

Introduction

Self-injury is any form of self-harm which involves causing injuries or pain to your own body. It can take many forms.

Our definition of self-injury is like the National Inquiry into Young People and Self-harm 'a wide range of things that people do to themselves in a deliberate and usually hidden way, which are damaging'. This can include cutting, burning, banging, hair-pulling, self-poisoning, hitting one's body with another body part, hitting one's body with or against an object, biting oneself, self-scratching, self-pinching, ingesting objects and eye poking.

Research considering the views of people without learning difficulties, suggests that for them self-injury has a clear function and is largely used as a coping strategy for dealing with emotional distress. They advocate the use of counselling or therapies, to develop a broad repertoire of coping skills.

Traditionally, self-injury in people with learning difficulties has been understood within a biological framework. It has been regarded as 'maladaptive' or 'challenging behaviour', and often managed by behavioural responses including aversive techniques and medication.

Key aims of the project

1. To find out more about the experiences of people with learning difficulties who self-injure, and their family/carers.
2. To explore in what ways they have been supported by the services and professionals who support them.
3. To identify ideas, and then produce resources for training and policy development.

Methods

We will aim to interview ten people with learning difficulties who self-injure in England, and five in each of Wales, Scotland and N. Ireland. With the consent of the person with learning difficulties, we will also aim to interview a family member/carer and professionals (if appropriate) supporting them.

Advice to the project

To ensure involvement of people with learning difficulties, the research team will work with two people with learning difficulties with personal experience of self-injury to act as consultants throughout the project. The research will also be supported by a research advisory group with relevant academic, professional and policy experience in this area.

Publications

Outputs and publications from the project will include:

Final report and summary

This report, with an executive summary, will present the findings from the research. We will also produce an accessible summary of findings for people with learning difficulties.

Resource pack

This pack will be developed in the light of our findings and will be a training/resource pack for staff (and family carers) supporting people with learning difficulties who self-injure.

Booklets about self-injury and people with learning difficulties

We will produce a booklet about Self-injury and people with learning difficulties, plus an illustrated, accessible booklet for people with learning difficulties.

Launch events

We will launch the final report, booklets and training pack at a launch event in each country of the UK.

Oxfordshire Research Ethics Committee A
Self-injury and People with Learning Difficulties
06/Q1604/120.

Self-injury & people with learning difficulties

Bristol Crisis Service for Women and the Norah Fry Research Centre (University of Bristol) are working together to carry out this research.

The Norah Fry Research Centre (NFRC) carries out research on issues affecting the lives of disabled children and adults with learning difficulties and their families.

The researchers on the project:

Dr Pauline Heslop is Research Fellow at NFRC. She has extensive experience of working with people with learning difficulties in professional and research environments.

Fiona Macaulay is Project Worker for BCSW's Information Service. She has experience in researching and developing a range of information about self-injury.

Further Information

For further information about the project, please contact:

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Helpline for Women

0117 925 1119

Fridays & Saturday evenings

9.00pm-12.30am

Sundays 6.00pm-9.00pm

Call from anywhere in the UK

We offer any woman who rings the opportunity to talk through her feelings in complete confidence. Many of our calls are from women who have suffered sexual abuse, or who injure themselves as a way of coping with feelings. (Interpreters are available).

We offer a range of training options and have a range of information and publications, including a series of booklets

1. Understanding self-injury
2. Self-help for self-injury
3. For friends and family
4. Self-injury support & self-help groups
5. Women from black and minority ethnic groups and self-injury (available in Bengali, Chinese, Punjabi and Urdu).



Self-Injury & people with learning difficulties



Bristol Crisis Service for Women

PO Box 654 Bristol BS99 1XH

www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk

Helpline: 0117 925 1119

Office/Admin: 0117 927 9600

Registered charity 1092299