

## SELF-HARM IN STOCKTON-ON-TEES

### Briefing for People Select Committee

16 January 2017

#### Why is self-harm important?

Self-harm is important for a number of reasons:

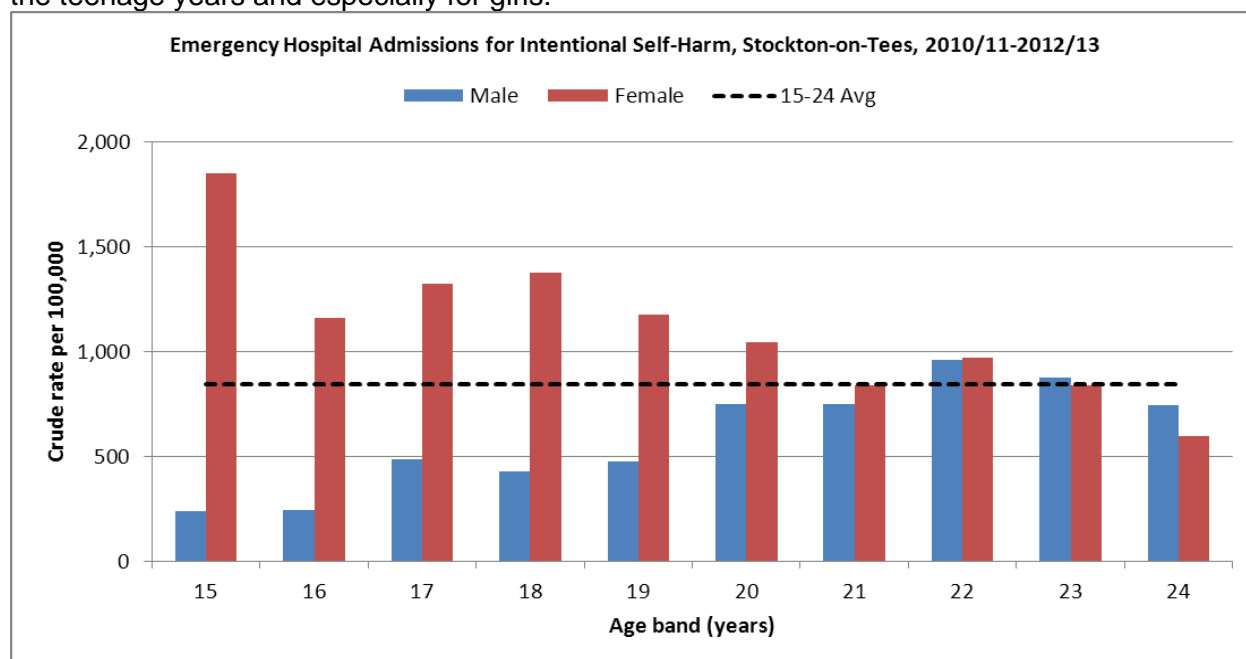
- It can be a clue to underlying difficulties
- It can be a predictor of future problems
- It is often repeated (about 1 in 5 of those who self-harm)
- There are higher risks of future serious harm
- It is important to tackle to reduce future risk

#### How big a problem is it?

National estimates vary. Some results suggest as many as 10% of young people (1 in 10) have self-harmed at some point in the past.

A survey of 15-16 year olds showed 6.9% overall (about 1 in 14) had self-harmed in the past year. This was 11.2% of girls (1 in 9) and 3.2% of boys (1 in 31). So overall, it is a common problem.

Hospital admissions for self-harm in Stockton-on-Tees are considerably higher than the average for England. The hospital admission rates for self-harm locally are much higher in the teenage years and especially for girls:



The graph shows that in the teenage years, admission rates for self-harm in females (red bars) are approximately 3-4 times higher than males (blue bars). This gender gap reduces as age increases and is more equal by the age of 21 years.

We also know that these are just the most 'serious' cases and many more people self-harm without going to hospital.

### What works for self-harm?

There is a range of evidence to suggest what works in tackling self-harm issues. Some of this includes:

- Prevention - school-based work
- Young people will often turn to other young people for support and wish to talk to someone who will listen to and respect them
- Reducing social isolation
- Reaction to first disclosure is very important
- School staff and all others who work with young people need a good awareness and understanding of self-harm
- Peer support schemes, self-help (including distraction techniques) and help for carers/parents too
- Tackle the underlying cause
- Address within wider strategies to improve young people's mental and emotional wellbeing
- Offer comprehensive assessments to those who have self-harmed

### What might we need to do?

Recent work in the Public Health department has suggested a range of measures that could be undertaken locally. These include:

- Training on self-harm issues for frontline workers
- Support for 'low level' self-harm
- Support for families and friends of those who self-harm
- Seeking views of young people and considering use of technology
- Proper assessments for those who self-harm
- Improving collection of numbers on self-harm cases