Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention, Skills for Schools by MindEd, 2019. Available free at: http://www.minded.org.uk/Catalogue/Index?HierarchyId=0_42929&programmeId=42929

Training Update

**Edited by
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It takes a deep breath to embark on MindEd e-learning as it can be time-consuming and not always straightforward to navigate. Having said that, one does get used to the site the more one uses it. It took me just under an hour to undertake *Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention, Skills for Schools* and it was well worth doing so. One in eight children and young people aged between five and 19 surveyed in England in 2017 had a mental disorder, an increase from one in ten in the last published research in 2004 (NHS Digital, 2018). Given that concerns about children and young people's mental health, especially self-harm, are much more out in the open and part of a current dialogue, access to the quality, evidence-based learning that MindEd provides is relevant and timely.

Self-harm is probably one of the most compelling concerns for those of us working with children and young people. This is especially true for staff in schools who may not have undergone formal training in child and adolescent mental health and at a time when access to specialist services has become more difficult because of reduced resources and raised thresholds. Over 55 000 children and young people were refused treatment in 2017–18, with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services rejecting as many as one in four referrals as not meeting their thresholds. Many were self-harming and/or abuse victims (British Journal of School Nursing, 2018). Whilst the government is now focusing on schools for preventative work and mental health interventions with funds of £1.4 billion to support designated leads in schools and mental health teams (Department of Health and Social Care and Department for Education, 2018), this will only reach one in four schools by 2022–23 (Royal Society of Arts, 2018).

Practitioners such as GPs, social workers and teachers are therefore often left in a 'holding' capacity which can feel unsafe (White, 2018). Alongside, there has been a tendency to minimise self-harm and make unsafe, incorrect attributions (Burton, 2019). In England, a quarter of 11–16-year-olds and nearly half of 17–19-year-olds with a mental disorder reported that they have self-harmed or attempted suicide at some point in their lives (Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, 2020). It is therefore important to be able to respond appropriately, even if we sometimes feel out of our depth. Self-harm is invariably about relationship breakdown. The key to repair is therefore through relationships. Our responses and relationships can act as a buffer to distress. Equipped with the knowledge that the MindEd e-learning programme provides, individuals can feel more confident.

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The programme offers two options: either e-learning or leading workshop-based learning. I chose the e-learning option, but at the end of the session there is a link to access the very informative workshop-based learning resources and additional information. The e-learning programme starts by introducing the learner to common myths and facts. These are spot on, with important messages. For example, it is commonly considered that

self-harm is attention-seeking, which MindEd correctly asserts is a myth, though I would have liked to see more discussion in the workshop materials around 'attachment seeking' or 'attachment needing' as a way of understanding behaviours as this is very often at the core of self-harm. Most importantly, MindEd has not missed the crucial aspects of looking after oneself and getting support through supervision.

Self-harm is defined correctly, as are suicidal ideation and behaviour as different but overlapping. They are described through short films of young people, Lucy and Ayesha. Another film featuring Lucy shows her parents' responses with helpful 'dos and don'ts' guidance. Together with an illustration of the cycle of the self-harm model, Ayesha's film clearly shows the differences between self-harm and suicide and additional features such as depression. There is an important message about not making assumptions but listening and validating young people's views and concerns. The film clips range from two to nearly five minutes in length – they are accurate in presentation and very watchable, though diversity more reflective of our population would have been welcome.

Overall, the material is accurate, timely and appropriately supported by up-to-date research and understanding. I would recommend this e-learning for its target audience in schools, but it would also be suitable for others working with children and young people.

'Clearly shows the differences between self-harm and suicide and additional features such as depression'

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