

# La Sainte Union Secondary School



- 900 girls 11-16
- Mixed 6<sup>th</sup> form (300)
- 70+ feeder primary schools

**“We wish to develop strength of character and confidence by stressing the pursuit of excellence and concern for others. We seek to educate the whole person, academically, socially, spiritually and morally .”**

# **Aims of presentation**

- **Illustrate a student-centred, whole school approach to self-harm**
  - **1) Context of student leadership at LSU**
  - **2) Understanding the problem from a student perspective**
  - **3) Developing a culture of trust**
  - **4) Communication, training and procedures**

# School Council

Representatives  
report to  
Headteacher  
and Governors  
each term

## School Committees

Key Stage Councils x 3

Head of House  
Committees

Safer School  
Committee

E Safety Committee

Feminist Group

Charities Group

London Citizens

## Mentoring

Peer mentors yr 11

Academic mentors  
yrs 10-13

Mental Health  
Group year 12



# Leadership Training Day

September /  
October

**Residential  
weekend  
training  
course for  
peer mentors**

## Student Committees

Research and  
project  
management

Speech writing  
and presentation  
skills

Running  
effective  
meetings

Communication

## Student Support Roles

Child protection

Assertiveness  
techniques

School rules and  
procedures

Promoting  
literacy

Management  
and organisation

# **Safer Schools Committee**

- **Campaigns in last two years:**
  - **Sexual exploitation**
  - **‘Shadism’**
  - **Disability and the media**
  - **Mental Health**

## **"Breathe Me" (Sia)**

**Help, I have done it again  
I have been here many times  
before  
Hurt myself again today  
And the worst part is there's no  
one else to blame**

**Be my friend  
Hold me, wrap me up  
Unfold me  
I am small and needy  
Warm me up  
And breathe me**

**Ouch, I have lost myself again  
Lost myself and I am nowhere to  
be found,  
Yeah, I think that I might break  
Lost myself again and I feel unsafe**

[Song](#)



## **Garbage- Bleed Like Me**

- **Doodle takes Dad's scissors to her skin  
And when she does relief comes  
setting in  
While she hides the scars  
She's making underneath her  
pretty clothes  
She sings, "Hey, baby, can you  
bleed like me?  
C'mon baby can you bleed like  
me?"**

## **"Bad Habit" Dresden Dolls**

**Biting keeps your words at bay  
Tending to the sores that stay  
Happiness is just a gash away  
When i open a familiar scar  
Pain goes shooting like a star  
Comfort hasn't failed to follow so far...**

**And you might say it's self-indulgent  
You might say its self-destructive  
But, you see, it's more productive  
Than if i were to be healthy**

# **Pupil discourses about self harm**

- **Mysterious**
- **Romantic**
- **Glamorous and 'dark'**
- **Fragile and feminine**
- **Attention- seeking**
- **Frightening**
- **Stigmatising**
- **Self indulgent**
- **Emotionally manipulative**

# **Developing awareness..**

## **Meetings with:**

- **Nimisha Deakin, CAMHS**
- **Pooky Knightsmith (In Our Hands)**

## **Research:**

- **In Our Hands Resources, websites and videos**

# Safer Schools Committee

## Dispelling myths

1. The young person is just attention-seeking
2. The more serious the self harm the more serious the problem behind it
3. Only teenage girls self harm
4. Self harm is a way of manipulating others
5. Girls self harm only because their friends are

## Underlying Causes

- Problems with relationships at home
- Problems with friendship groups
- Bullying
- Bereavement
- Feelings of not being good enough
- Exam stress and pressure
- Big life changes e.g. moving house, school
- Underlying depression or anxiety
- Illness

# **Key messages in student presentations**

- **Everyone who self harms has a different story: what they have in common is they have not developed less hurtful ways of dealing with pressures and worries**
- **There are reasons why people self harm and it is important to get the right help**
- **There are risks associated with self harm – often unintended**
- **This is too big a problem to manage on your own and for your friends to support you with alone**
- **(Used Headspace Video on Self Harm)**

# The Healthy Minds (Islington) Lesson on Self Harm

- **True / false** exercise on what they had heard presented in assembly

## **Diamond Nine exercise:**

- Say 'your secret's safe with me' and do nothing
- Say 'oh that sounds horrible'
- Say 'you should talk to someone about it'
- Say 'oh that's really bad. You have to stop.'
- Ask lots of details and questions about how they self harm and how often
- Offer to go with them to tell an adult you trust
- Say 'it sounds like things are bad for you at the minute. How are you feeling?'
- Say 'do you feel like you want to kill yourself?'

