

Women and Self-Harm

Suitable for:

Staff or carers who wish to acquire or develop a general understanding of women who self-harm, working in the wide range of services accessed by women who self-harm. This may include: mental health services, education, drug and alcohol services, youth services, criminal justice, accident and emergency, counselling service etc.

Aims of the course:

- To develop participants' awareness and understanding of self-harm.
- To establish that self-harm is a coping strategy which women are likely to have developed as a way of dealing with difficult feelings and situations; and that helpful responses from workers and carers may play a vital role in supporting a woman who self-harms. That staff and carers require access to information and resources, along with opportunities to reflect on their practice, in order to maximise the positive potential of their work with women who self-harm.
- To increase participants' confidence when offering a supportive, informed response to women who self-harm.

Objectives of the course:

- To construct a definition of self-harm, and to consider how self-harm relates to other self-damaging behaviours, including suicide and offending behaviours.
- To identify why women may self-harm, and what consequences this may have for service response
- To measure different rates of prevalence amongst different groups of women, and to think through possible reasons behind increased rates of prevalence.
- To listen to experiential accounts of self-harm; as well as having access to current self-harm research, publications and resources
- To identify and evaluate various responses, treatments and professional approaches to women's self-harm
- To identify the emotional impact of self-harm on staff and carers, and their consequent need for support, supervision and self-care.
- To identify some of the most important issues which are likely to arise when working with women who self-harm; and to consider ways of addressing them
- To increase participants' skills and confidence when working with and responding to self-harm
- To provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on their own personal responses and their practice in working with self-harm
- To provide an opportunity for participants to share experiences, knowledge and opinions around the issue of women and self-harm.

"I now have much more awareness of why people self-harm and how I could help/ support them" (community mental health worker, harm-ed training event Oct 17th 2006).

Course content:

An introduction to some of the most important issues around self-harm such as:

- what is self-harm?
- why do people self-harm?
- are women more likely to self-harm - why?
- women, diversity and self-harm
- how should we respond to women's self-harm?
- what resources are available to support work with women who self-harm?
- how do we support staff who work with women who self-harm?

Learning materials and methods

Whilst being structured and facilitated in order to ensure a safe and comfortable space for all participants, it is also informal, friendly and participatory. Course facilitators use a range of different learning materials and methods, including:

- Published research
- Literature
- Experiential accounts of service users and carers
- Experiential accounts of staff
- Participatory exercises
- Group discussion and debate
- Individual reflection and feedback

In addition, all participants receive a reading pack containing relevant articles, statistics, leaflets and details of further sources of information.

