.html](http://www.palace.net/llama/psych/injury.html)
- ❑ SIARA – Self Injury and Related Issues  
[www.siari.co.uk](http://www.siari.co.uk)

### Support Sites

- ❑ The Samaritans  
[www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

## BOOKS

### Factual Books

- ❑ Who’s Hurting Who? – Young People, Self Harm and Suicide  
Helen Spandler – 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, 2003  
ISBN: 1903199140
- ❑ The Language of Injury – Comprehending Self-Mutilation  
Gloria Babiker and Lois Arnold, BPS Books, 2001  
ISBN: 1854332341

## Self Help Books

- The Self-Harm Help Book  
Lois Arnold and Anne Magill – Contact The Basement Project at 01873 856524 or go online at:  
<http://www.basementproject.co.uk/publications.html>
- The Rainbow Journal for Young People Who Self Injure  
Bristol Crisis Service for Women  
ISBN: 0953134881

## Novels

- Cut  
Patricia Mc Cormick, Collins flamingo, 2002  
ISBN: 0007130317

## LEAFLETS

### Downloadable/Printable Leaflets

- Understanding Self Harm – produced by Mind – written by Diane Harrison  
<http://www.mind.org.uk/Information/Booklets/Understanding/Understanding+self-harm.htm>
- Self Harm – the facts. Produced by the Basement Project  
[http://www.basementproject.co.uk/fs\\_selfharm.html](http://www.basementproject.co.uk/fs_selfharm.html)
- Worried about self injury? Produced by Young Minds aimed at mainly under 19's  
<http://www.youngminds.org.uk/publications/booklets/selfinjury.php>
- Deliberate Self Harm in Young People. Produced by the Royal College of Psychiatrists – mainly about under 18's  
<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinformation/mentalhealthandgrowingup/26self-harminyoungpeople.aspx>

## HELPLINES

- 42<sup>nd</sup> Street      0161 832 0710      Open 12.30pm – 4.30pm  
    Mon-Fri
- The Samaritans 0345 90 90 90      24 Hours
- Childline      0800 1111      24 Hours – for Under 18's
- Crisisline      0808 808 2007-01-26      Open 8.00pm – 12.00
- Contact Centre 0161 255 8250      Out of hours

**UPDATE October 2011**



**MANCHESTER FAMILY PLACEMENT SERVICE**

<b>Title of Policy or Procedure</b>	<p><b>LAC Multi-agency Guidelines for Foster Carers, Prospective Adopters and Supported Lodgings Providers for Supporting Children and Young People who Self-harm</b></p> <p><b>Review of : “Self-harming Guidelines for Foster Carers, Supported Lodgings Providers and Prospective Adopters” Dec 2008</b></p>
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<b>Purpose</b>	Inform foster carers, prospective adopters and supported lodgings providers on how to care for and respond appropriately to children and young people who self harm. (Review Document)		
<b>Scope</b>	All foster carers, supervising social workers, supported lodgings workers and team managers		
<b>Appendices</b>	None		
<b>Responsibilities</b>	Team Managers and supervising social workers/supported lodgings workers to ensure foster carers and supported lodgings are informed and understand the guidance.		
<b>Contact:</b>	<b>Viv Lyons</b>		
<b>Author:</b>	<b>Viv Lyons</b>	<b>Date completed:</b>	<b>December 2008</b>
<b>Position</b>	<b>Policy Officer</b>	<b>Date of Review:</b>	<b>12<sup>th</sup> January 2012</b>
<b>Signature</b>	Vj Lyons	<b>Date of Review:</b>	

<b>Related Policies and Procedures</b>	<b>LAC Multi-agency “Guidelines for Supporting Looked /After Children and Other Children/ Young People who Self-harm” – October 2010</b>		
<b>Procedure Approved By:</b>			
<b>All Team Managers on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2011 at Team Manager’s Meeting</b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>Joanna Waterhouse</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Head of Service</b>
<b>Signature</b>	J Waterhouse	<b>Date 26/01/2011</b>	
<b>Circulation:</b>	<b>Date</b>		<b>Date</b>
<b>SSW/TMs</b>			
<b>Children’s Manual/smasters</b>			

