

Catharsis Suicide and Self Harm Policy Statement

Self-harm is common and can cover a broad spectrum of behaviours to include sexual activity, eating / not eating, substance misuse as well as cutting, burning and other damaging and harmful behaviours. This statement is informed by the Self Harm Practice Guidance (2015) issued by Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children's Board, which clearly illustrates the vulnerability and Risk Factors linked to Self-Harm and repeated behaviours.

There is a difference between self-harm and suicidal intent; they sometimes overlap but are not the same. Whilst suicide is rare, self-harm is known to be the strongest clinical predictor of death by suicide. For this reason, and others, self-harming behaviour causes great concern among family members, friends, teachers and clinicians. The Practice Guidance issued by Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children's Board states that 'what matters for many young people is having someone to talk to who will take them seriously'. It is stated that a lack of understanding / ambivalence about self-harm can increase the risk of escalation to suicide. This policy statement is also supported by a Catharsis Suicide Risk and Safety Assessment as well as Catharsis Safety Plan document, which is available to all therapists working within our team.

Catharsis Therapists are trained to at least MA level and are adept at building trusting relationships in order to support their clients. Young people are informed at the start of therapy that, where there are concerns about their wellbeing, these may need to be shared. Wherever possible, information sharing will be done with the Young Person's consent. With regards to suicidal ideation and self-harm, assessment of risk and intent is important – Catharsis therapists will not have an issue with forfeiting the therapeutic relationship if danger is assessed.

Therapists will know who the Safeguarding lead is and have access to the Catharsis Senior Management Team and their Clinical Supervisor for further discussion and advice on what next steps need to be taken. Therapists will be familiar with the policies of the institution they are working in, Catharsis policies, how to access Incident Report Forms and how to make a Safeguarding referral or a referral to CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) Single Point of Access (see link below). Therapists working in Local Authorities outside of Derby / Derbyshire / Nottingham / Nottinghamshire will need to familiarize themselves with the procedures in place within their own Local Authorities; Catharsis SLT are on hand to support this remotely.

Where self-harming behaviours are known about, referral to a Catharsis therapist may happen with the specific aim to help the client reduce incidents of self harm and identify less damaging coping strategies. This type of referral may therefore be as part of a School Self Harm Care Pathway. During therapy sessions therapists will make an ongoing assessment of risk and will liaise with parents / carers, other professionals and Safeguarding leads (as appropriate) where there are ongoing concerns that cannot be safely managed within the therapy room. The therapy space is a space for the client to get help to reduce risk; therefore, the therapist may be best placed to work with the client's risk. Wherever possible, in agreement with the client, the therapist will draw up an agreement with regards to self-care strategies; this may be shared with other support networks (see Catharsis Safety Plan).

Where disclosure of a new self-harm incident is made, dealing with immediate medical needs will be a priority. Where possible the therapist will explore with the client what is going on in their life that has caused them to feel or behave in the way they have. This can help the client begin to make sense of the self-harm and to think about other ways of coping; this can be the start of further work and support offered by the therapist.

In the event of a suicide by a YP known or not known to Catharsis, a prompt and strategic plan to support all those affected; who to tell, how to tell etc. is key. It is known that suicide can happen in clusters and therefore the Local Authority and local services need to be kept informed (as well as parents and carers and the YP themselves). Catharsis will endeavour to

contribute where it can to these plans and can provide a supportive space for staff to talk openly and put together a plan as a team. Catharsis therapists can provide 1:1 support for any person needing support after a suicide occurs.

Single Point of Access (SPOA) Referral form link:

<https://www.derbyshirehealthcareft.nhs.uk/services/childrens-mental-health-services-camhs-derby-and-southern-derbyshire/im-professional/single-point-access-referral-form>

Review

Implementation / Review date	Reviewers
August 2025	Hannah Robertson
Next Review date	Keren Adler
August 2026	