**Ways of caring for yourself :** including Samaritans Video: [Resilience Video](#)

# **Developing a Culture of Trust**

# **What are young people's biggest worries about seeking help?**

- **They will be judged**
- **They will be seen as a failure**
- **No-one will be able to understand**
- **Parents / carers will be called straight away**
- **Parents won't cope with the news**
- **It might get worse if their parents know**
- **Everyone on the staff will get to know**

## **What happens when you ask for help at LSU?**

- **Approach any staff member who you feel comfortable to talk to**
- **S/he will give you the choice of contacting your Head of Year, Ms Taylor, Shirley, Parminder or Olivia**
- **They know about self harm and will not judge you**
- **Your privacy will be respected**
- **Your views will contribute to decisions about what happens next**
- **Parents are contacted only after discussion and not in every case**

**Communication and Training**

**School Professionals and Parents**

# **Raising awareness of staff and parents**

- **SEAM/ Inclusion team:** consultation on a **draft policy** and **risk assessment**
  - **Nature; Causes; Risk factors; Warning Signs Assessment;**
- **Training session** by Jan Eaton, CAMHS
- **Presentation to whole staff** on self harm before presentation to pupils
- **Letter to parents** with information about self harm
- **Evening for parents on adolescent development** and supporting young people with problems

- **SELF HARM: HEAD OF YEAR SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT AND ACTIONS FOR HIGH AND MODERATE RISK**

**Assess: get as accurate a picture of the events of the last 48 hours from his /her perspective.**

What has happened, when and where?  
what external pressures are they feeling?  
who can they talk to?  
what are their relationships with family and friends etc?

**Ask direct questions about the young person's intentions:**

have they self-harmed in the past ?  
are they having suicidal thoughts?  
do they have a plan to commit suicide?

**HIGH RISK**

Previous attempts of self harm/ suicide  
Indicated clear intentions to die  
Made a deliberate premeditated suicide attempt  
Will usually have left a note  
Arranged a time when s/he reckons she will be alone  
Is still experiencing suicidal feelings  
Appears extremely depressed  
Is regretful of failed attempt

**What to do:**

In an emergency or case of overdose (however small) CALL an ambulance **IMMEDIATELY**  
Telephone Children's Social Care **IMMEDIATELY** after your assessment  
Contact parents/ carers **unless** your assessment suggest that parenting may not be a protective factor. Advice in this respect should be sought from CSC on referral.

**MODERATE RISK**

History of self harm, risk taking or impulsive behaviour  
Poor stress coping mechanisms but has no clear intention to wish to seriously self harm  
Clear reasons for actions but these no long pose an obvious risk  
Made an attempt to deliberate self harm but has no actual suicidal intent  
Obtained the agent impulsively that day  
Self harms when others in the vicinity and may have informed others

**What to do:**

Decide a support plan with the student, seeking consent from the student for other relevant professionals' involvement.  
Consider an CSC referral, ECAF referral or referral to LSU Inclusion Team  
Depending on the context, inform the parent/ carer, where helpful inviting them to school (**unless** your assessment suggest that parenting may not be a protective factor). Advice in this respect should be sought from CSC on referral.

**IN ALL CASES RECORD**

Nature of self harm incident/s:  
Date and time/s of occurrence:  
Risk level: high/ medium / low (with details of assessment)  
Action taken:  
Recommendations:

**Email this record to the Child Protection Administrator**

(adapted from Steve Walker: Responding to Self-Harm in Children and Adolescents: A Professional's Guide to Identification, Intervention and Support)

**1) Training for Inclusion / SEAM staff: CAMHS**



**2) Consultation on risk assessment process and on policy**



**3) Safer Schools Student Committee: meetings with professionals / presentation development**



**4) Presentation to all staff on self harm**



**5) Letters to parents about self harm and forthcoming lessons**



**6) Safer schools: rehearsals and presentations to all year groups**



**7) Lessons on self harm – all pupils**



**8) Risk assessments on all young people referred by Inclusion staff**



**8) Meetings with parents as appropriate**



**9) Referrals and review mechanism**

# Impact and follow up

- Parents / carers contacted and meetings held
- All offered CAMHs or counselling
- Monitored at Child Protection review meetings
- Feedback: Heads of Year and Inclusion staff are confident in discussing self harm and raising this as part of general assessments of need.