BATTLE SCARS CIO SELF-HARM POLICY

Policy information	
Organisation	Battle Scars
Scope of policy	Applies to all volunteers, trustees, employees and service users
Policy operational date (original)	29/12/18
Reviewed	18/01/26
Amended	No
Date approved by Board	05/08/24
Policy review date	By 31/01/28 Every 2 years or sooner if required
Distributing	This policy will be available on the Battle Scars website. It will be a requirement for all trustees and staff to read the policy after appointment or after its review. Volunteers will be kept up to date with any changes that might affect their role.
Policy	
Background	All volunteers (including trustees) and employees have personal experience of self-harm (direct or indirect). It's either compulsory or advised for the above to attend the Battle Scars training on self-harm (depending on role). Battle Scars never sets individuals' goals but we promote the management of self-harm.
Aims	The aim of this policy is to: • provide clarification on procedures regarding self-harming on Battle Scars premises; • provide clarification on procedures regarding self-harming outside Battle Scars premises while performing their duties; • re-enforce the peer support group agreements; • provide clear guidance to volunteers and employees on dealing with service users who have self-harmed or need to self-harm; • provide clarification on procedures regarding staff and volunteer conduct; • provide guidance about the support line managers need to provide to staff/volunteers who deal with self-harm on the premises or in their service; • provide guidance to staff and volunteers about how to support colleagues who self-harm on the premises.
Declaration	Even though self-harm is not encouraged by Battle Scars, it is preferable to self-harm in a more controlled manner on Battle Scars premises with increased safety and support than in an environment or under circumstances with higher risk.
Definition	The Battle Scars definition of self-harm: Self-harm is any harm done to the body or mind, internal or external, with short or long-term effects.
Procedure	

Self-harming within Battle Scars premises – visitor, service user, building partner, building partner service user	• It is expected that a member of the Battle Scars' team will be spoken to beforehand to allow them to offer support, check safety and, ultimately, provide the person with access to a space they can use for self-harm, if necessary. • The person needing to self-harm is an adult (18+). If under 18 we cannot knowingly allow them to self-harm on the premises but we will offer support (whether they have not self-harmed yet or already have self-harmed). Such support will be offered to any person who indicates they need to self-harm or have just self-harmed by a member of the Battle Scars team (staff or volunteer) who is comfortable enough to have such a conversation. The aim will be to reduce the intensity of the self-harm urges, distract, assist the person to apply their strategies and avoid self-harming. We acknowledge that these attempts will not always be successful. • If self-harm is unavoidable (it is acceptable to ask the person if they still need to self-harm), Battle Scars team members may arrange for the person to use the designated room (if available). The Battle Scars team member will ask how long the person needs and will come and check up on them after that time has elapsed. They will have to ask if the person needing to self-harm can keep themselves safe. They have the right to ask which self-harm method will be used as safe self-harm can only be practiced with certain methods (e.g. cutting, burning). If the method can be practiced safely but the person doesn't feel they can do it safely, distraction/delaying techniques may be used. The time the person will be left alone in the designated room will be agreed in advance but reducing it may be negotiated to encourage self-harming safely. • In cases where only one member of the Battle Scars team is present with the person who needs to self-harm and are not comfortable/confident to allow the above they have the right to prohibit such self-harming behaviour on the premises. • If the **self-harm method is self-poisoning, overdosing or ligaturing, it will not be allowed under any circumstances.** If they disclose that they've already self-poisoned or have taken an overdose they will be encouraged to seek medical attention and/or an ambulance will be called. If the need to self-harm in such a way is disclosed, they will be offered a 1-1 if possible and it's safe to do so. Extra help may be sought (e.g. contact the crisis team). • A sharps bin will be provided in the designated room as well as disinfectant wipes and first aid supplies. The room must be left clean and tidy (cleaning wipes will be provided). All self-harming must be discreetly carried out to avoid triggering others present in the building. • The room finger-locks from the inside but all staff have access to the key and will enter if concerned or if asked to (for example, the person self-harming needs assistance to care for their injuries, or have accidentally hurt themselves

