Safeguarding News

Self-Injury

What is the cause of self-Injury?

Self-injury is often understood to be a physical response to an emotional pain of some kind and can be very addictive. Some of the things people do are quite well known, such as cutting, burning or pinching, but there are many ways to hurt yourself, including abusing drugs and alcohol or through an eating disorder.

People who self-injure often say it provides short-term relief to emotional pain. Even though they're aware of the potential damage they may cause, they can find it hard to stop as a result.

+ half of 11-14 year olds have self-injured themselves or know someone who has

70% increase in 10-14 year-olds attending A&E for self-Injury related reasons over the preceding two years

What can lead young people to self-Injury?

There are many reasons why young people may start to self-injure. Family reasons, such as not getting on with other family members or their parents getting divorced, may be the trigger. They may have personal problems to do with sexuality, race, culture or religion, or they may suffer from low self-esteem and feelings of isolation. Bereavement, current or previous experience of abuse in childhood or stress as a result of bulling or impending exams can all lead to self-injury.

Spotting the signs

There are two types of self-Injury: physical and emotional, and young people will go to great lengths to hide them or explain them away.

The signs to look for with physical self-harm are cuts, bruises, burns and bald patches from hair pulling. Young people are likely to cover themselves up in long-sleeved clothes and hats to hide the signs.

The signs of emotional self-harm are a lot more difficult to spot – and it shouldn't be assumed that a young person is self-harming purely on this basis. If you spot these in addition to the physical signs there may be cause for concern. The emotional signs include: depression, tearfulness and low motivation, unusual eating habits, sudden weight loss or gain, low self-esteem and drinking or taking drugs.

Subtle changes in behaviour may indicate self-injury, warning signs can include; sudden changes in peer groups; dramatic changes in academic engagement; attendance, apparent changes in mood or attitude

For further information or guidance, on any of the topics covered in this newsletter or any Safeguarding concerns please contact a member of your academy safeguarding Team.

Self-injury and online activities

The internet offers your children the opportunity to learn, be creative, socialise and have fun. However, the increase in awareness of self-injury generally has seen a corresponding rise in the number of sites covering the issue – both positive and negative.

Cyberbullying and other forms of online abuse can drive young people to self-harm, whilst pro-self-harm websites or communities that spread knowledge of self-harming techniques can encourage experimentation. There are however a number of excellent sites that discourage this and offer advice, guidance and knowledge to help parents and their children deal with this issue.

What to do if you have concerns.

What to do:

Stay Calm

Take it seriously

Find a quiet place to listen

Convey the message that there are people in the academy that they can talk to.

Ask a few gentle questions; "Do you feel you are able to talk to me about what's going on?" "What do you need right now?"

Inform the student that you need to talk to the Safeguarding team about this

What not to do:

Ignore it

Tell them not to do it

Make them feel judged or blamed in any way

Talk over them

Panic

Shout or startle the young person

Challenging preconceptions about self-injury

It' not an illness
Self-injury is not a mental illness, nor is it an attempt to commit suicide

It can effect anyone

It can effect anyone
Young people from all walks of life self-harm, regardless of their social or ethnic background

It's not just girls
It doesn't just affect girls. Boys self harm too, but they are much less likely to tell anyone about it

It's not about attention

It's not about attention
Self-harm is not a fashion trend, nor is it merely 'attention seeking behaviour'

It's hard to stop

It is not easy for a young person to stop self injuring behaviour

For further information or guidance, on any of the topics covered in this newsletter or any Safeguarding concerns please contact a member of your academy safeguarding Team.