



Coleg Gŵyr Abertawe
Gower College Swansea

SELF-HARM PROTOCOL FOR STAFF SUPPORTING STUDENTS

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If you, or someone you know, would like this document in large print, audio, electronically or in Welsh, please contact:

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1. Context

Gower College Swansea has a statutory and moral duty to promote and safeguard the welfare of all our students under the age of 18 and our vulnerable adults, this protocol serves to support students whom self-harm and provide practical supportive measures which students can access.

2. Scope

The protocol applies to all students who self harm or may be at risk of self-harm and require support or advice.

This protocol; ensures all allegations are referred to one of the Designated Safeguarding Officers, where they will be acted upon accordingly.

3. Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the Self-Harm Protocol is to ensure that all staff are clear on how to proceed should a student disclose they are self-harming or should another student be concerned around a friend who is a student who is self-harming. The Protocol lays out procedure and details of the Support Staff that are trained to assist and the reporting process, to ensure all cases are recorded and monitored from a support stance.

4. Body of Protocol

What is Self-harm?

The UK has one of the highest rates of self harm in Europe and is the reason for many admissions to accident and emergency departments. Self-harm and suicidal threats by a young person can put them at risk of significant harm and should always be taken seriously and responded to without delay.

Self-harm is the act of deliberately causing harm to oneself, either by physical injury or self poisoning irrespective of the apparent purpose of the act². It may also be linked to putting oneself in dangerous situations and/or self neglect. Self-harm is an expression of personal distress, not an illness and there are varied reasons for a person to harm themselves²

Self-harm should not automatically be viewed with suicide. People suffering emotional distress may feel suicidal but as self-harm is a coping mechanism its function is predominantly to prevent suicide rather than being a suicide attempt.

Self-harm is a way of coping with difficult or overwhelming situations or emotional states and not always linked to suicidal thoughts. However, some individuals that self harm may go on to attempt suicide.

Most self-harm is privately or secretly carried out it can be hard to notice that a young person is self-harming but some signs to look out for are:

Warning Signs

Self-Harm is very often secretive behaviour and there may be no warning signs, but some of the things below might indicate that a student is suffering and this may lead to Self-Harm.

- Negativity and low self esteem
- Is unhappy or depressed
- Perfectionism
- Behaving in an out of character manner
- becoming very withdrawn and not speaking to others
- Drug and/or alcohol misuse or risk taking behaviour
- A sudden change in friends or withdrawal from a group
- Signs they have been pulling out their hair

Types of Self-Harm, this is a non-exhaustive list of some of the behaviours that might be considered as self-harm:

- Scratching or picking skin
- Cutting
- Tying something around body
- Inserting things into body
- Scouring body
- Hitting self
- Head banging
- Hair pulling
- Excessive drinking of alcohol
- Burning or scalding body
- Taking an overdose
- Self-strangulation
- Taking non-prescription drugs
- Risky behaviours such as running into the road
- Swallowing objects
- Self tattooing
- Low self esteem and feeling of hopelessness
- Deliberately starving themselves (anorexia nervosa) or binge eating (bulimia nervosa)
- Excessively exercising

Who Self-Harms

Self harm is common, especially in young people. Any young person that self-harms or expresses thoughts of self-harm or suicide must be taken seriously, assumptions should not be made about the reasons for self harm and each episode must be treated individually.

Indications of Self-Harm

- Obvious cuts, scratches or burns that do not appear to be of accidental nature
- Frequent accidents that cause physical harm
- Regularly bandaged arms and wrists
- Wearing long sleeves, long skirts or trousers in warm weather
- Self-loathing and expressing a wish to punish themselves

Support available to Staff

All Student Support Officers, Health Advisors and Safeguarding Officers have undertaken training in suicide assist and are appropriate support members of staff to assist with declarations of self-harm.

