

1. A vision to make a difference

1 in 10 British teenagers self harm. That is to say, they cut, burn or harm themselves as a way of coping with overwhelming emotions. This activity is often highly secretive and can become addictive as well as dangerous. Little understood, self harm has become a major issue in British youth culture with support and help scarce.

In 2004 the Government commissioned a National Inquiry into Self Harm which confirmed the need to develop more and better support services to face a growing crisis among young people. It also concluded that the most effective help for teenagers was found through small therapeutic groups and school-based interventions.

Whilst the NHS, through GP's and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, provide some support, there is still a huge gap in services. Our vision is to fill that gap and meet the needs of young people in Luton who self harm.

2. LCET's current work with young people who self harm

LCET is a charity based in Bedfordshire working with young people aged 11 to 19. Over the past 7 years we have developed an innovative and highly successful approach to enabling young people to stop harming and find other more positive ways of coping with emotional pressures. The work is mostly based in schools where therapeutic group work is led by members of our team. Groups run over 8 weeks and a curriculum has been developed to give the space and context for young people to talk honestly and openly about their harming. Over 80% of those taking part stop harming by the end of the programme. LCET has received national acclaim for this work, as well as funding from BBC Children in Need and other national grant making trusts.

As part of the past work, we staged 'Hear Me', an art exhibition by local young people who harm. The visual and audio material has since been used widely in helping people understand more about self harm.

We are now looking to enhance this work further, continuing our group work, but also finding new ways to support young people. We are looking for someone to take the lead in developing this programme, working alongside the other members of the therapeutic team who each have specialisms in other areas (for example, working with young people in care).

3. A national perspective

Out of the success of our local work, LCET is also developing a national project to support young people who self harm called selfharm.co.uk. An ambitious website is in development, due to be launched in March 2010, offering advice, support and information for young people. The self harm therapeutic worker will be closely involved, working with the Advisory Group overseeing the project, to develop new content and services.

4. About LCET

LCET is a charity started by local churches in Luton in 1993. Over the 16 years of it's work, three complementary teams have developed: one providing therapeutic care for young people with emotional and personal needs, another working with young people who are NEET (not in education, employment or training) and the third seeking to promote spiritual development in young people through placing chaplains in local secondary schools. These three teams work closely together on a range of other larger projects and each is led by a senior manager. LCET now works in all thirteen of the town's secondary schools as well as the other specialist educational establishments.

5. The LCET team

There are currently fifteen salaried staff together with over twenty volunteer staff. The whole team meets together weekly. In addition each department will have regular meetings and a programme of supervision and management for individual staff. Six times a year the team holds a three day retreat at a nearby Benedictine monastery, giving space to reflect and develop as a community.

6. Management structure

Each team or department has a Director, managing its work. Together with the Finance Director and the LCET Chief Executive and Deputy, they make up the senior management team who are, in turn, responsible to a Board of Trustees. The Trust also has a number of Patrons. The senior management team meets fortnightly and the Board of Trustees meets five times each year.

7. Training

LCET will provide training appropriate to the experience of the appointed staff member. A skills audit will be developed in the first few weeks which will enable a comprehensive training plan to be put together. This may include mentoring from LCET staff, internal training or external courses.

LCET also provide opportunities for staff to pursue further education qualifications and provide course fees and study time to facilitate this. To date five staff have successfully completed a master postgraduate degree qualification in a related field with a variety of universities and colleges.

8. Salary structure

LCET's salary structure takes account of previous relevant experience and qualifications and also provides annual incremental increases for length of service and inflation. Additional increases are given for management or other senior roles.

9. Recruitment

LCET follows the guidelines laid out by the Luton Safeguarding Children Board in ensuring safe and appropriate recruitment.

