**Managing Self-Harm**

**General advice for staff**



Whilst the University of Chichester does not encourage self-harm, we do accept that this can be a coping method for some students. Student Support and Wellbeing services can offer advice on staying safe, first aid and mental health support to students and staff who wish to access it.

These services may not be able to prevent self-harm from occurring, but they can encourage and support students to do this in as safe and controlled a way as possible to minimise harm to themselves and others. Signposting to appropriate professional help can also be provided.

**General advice**

If you are aware that a student self-harms, it is important to respond in a calm and controlled manner. It is a myth that self-harm is always a sign of suicidal behaviour. It is usually a coping mechanism to manage an episode of emotional pain and distress that they don’t otherwise know how to deal with. It is likely that you are in everyday contact with people who use self-harm to cope, but are unaware as their injuries are not visible to you.

You do not need to report or approach a student if you notice evidence of self-harm; **however, if this appears to be part of a bigger picture of risk, taking into consideration behaviour, poor attendance or more serious mental health concerns, please raise a Wellbeing Referral (**[**https://wellbeingreferral.chi.ac.uk**](https://wellbeingreferral.chi.ac.uk)**)** and encourage the student to attend an ‘Ask Wellbeing’ drop-in (SIZ have details or see the Wellbeing website: <https://wellbeing.chi.ac.uk/>) or to book themselves a Wellbeing triage appointment (by emailing Wellbeing@chi.ac.uk).

If a student discloses self-harm to you and requests support, please refer them on appropriately to University support services and, if urgent, statutory services. See Useful Contacts at the end.

**Please do not take photographs of self-harm injuries**
If you are concerned by what you see, you can describe the injuries to the Nurse Health Advisers or Wellbeing Advisers.

**Be prepared:**

As self-harm by cutting is widespread, it is likely that you will be aware of students who use this as a coping mechanism.

* Read up about self-harm, or email us (studenthealth@chi.ac.uk).
* Self-harm self-care packs are available free of charge; they contain advice for the student or friend and dressings so that wounds can be managed independently. You are welcome to pick one up from the health centres at either campus or email studenthealth@chi.ac.uk.
* Self-harm advice booklets are available, feel free to have some on hand to offer to students if required. You can find copies of these in the health centres at either campus or email studenthealth@chi.ac.uk.
* Have some of the Wellbeing Services fliers and Student Health fliers at hand so that you and the student are aware of how and when they can access support. These are available at the SIZ desks.

**Encourage responsibility:**

Whenever possible students should be encouraged to manage self-harm responsibly and independently by:

* Being mindful of and limiting the potential impact on other students.
* Using clean equipment and cleaning any cuts afterwards to reduce the risk of infection; have a first aid kit ready to hand (self-harm self-care packs are available from Student Health, the SU and the SIZ).
* Being aware that blood is a potential hazard. Gloves should be worn appropriately, and any blood cleaned up effectively.
* Dispose of all sharps safely or store in a safe place; Student Health has sharps bins, and can offer advice.
* Learning to clean and dress cuts to avoid infection; Student Health can support this.
* Thinking about the environment in which self-harming, by avoiding dirty and dangerous situations and having access to appropriate people who could help you if necessary.
* Avoiding self-harming when under the influence of alcohol.
* Finding a safe place where they will not be disturbed and where they feel calm.
* Ensuring they have a charged phone on them and a signal so that they are able to call for support if necessary. If the cut is deep or won’t stop bleeding, it will need to be treated by a nurse or doctor.
* Call the University Help Line 01243 816363 any time day or night to get first aid advice. NHS 111 can also be called for advice.
* **First aiders are advised to encourage the student to self-manage their wounds, to promote self-care, and minimise the risk of inappropriate dependence on others.**
* First aiders will be able to provide dressing supplies, if necessary, and advice on the need to attend A & E or Student Health for further support.

**First aid advice - non-urgent**

* Once the urge to cut has passed, the student should assess and treat any injury. Self-harm self-care packs are available from Student Health, the SU and the SIZ.
* The main points when considering first aid after cutting is to control any bleeding and prevent possible infection.
* If blood oozes slowly out of a wound then it is a less serious injury.
* Clean the wound and cover with a clean dressing and apply pressure if necessary to stop bleeding. Encourage the student to dress the wound independently if appropriate.
* If the area of injury is on a limb then raise the limb to reduce blood flow to the area, reducing blood loss and allowing time for a blood clot to form.
* If the student has concerns about a minor injury, refer to the Student Health service for advice.