How to Manage (All Staff)

It is really important that the student feels comfortable and does not feel judged, if a student confides in you that they are self harming, this means they have put their trust in you, therefore:

- Make it known that you are there to listen
- Encourage student to be open with you
- Try to let student feel in control, by asking them what they would like to happen
- Ensure Self-Harm is reported to a Designated Safeguarding Officer
- Enable students to find places for help and support, which could include referral to our counselling service and Student Support Officers

If possible try and obtain the following information from the student (providing **not crisis situation**, refer to Crisis below):

- Have they taken any substances or injured themselves
- What is troubling the young person
- How imminent or likely self-harm may be
- Discuss what support is available (ie) SSO, counsellor, referral to Dr etc
- Discuss who else may be aware of how they are feeling

Confidentiality is a key concern for young people and they need to be aware that we will have to share information on a need to know basis, with the Line Manager and Safeguarding team for example if the young person is at risk of harm.

It is really important that we do not:

- Ignore or dismiss their feelings
- See the behaviour as attention seeking
- Are aware that they may try and cover up their distress

- If staff are informed of a student self-harming by another student that this is immediately reported to the designated member of support staff and that that pupil is located that day

Crisis Situation

In a crisis situation, for example, where a young person presents with a serious injury or has taken an overdose, standing on a roof or walking into a road immediate action should be taken, First Responders or the Health Advisor should be called to provide immediate assistance and emergency services called immediately.

In Crisis situation a decision needs to be made about informing the parents if appropriate

Any cases of recent self-poisoning should be regarded as a crisis situation and emergency services contacted as the quantity and exact substance ingested may not be known or accurately stated. Any remaining substances should be taken to the emergency department also, to help identify treatment.

Non Crisis Situation

If in a non crisis situation, the SSO, Health Advisor, Safeguarding Officer will be able to offer additional support and further explore:

- How long they have felt like this?
- Is there anything they are worried about?
- Are there any health concerns?
- Are there any relationship difficulties? Sexual Orientation difficulties?
- Are there any other forms of risk taking behaviour that they have been involved in?
- Is there anything that they do, that helps the self harming behaviour from becoming worse?
- Where on the body do they typically self-harm? What do they use to self-harm?
- Have they ever hurt themselves more severely than intended?
- Have they accessed doctor support due to self-harm and injury?
- How often do they self harm?
- What are the triggers to self-harm (ie) tension relief, punishment, or intent to kill self?
- Can any support be put in place in College to support the young person with how they are feeling?
- Is there anything that can be done at home to help them with how they are feeling?

Designated Safeguarding Officers/Health Advisors/Student Support Officers will:

- Ensure records are kept of the self-harm, incidents and concerns
- Liaise with local services around help available
- Provide advice on safer forms of self-harm, which cause pain sensation, but not physical injury
- Ensure any safeguarding procedures are followed.
- Keep up to date with information about self-harm by attending training every 2 years (minimum)
- When appropriate contact parents (with the student involved in this process) and advise parents of support available
- When appropriate refer to external organisations (ie) Social Services, etc. GP's should always be informed for information purposes

Students will be expected to:

- Not display open wounds/injuries. These must be dressed appropriately
- Talk to appropriate member of staff if they feel distressed (ie) Personal Tutor, Lecturer, Student Support Officer, Health Advisor
- Alert a member of staff if they think another student is suicidal or at serious risk of harm to themselves

5. Designated members of staff who can support staff who are supporting students that self-harm

The designated members of staff are:

1. **Anne Pitman** (Learning Services Manager) – Tel 01792 284223/01792 890700 ex: 4128
2. **Ceri Lowe** (Learning Support Co-ordinator) – Tel 01792 284237
3. **Vicky Wannell** (Student Support Officer) – Tel 01792 284227
4. **Ryan McCarley** (Student Support Officer) – Tel 3212
5. **Ian Billington** (Student Support Officer) – Tel 01792 890708
6. **Mo Qasim** (Student Support Officer) – Tel 01792 283214
7. **Tamsyn Oates** (Student Support Officer) – Tel 01792 284193
8. **Cathy Thomas** (Student Support Officer) – Tel 01792 89772
9. **Angela Clarke** (Student Health Advisor) – Tel 01792 284077
10. **Sam Hood** (student Health Advisor) – Tel 01792 890721

