

# Young People and Self-Harm

## Suitable for:

This one-day (or equivalent) course is built around the specific needs, experiences and concerns of staff working with young people in a range of settings, who wish to acquire or develop their knowledge of self-harm in relation to young people. This may include schools, colleges and universities, youth services, youth justice and offending teams, counselling and mental health services.

## Aims of the course:

- To develop participants' awareness and understanding of self-harm in relation to young people.
- To establish that self-harm is a coping strategy which young people 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 young person 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 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.
- To consider why young people may self-harm, and what consequences this may have for service response
- To identify rates of prevalence amongst different groups of young people, and to think through the reasons behind different rates of prevalence.
- To have listen to experiential accounts of self-harm; as well as having access to current research, publications and resources which address the subject of self-harm in relation to young people.
- To identify and evaluate various responses, treatments and professional approaches to self-harm amongst young people
- To identify the emotional impact of self-harm on staff and carers, and their consequent need for support, supervision and self-care.
- To increase the participants' skills and confidence when working with and responding to young people who self-harm
- To provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on their own personal responses and their practice in working with young people who self-harm
- To provide an opportunity for participants to share experiences, knowledge and opinions around the issue of young people and self-harm.

*"I now have deeper understanding and more confidence if I come across self-harm in my role". (education worker, harm-ed training event Sept 12<sup>th</sup> 2006)*

The National Inquiry into Self Harm amongst Young People (Mental Health Foundation/Camelot 2006), found that 1 in 12 young people self-harm. Catherine McLoughlin, the Chair of the National Inquiry, stated that *"it is vital that everyone who comes into contact with young people has a basic understanding of what self-harm is, why people do it, and how to respond appropriately"*.

## Course content:

- What is self-harm?
- Why do young people self-harm?
- Young people, diversity and self-harm
- Responding to young people who self-harm
- Resources available to support work with young people who self-harm
- Legal, organisational and practical issues faced by staff who work with young people who self-harm
- Issues and support for parents and carers
- Staff support and self-care

## 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.