## When to seek medical advice

The following situations provide examples of the level of medical attention that should be sought:

| **Example** | **Action** |
| --- | --- |
| If the wound continues to bleed heavily once you have carried out the above steps, including bandaging | **A&E** |
| If the cut is deep and has exposed underlying muscle (this may be a much darker red in colour) | **A&E** |
| If a foreign object is stuck in the wound, you should not apply direct pressure. Use indirect pressure by pressing the wound together – do not remove the object | **A&E** |
| If the area of injury or a more widespread area has lost sensation there may be nerve damage  | **urgent GP or A&E** |
| If movement has been limited there may be damage to a tendon | **urgent GP or A&E** |
| If after a few hours or days the wound is infected (it could be red, sore, swollen or weeping) | **urgent GP or Nurse Health Advisers** |
| If steristrips/stitches may be needed to close the wound the Nurse Health Advisers on campus can offer advice and support  | **Nurse Health Adviser** |

**If in doubt, phone NHS 111**

**In an Emergency**

**If you are concerned that the individual is a risk to themselves or others then call 999 and call the University emergency number (01243 816363) to let them know.**

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**If the injury is severe, or the intent to self-harm / consider suicide is still strong or unclear, or if in any doubt:**
 **GET HELP call 999 or get them to A&E to be assessed by a health professional ALSO call the University emergency number 01243 816363 (internal extension 6363)**

**If blood is pumping or pulsing out from the injured area, this is an Emergency:**

* **Apply direct-and sustained pressure immediately.**
* **Elevate the area if a limb.**
* **Call for help and dial 999 for an ambulance.**
* **Give the student’s location, room no halls and the University address.**
* **Contact the University emergency number 01243 81(6363). This is to inform them an ambulance has been called and the location of the student. Ask for a first aider if not already present.**
* **Keep the student as warm and comfortable as possible.**

## Wound management

* We advise students to keep recent or scabbed wounds dressed. This is to minimise risk of wound infection or cross infection to others.
* Wounds should be kept clean dry and covered until healed.
* If a student has a recent wound which is exposed and they are attending lectures / placements / participating in sports etc, it is appropriate to ask discreetly that this is covered.
* Refer them on to Student Health or inform them about the self-care packs that are available from Student Health, the SU and the SIZ.
* Please contact Student Health (studenthealth@chi.ac.uk) if you would like further advice.

## Forcibly stopping and removing implements not advised

**If the student is found with their self-harming implement it is not always advisable to remove it.**

Self-harm is often a means by which the student is taking control of a situation which is causing them distress. In some cases, it has been demonstrated that attempting to prevent self-harm by removing implements results in students reacting by hurting themselves in covert ways in order to regain control. It has also been shown that removing all implements that could be used for self-harm may leave young people less prepared to engage in the therapeutic process[[1]](#footnote-1).

**Responding to underlying distress is more important than focusing on stopping the self-harm.**

**Useful Contacts**

## Student Support and Wellbeing Services

* **Student Health Drop-ins**Timetable available from the SIZ and on the help webpages:
 <https://help.chi.ac.uk/student-health-service>
* **Wellbeing Triages**Self-bookable appointments (by emailing Wellbeing@chi.ac.uk)
Timetable available from the SIZ and on the Wellbeing website:
 <https://wellbeing.chi.ac.uk/>
* **Ask Wellbeing drop-ins**Details and timetable on the Wellbeing website: <https://wellbeing.chi.ac.uk/>
* **Nurse Health Advisors
Becky Pothecary and Chrissie Dunn**07739 983703 - 01243 816111 studenthealth@chi.ac.uk
* **Staff Wellbeing Referrals (to refer a student of concern)**Please note the Wellbeing Team are no longer accepting referrals by email, please use this referral form which is fast-tracked:
Referral form <https://wellbeingreferral.chi.ac.uk>

**University First Aid and Out-of-hours services**

* For First Aid and out-of-hours support phone the
University emergency number 01243 81 6363

**NHS Services**

* If non-urgent advice is sought **111**
* In emergencies **999**
and also notify the emergency number 01243 81 6363
to let them know an ambulance is on the way
1. Understanding suicide and self-harm amongst children in care and care leavers. Published: July 2013; IRISS Insights, no.21 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)