

Safeguarding News

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Self-Injury

What to do if you are concerned about deliberate self-injury?

Aims: Basic guidance to advise staff if they have concerns over a student who may be deliberately injuring themselves in the Academy or at home.

Objectives:

1. Recognising deliberate self-injury – what is it?
2. Identifying why someone may wish to injure themselves deliberately.
3. Responding in a reasonable way to safeguard the student and yourself.

What is deliberate self-injury? Examples may include; cutting; scratching; burning; banging; bruising; hitting themselves; substance abuse; overdosing.

These are the most likely we encounter at school, however there are more complex and dangerous forms of self-injury that will need to be brought to the attention of the Safeguarding team immediately, such as restrictive eating.

At times deliberate self-injury is obvious, for example cutting, but it can also be concealed. Subtle changes in behaviour may indicate deliberate self-harm, warning signs include: **sudden changes in peers groups; dramatic changes in academic engagement; attendance; apparent changes in mood or attitude.**

Is deliberate self-injury “attention seeking”? Deliberate self-injury is more complicated than using a term like “attention seeking”. It may well be a cry for help, a way to communicate distress or an inability to deal with their current situation. **Every incident of deliberate self-injury must be taken seriously.**

A young person who is deliberately self-injuring will be experiencing emotional difficulties or distress. By taking incidents seriously and working as a team to investigate a young person’s situation this may allow us to provide internal and external support that may reduce the risk of more serious harm.

Why young people deliberately self-injure.

- Bereavement.
- Trauma.
- Bullying.
- Abuse.
- Relationship difficulties.
- Struggling to cope at school or home.
- Students who self-injure will be experiencing low self-esteem and/ or low mood.

Remember: Young people are complicated, avoid making snap judgements about what is happening in a young person's life.

What to do if you have any concerns.

What to do:	What not to do:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stay calm.• Take it seriously.• Find a quiet place to listen.• Ask a few gentle questions: "Do you feel able to talk to me about what's going on?", "What do you need right now?"• Convey the message that there are people in school who can help.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ignore it.• Tell them not to do it.• Make them feel judged or blamed in anyway.• Talk over them.• Panic.• Shout or startle the young person.

Every incident of deliberate self-injury must be taken seriously and recorded on CPOMS.
