

Blyth Lifeguard & Swimming Club



Concerns regarding a young person self-harming

What is self-harm?

Self-harm, also sometimes referred to as self- injury, is a term used to describe a wide range of behaviours where individuals intentionally hurt themselves; it is often seen as a physical response to an emotional pain.

There are lots of different forms of self-harming. Some individuals may use the same method of self- harm all the time, whilst other individuals may use different ways at different times. Ways of self-harming can include but are not limited to:

- cutting
- rubbing/scraping the skin with sharp objects
- scratching, picking and pinching of skin
- biting yourself
- burning
- interfering with healing
- hair pulling (and then potentially hair eating)
- hitting objects, including punching and head banging
- abusing drugs and alcohol
- poisoning or overdosing
- eating disorders
- exercising excessive

Why does someone self-harm?

The trigger for someone to self-harm will be different for each individual. It can be used as a coping mechanism to deal with something that is either happening or has happened in the past, whilst for others, the reason may be less clear. Sometimes it may be a sign of an underlying mental health issue. There are many reasons why an individual may be self- harming, these could include but not limited to:

- being unhappy and/or experiencing low self esteem
- suffering from bullying or discrimination
- coming to terms with their sexual orientation
- having problems at school
- experiencing negative life events and family issues
- bereavement
- experiencing physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect
- undergoing other psychiatric and/or psychological factors.

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Self-harm can be used as a way of punishing themselves for something they have done. It can also be used as a way to make the individual feel as though they are in control of something in their life.

Talking about self-harm

Whether someone tells you directly, or you suspect that an individual is self-harming, it can be extremely difficult to know what to say and how best to approach the situation.

- Try not to panic or overreact. The way you respond will have an impact on how much they open up to you now and in the future.
- Try to be non-judgemental.
- Let the individual know you are there for them.

It can be difficult for sufferers because they may feel scared, ashamed, think they will get in to trouble and may have difficulty in explaining to others how they feel and why they are self-harming. Parents/guardians of sufferers may equally find it difficult to talk about and deal with the emotions of what is happening to their child.

Support and guidance on how to deal with self-harm is available from the RGB Child Safeguarding Team and in some cases a referral may be made to the Swim England Doctor under the Medical Protocol as required. It is important to remember that club officers, coaching staff and the RGB Child Safeguarding Team are not trained professionals in the field of self-harm and there is no expectation on individuals to provide counselling services to either the young person or their family. Self-harm is a highly complex area and requires appropriately qualified medical expertise to support the young person and their family.

What to do if you suspect someone is self-harming

If an individual has concerns, has noticed marks on an individual's body or has received a disclosure, it is important that these concerns are referred to the Welfare Officer/Head of section so appropriate advice can be provided.

Blyth Lifeguard and Swimming Club follows guidance provided by Relevant Governing Bodies (RGB) Swim England, Royal Lifesaving Society (RLSS) Surf Lifesaving Great Britain (SLGB), Swim Teachers Association (STA) and The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NCPCC) in formulating our policies, regulations and codes of conduct and in having robust procedures in place for when these are breached.

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Agreed by BLSC Executive Committee	Due for review
22 nd July 2024	July 2026