



# Understanding Self Harm: information and advice for parents & carers

## Introduction

This leaflet provides advice and information for parents and carers who are concerned that their child, or the person they care for, may be self-harming. It has been produced by CASY in conjunction with North and West Locality Management Groups.



## **What is Self Harm?**

Self harm (sometimes known as self injury) can describe any act through which a person deliberately hurts themselves. This could include hitting themselves or hitting a wall, disrupted eating patterns, cutting, overdosing, burning or poisoning.

## **How might you feel?**

Discovering that the child you care for is self harming can create a range of strong emotional responses within you. You may feel confused, shocked, scared or angry. You may take their behaviour personally, feeling as though you have let them down in some way. Talking about self harm can be difficult, and you may fear bringing it up. If your child is self harming you may fear that they are feeling suicidal. While there is little evidence to support this, self harm is an indication that something may be wrong and it needs to be taken seriously.

## **Why do people self harm?**

There are many reasons why a person might self harm, and it is important to remember that the self harm is a sign that something deeper needs to be addressed. In most cases, self harm is not a suicide attempt but is instead a way of coping with or expressing their emotions. It is a way for a person to exert control when they perhaps feel they have little elsewhere in their life. They may be struggling with an event or experience such as bullying, bereavement or stress; or they may be experiencing low self esteem, depression or anxiety.

## What can you do?

**Don't tell them to stop!** Don't take their tools away—they will always find something and it will not change their feelings or urges to hurt themselves

**Tell your child that you love them** and reassure them that whatever, they are important

**Help them work to stay clean,** offer first aid or seek medical attention as necessary

**Listen,** however painful it may be

**Try to understand,** look on the internet for more information

**Keep calm;** although it is hard, you will need to try and put your feelings to one side for now, and focus on their needs

**Remember, as parents you are learning,** it's not easy and we all need support at times

**Seek professional support** for both them and you

## Support

There are a number of specialist services you can access for both you and the young person you care for. These often offer support and information to both the person who is self harming and the people who are supporting them and can be accessed in a variety of ways.

### CASY:

[www.casy.org.uk](http://www.casy.org.uk)

CASY provides counselling for children and young people throughout Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire and training for those who support them.

### YoungMinds:

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

Young person's emotional and mental health charity who provide information and support for parents.

Parents' Helpline: 0808 802 5544

### Self Harm:

[www.selfharm.co.uk](http://www.selfharm.co.uk)

Self Harm offers support, information and advice for young people and their carers who are experiencing self harm in their

### Harmless:

[www.harmless.org.uk](http://www.harmless.org.uk)

Harmless was set up in 2007 and provides information, training and consultancy on self harm.

**Local Support:** Your GP may also be able to help.



[www.casy.org.uk](http://www.casy.org.uk)



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