6. Yr Iaith Cymraeg / The Welsh Language

- 6.1 Mae Coleg Gŵyr Abertawe yn ymrwymedig i hyrwyddo'r iaith Gymraeg, yn unol â Safonau'r Iaith Gymraeg a Mesur y Gymraeg (Cymru) 2011.
- 6.2 Gower College Swansea is committed to the promotion of the Welsh language, in accordance with the Welsh Language Standards and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

Appendix 1
Self-Harm Reporting Form, to be given to a Safeguarding Officer

Self-harm Referral form	
Date:	Student Name:
Person Reporting:	Reported to:
Detail of Self-Harm Concern:	
Action Taken:	
Details of people informed on a need to know basis:	
Any further action:	

Appendix 2 Wellbeing Resources for Stress and Anxiety

Website	Description
https://youngminds.org.uk/	The voice for young people's mental health & well-being
http://www.mind.org.uk/	Mental Health Charity – A-Z of mental health particularly useful
https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/	Most anxiety-related issues covered in detail
http://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/anxiety.asp	Excellent CBT-style approach to anxiety. NOTE: same website also offers info on depression, suicide, psychosis & many other conditions
https://www.nopanic.org.uk/	General info on anxiety and details of youth helpline
https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/	General resources and personal stories about MH
http://www.stem4.org.uk/	Most MH conditions aimed at young people and teachers
https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/projects/right-here/resources	Very good resources geared towards YPMH
https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications	Booklets on many MH conditions
https://www.papyrus-uk.org/	Young people & Suicide
http://studentsagainstdepression.org/	Issues around depression
https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z	A-Z of key MH issues & conditions
http://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/Depression.asp	CBT-style approach to depression. Clearly explained
http://www.ntw.nhs.uk/pic/selfhelp/	Many, well-written NHS self-help booklets

Website	Description
http://www.lifesigns.org.uk	Support for self-harmers to surf the urge. It reads like you have someone with you helping 27/7
https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/index.html	Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) has been proven to help mental health problems . This website provides CBT self help and therapy resources, including worksheets and information sheets and self help mp3s
https://www.scvs.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=6052af54-bf4c-4584-a93c-6270274f68b1	Mental Health and Wellbeing Directory Directory of local and national services and resources available to people with mental health difficulties in Swansea
https://www.scvs.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=939255ac-19d1-41e7-9235-a9a7f06fad5b	Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing directory for Swansea Mental Health and wellbeing services, support and resources for children and young people aged 0-25
https://www.scvs.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=464ab822-f137-4d12-8996-de665faaf9cc	Counselling Resource

Really Useful Apps for Mental Health and Stress	Description
http://www.solentcamhs.nhs.uk/page_sa.asp?fldKey=247	This app tracks mood, has a section for notes and produces data. Can be shown to GP, counsellor or CAMHs staff to support referrals or therapeutic sessions
https://www.headspace.com	This app has ten 10 minute free sessions in essence to control anxiety/stress
http://mentalhealthrecovery.com/wrap-is/	This clever self-help tool – can be used for any reason really but is aimed at mental health recovery. A great way to store your hints, tips and activities. Wellnes s recovery action plan

Useful Helplines
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call the Samaritans support service anytime on 08457 90 90 90 • Call the Papyrus HOPELineUK on 01925 572444 if you are a young person (or have concerns about a young person) • Call the CALL Helpline (Community Advice and Listening Line) (Wales) on 0800 132 737 Offers emotional support and information on mental health and related matters to the people of Wales • Contact NHS Direct (Wales) on 0845 4647 • Contact Meic Cymru 0800 80 23456 (8am – midnight, seven days a week). Offer a confidential helpline service for children or young people up to age 25 • Contact Mind Infoline 0300 123 3393, offers support and advice • Contact Saneline 0845 767 8000 (6pm – 11pm) a national mental health helpline to provide support