



Beamont Collegiate Academy

SELF-HARM POLICY

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Signature of Chair to the BFP committee	L Waterson
Signature of Academy Principal	A Moorcroft
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1:0 Introduction

Beamont Collegiate Academy High School is fully committed to Safeguarding young people from harm. This policy is intended to give rationale, procedures and further guidance for all staff both teaching and non – teaching to support pupils who do self-harm.

Recent research indicates that about one in ten young people in the UK engage in self-harming behaviours, and that this figure is higher amongst specific populations, including young people with special educational needs.

School staff can play an important role in preventing self-harm and also in supporting students, peers and parents of students currently engaging in self-harm.

2:0 Aims: of the Policy

- To increase understanding and awareness of self-harm
- To alert staff to warning signs and risk factors
- To provide support to staff dealing with students who self-harm
- To provide fixed procedures and guidance for staff working with children and their families of children who do self-harm.

3:0 Definition of Self-Harm

Self-harm is any behaviour where the intent is to cause harm to one's own body for example:-

- Cutting, scratching, scraping or picking skin
- Swallowing inedible objects
- Taking an overdose of prescription or non-prescription drugs
- Swallowing hazardous materials or substances
- Burning or scalding
- Hair-pulling
- Banging or hitting the head or other parts of the body
- Scouring or scrubbing the body excessively

Self-harm is usually conducted at times of anger, distress, fear, emotional worry, low mood or low self-esteem in order to manage negative feelings. To gain an understanding of why people self-harm, see Appendix 1.

4:0 Risk Factors

The following risk factors, particularly in combination, may make a young person particularly vulnerable to self-harm:

Individual Factors:

- Depression / anxiety
- Eating Disorders
- Poor communication skills
- Low self-esteem
- Poor problem-solving skills
- Impulsive behaviour
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Unreasonable or unsustainable expectations of self or parents

Family Factors

- Neglect or physical, sexual or emotional abuse
- Poor relationship with parents
- Depression, self-harm or suicide in the family
- Being a currently or previously a child in care
- Being a young carer

Social Factors

- Difficulty in making relationships/loneliness
- Being bullied, teased or rejected by peers

Warning Signs

School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student is experiencing difficulties that may lead to thoughts of self-harm. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should seek further advice from one of the designated teachers for safeguarding children or from Pastoral Manager of the pupil.

Possible warning signs include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating/sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Lowering of academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss and hope
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Skipping PE
- Lateness to or absence from school

5:0 Statements and procedures Roles and Responsibilities

The Principal and Headteachers

Will ensure additional training on Self-Harm for Designated Senior Leads and Pastoral Support Staff.

Will ensure that appropriate time is given to raise awareness of self-harm: its causes, how it may manifest itself and its consequences to all staff.

Will ensure that all staff are aware of the action that they are required to take should they be made aware of a child who has self-harmed or discovers a student self-harming

Will ensure that all staff are supported where they are working with children who are self-harming through supervision arrangements.

Teaching staff and Support Staff

Will keep an open mind when made aware of students who maybe self-harming and pass their concerns to a Pastoral Manager or Designated Lead.

Will support the child by following the protocols and guidance in Appendices 2 and 3

Will not promise confidentiality.

Will seek first aid help where a child is found to be self-harming and will ensure that information is passed to the Pastoral Manager or Designated Lead.

Designated Leads for Safeguarding

Will case manage pupils who are self –harming on their own site: This may include:

Contacting Parents/Carers

Direct Referral to school health

Direct referral to CAHMS or CART

Arranging professional assistance eg; doctor, nurse, social services.

Will consider the need for a Risk Assessment for the child when they are in school.

Staff Support

Staff Supervision

All staff who work with cases of self harm have a named Supervisor whom they can meet with to support their emotional well being.

Raising Awareness amongst students.

Students will be encouraged to inform staff at school that they have concerns about a friend who they believe is showing signs of self -harm. This will be done through the contact with any member of staff or tellus@bca.warrington.ac.uk

Friends can worry about betraying confidences so they need to know that self-harm can be very dangerous and that by seeking help and advice for a friend they are taking responsible action & being a good friend. They should also be aware that their friend will be treated in a caring and supportive manner.

The peer group of a young person who self-harms may be given the opportunity to discuss their concerns as a group with their Pastoral Leader. This will be decided by the Designated Lead if and when it is deemed to be appropriate and supportive to the individual who is self-harming.

6:0 Evaluation

The school will regularly review to ensure best practice.

- The training received by staff in school to support pupils who self-harm.
- The amount of support received from partner agencies and its value.

