

## **Working together to support people who self-harm**

Stephanie is 20 years old and has been self-harming for six years. She is the eldest daughter in a family of three girls, and was sexually abused by her father between the age of seven until she left home at 17. Although her father has stopped abusing her, she lives with the constant distress that he will abuse her younger sisters. Stephanie began to self-harm at 14, because she found it gave her a euphoric feeling that released her from the emotional pain she felt over being abused.

Stephanie was completing year 12 when she left home. She has struggled to finish year 12 because she is sharing a flat with three friends, working part-time in a supermarket and trying to complete a TAFE course. Her flat mates do not know that she self-harms, but they often ask her if she is feeling okay when she becomes quiet and does not want to socialise with them in the main living area of the flat. People at TAFE are not aware of her self-harming because she always wears long sleeves to cover it up. Stephanie generally cuts her arms, and sometimes writes words like hate, love, pain and general lines on herself.

Between the age of 15 and 18, Stephanie harmed herself every day. Stephanie has also indulged in heavy drinking and drugs to try to escape her emotional pain. She has found it difficult to form emotional relationships with people.

Stephanie visited her usual family GP to seek help. The GP prescribed antidepressants and referred her to a psychologist. Some of the CBT therapy offered by the psychologist helped temporarily, but Stephanie does not feel that the antidepressants are helping.

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