

3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on

# Mental Health and Human Resilience

June 21-23, 2017 London, UK

## Promoting protective factors in UK secondary schools to moderate risk factors for adolescent self-harm

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Self-harm has a strong prevalence within adolescent populations in Europe and a potent relationship with suicide. In the UK, adolescent self-harm hospital admissions are rising each year. These statistics reflect the tip of the iceberg with the majority of incidents hidden from public health networks. This invisibility creates barriers to: Epidemiological information, the planning and evaluation of evidence-based support, health management within the complexity of adolescent self-harming behaviors to ensure recovery and healthy adolescent trajectories. It is also a serious health risk for this population group and accidental death from self-harm is one of the common causes of injury-related adolescent death. This paper outlines the results of a recent UK county-wide complex public health project targeting adolescent self-harm, and makes key recommendations for future developments to support the needs of this population group. The pilot program was designed to develop protective factors within secondary schools settings in the overarching context of the increase in adolescent self-harming behaviors and this population's invisibility to health services for support. Detail is given of specific barriers and facilitators in regards to planning support for, and meeting the needs of, the adolescent self-harm population group in UK secondary school settings, which provides detail and insight for future public health planning improvements. Significant barriers include the lack of knowledge regarding adolescent self-harming behaviors and the sparse evidence-base. Key recommendations are made to continue to develop research and programs that establish protective factors in UK secondary schools to moderate risk factors for adolescent self-harm.

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