Appendix 1 – Understanding Why People Self-Harm

There are a wide range of reasons why people turn to self-harm and every single case is different but there are certain themes that recur time and time again. Here are some quotes from young people who've self-harmed to illustrate some of the most common reasons given in order to help you understand some of the reasons young people turn to this unhealthy coping mechanism.

Control

During adolescence, a time when young people are keen to assert their independence, they can begin to feel very out of control of their own lives. This can be for a number of reasons, perhaps their life is in chaos with difficult relationships at home or school, or perhaps they feel like they're being told what to do every minute of the day and don't have the freedom they'd like from parents or teachers. When you can't control anything else in your life, you can completely control your own body.

"I know it's a really negative kind of control but when your whole life is complete S**t you take what you can, Y'Know? And as I burnt myself I would feel in control for a while. I guess I was on self-destruct and that was bad but at least it was me driving this."

"The day I realised that nobody could take control of my body but me, I felt really powerful. In the past I'd been weak and other people had controlled by body but now it's mine. I can care for it if I want to care for it and I can hurt it if I want to hurt it. It's MINE."

"I'm 16. Every day of my life I've been told what to do from the moment I wake up to the moment I go to sleep. I'm sick of it. This is just my secret way of asserting a bit of control in my life."

Release and Communication of Feelings

For people who struggle to communicate or express their feelings in another way, self-harm can feel like the only way to communicate and release those feelings.

"I'm not good with words. I'm good at cutting. When there are more cuts it means I need more help."

"Sometimes I'd have so many different feelings inside me I thought I was going to explode. Then I'd cut myself and I'd instantly feel a bit better, like releasing a valve."

"It gave me a buzz. Like a drug. It didn't last long and soon I'd be back to square one, but for a few blissful moments I'd be free from all my problems."

Appendix 1 continued – Changing self-harming behaviours

Here are some simple ideas that you can use to support someone who is trying to reduce how much they self-harm. Be realistic in your expectations and be sure to celebrate progress, no matter how minimal.

Time and Place

People who frequently self-harm will often do so in the same place and at similar times each day. Talk to them about whether it's possible to try to disrupt this routine. Can you work with them to think of an alternative activity they might be able to do at their trigger time, or is there somewhere different they could go? As a minimum perhaps you can think with them about how to ensure they are not alone at the times when they are most vulnerable from self-harm. If it's not possible for them to be physically accompanied, you might suggest they phone a helpline such as Childline or the Samaritans so they feel less alone.

Means for Self-Harm

Some people will always use the same implement to self-harm with. If they are ready, they might think about throwing away this implement. Doing so prematurely may leave them feeling very desperate and vulnerable so this needs to be carefully considered. If they are not yet ready to dispose of their implement then they might consider locking it away, either in a safety deposit box or even simply in a shoebox wrapped up with tape or ribbon. Making their preferred implement less available will provide valuable thinking time and remove some of the impulsivity from the act of self-harming, making it more likely they'll be able to think of an alternative coping mechanism.

Another helpful approach is to encourage them to reduce their easy access to items that might be used for self-harming. This might mean locking away or removing things like blades, knives and medicines where they cannot be so easily accessed.

Try to Break Rituals

Self-harming activities can become highly ritualised, adding a feeling of control to the process and providing a sense of relief and release to the person harming. Trying to remove some of the more ritualised or repeated parts of their self-harming behaviours can reduce the reinforcement that young people feel from the activity. It also makes it harder for them to self-harm on auto pilot which, again, reduces the likelihood of them going through with an act of self-harm.

If a young person feels comfortable enough to talk to you about their self-harm rituals, take a real interest and try to understand their motivations behind each part of the process. Question why they do each thing and where possible make suggestions for alternative behaviours. Occasionally your words and questions will have an impact on the sufferer and play back to them during a self-harm act and empower them to stop.

Key documents/legislation and web links

Useful sources of support

www.youngminds.org.uk – Young Minds are committed to supporting the emotional wellbeing of all pupils. This website has lots of resources and advice for teachers on a range of mental health issues.

www.selfharm.co.uk – support for young people impacted by self-harm

Samaritans – The Samaritans helpline is available 24 hours a day 363 days a year and their trained advisers are a great source of support if you need to talk to someone.

