

# What is self-harm?

Self-harm usually means cutting or injuring oneself deliberately. It gives a visible sign that something is 'not OK'. A child or young person may self-harm to feel more in control, to help them cope with negative feelings, or to punish themselves.

## What can school staff do to help a child or young person who is self-harming?

- 1. Say something.** Doing nothing is the worst thing you can do – talking about the problem won't encourage more self-harm.
- 2. Listen.** It may take a few invitations to talk before the child or young person feels able to risk sharing with you. The most important thing you can do is offer to listen.



- 3. Make a plan.** This might be as simple as making another time to listen, or it might be making a referral to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). What's important is that you and the child or young person discuss and, ideally, agree the plan.



- 4. Share.** Speak to colleagues, to CAMHS professionals for advice, and to the pupil's parent/carer. Explain why you are doing this and give the child or young person choices about how you might tell a parent/carer.

- 5. Act.** Do what you've agreed. Let the child or young person know what you have done and what you haven't managed to do yet, and why.

## Remember...

Although wanting to tell a child or young person to stop self-harming is understandable, this is often less helpful at the beginning. It's more useful to show concern for how the child or young person is feeling.

Most self-harm isn't linked to suicidality but if a pupil tells you that they have thoughts about wanting to die it is important you share this information with the pastoral care team. A referral to CAMHS would be appropriate in these circumstances. If you are worried about a child or young person's immediate safety, call 999.