Helpline: 08457 90 90 90 [Email: Jo@Samaritans.org]

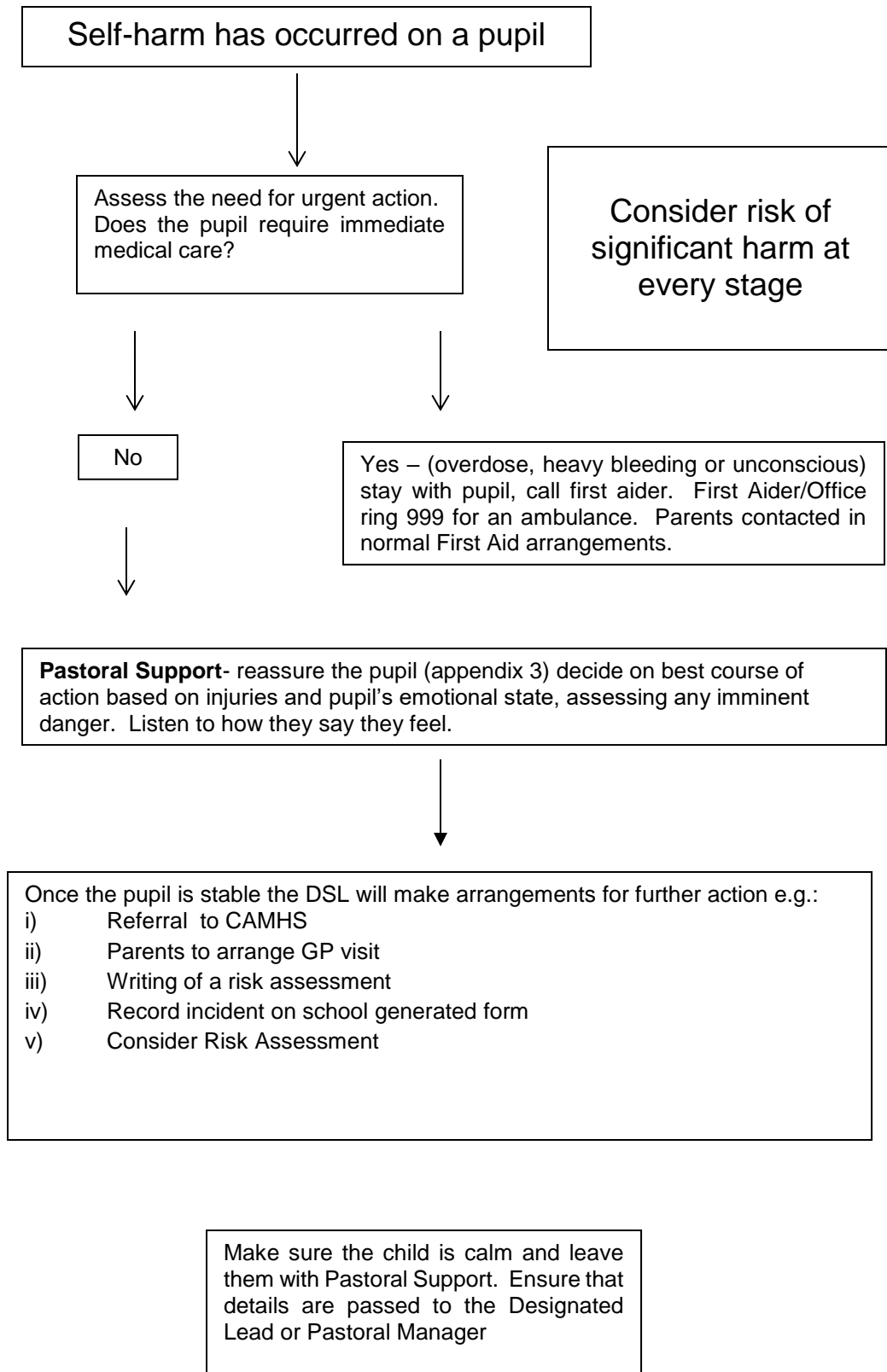
Website: www.samaritans.org/

Papyrus – Papyrus is aimed specifically at preventing suicide in young people. They have a free UK helpline which provides support and advice for young people at risk or those who care about them.

Helpline: 0800 068 41 41 [Email: pat@papyrus-uk.org]

Website: www.papyrus-uk.org/

Appendix 2- Managing Incidents of Self-Harm



Appendix 3: Children: How they would like you to respond

Help me manage my-self harm at school

- Your first response to knowing I self-harm is very important. Please do not judge me negatively and try to understand.
- Stay calm and help me deal with the immediate situation.
- Try to understand my feelings of distress even if they appear minor to you.
- Ask me.
- Help me feel I have some control by asking me what I would like to happen and what I might need.
- It makes a huge difference for me to know that there is an adult at my school who knows all about my condition and who I can talk to if I am worried or unwell.