	more than intended, or can no longer keep themselves safe). • It's the responsibility of the person who self-harmed to place any sharps in the sharp bin. Battle Scars staff will not attempt to remove any sharps, the person self-harming will be asked to place them in the sharps bin. If necessary, Battle Scars staff will place sharps in the sharps bin with care and wearing gloves. • It's the responsibility of the person who self-harms to clean the room and dispose of any contaminated tissues and wipes in the bin provided. The bin liner will be changed after every time someone has used the room for this purpose. • Even though not compulsory for anybody present, attempts should be made to engage in conversation afterwards, ensure the person feels accepted, supported and to confirm they were able to care for their own injuries. Self-care is always encouraged. Open wounds need to be dressed appropriately for hygiene reasons *(see First Aid section below).* • In cases of severe self-harm on Battle Scars premises, confidentiality will be broken and an ambulance will be called. **If possible**, we will inform the person who self-harmed of our actions. • All self-harm on the premises, with or without the Battle Scars team's prior knowledge, has to be logged by staff using the Self-harm log spreadsheet. The aim of this is to monitor cases of repeat self-harm, adjust and/or increase support provided to people who self-harm on the premises and for the purposes of reviewing this policy. Also to monitor the Battle Scars team's wellbeing when dealing with someone else's self-harm. • The Board of Trustees will be regularly updated on self-harm on the premises. Certain cases may be discussed, especially if we have safeguarding concerns. • The Battle Scars Protecting Vulnerable Adults and Safeguarding Children Policies will be implemented when required. *by *Battle Scars team member* we mean staff and volunteers but there is no expectation for volunteers to deal with this and they are advised to ask a staff member to take responsibility who can in turn request this is dealt with by a manager or senior staff. *(See below for dealing with repeated self-harm on the premises and when the severity of the self-harm increases)*
Self-harming within Battle Scars premises – staff and volunteers	The above will also apply if the person who needs to self-harm is a member of staff or a volunteer working on Battle Scars premises. • If lone working they must practice care due to lack of immediate support. They are expected to request help by getting emergency medical attention, be honest and log it in the spreadsheet. • We encourage staff and volunteers to try to obtain support before and/or after from other members of the team. • Some volunteers may be between the ages of 16 and 18. It is essential they inform a more senior member of their team

	or a member of staff if they need to self-harm who will support them with the aim to avoid self-harm. If self-harm is unavoidable, it will be permitted on the premises but having an informal discussion with a member of the team will be compulsory. • We discourage all staff and volunteers from self-poisoning, overdosing and ligaturing on the premises but we will offer full support if this has occurred without the knowledge of any other team members. • As self-harm is routinely brought up in supervision, any instances of self-harm on Battle Scars premises can also be discussed. Interventions will be suggested depending on the severity of the self-harm and the impact it has on the employee's/volunteer's ability to carry out their role's tasks and possible impact on the rest of the team, such as increasing supervision frequency, less formal support from line manager/team. Self-care is always encouraged. • Open wounds need to be dressed appropriately for hygiene reasons. *(see First Aid section below)*
Self-harming outside Battle Scars premises while on Battle Scars business involving others (staff and volunteers)	• All volunteers and employees are advised to practice safe self-harm, self-care and to reach out for support before the act or after. This can also be brought up during supervision. • Volunteers and staff are expected to be open about their ability to do their tasks. If they feel they are able, they are expected to keep themselves safe while on Battle Scars business involving others (i.e. events, presentations, groups). If, for some reason, they are triggered and the need to self-harm is beyond managing while they are performing their tasks, the line manager, volunteer manager or CEO must be contacted immediately to arrange cover or at least be aware that there is no Battle Scars representation at the event. • Open wounds need to be dressed appropriately for hygiene reasons.
Self-harming behaviour during group – attendees (excluding food-related self-harm)	• If a service user self-harms during a support group (for example, during break) and discloses it to the facilitators or needs help with their injuries, depending on the self-harm method and damage caused, they will be asked to have a 1-1 with the group facilitator. It is not the group facilitator's duty to assess the injuries but in the case of serious self-harm the group facilitator will need to consider breaking confidentiality as above. • If a service user frequently self-harms during the group in ways that require the facilitator's time and assistance or in ways that disrupt the group, it must be reported to the line manager, volunteer manager or the CEO to discuss the best way to support the service user (including signposting or referral to other services) and the facilitators. In extreme cases, the service user may be informed they can no longer use our services. • If a volunteer or employee self-harms while representing Battle Scars at a support group, event or similar, they are expected to care for their injuries and dress them

	appropriately (if they do not have 1st aid supplies with them, we advise them to ask for/use the 1st aid kit of the premises). The line manager, volunteer manager or CEO must be notified as soon as possible. Supervision will be arranged at the earliest convenience.
Repeated self-harm	If the self-harm happened **with** the knowledge of a member of the Battle Scars team in the case of service user or a staff/ colleague/manager if the case of staff and volunteers: • If visitors and users of services on the premises ask to be provided space to self-harm regularly (more than twice in a month or more than 4 times over a year) a member of staff will speak to them next time they ask. This will be compulsory if they wish to continue using our services. • If volunteers frequently self-harm on the premises (more than twice in a month or more than 6 times over a year) the volunteer manager or leader will arrange to have a discussion with them at the earliest opportunity. • If staff frequently self-harm on the premises (more than twice in a month or more than 10 times over the year) their line manager or CEO will arrange a supervision at the earliest opportunity. • Discussions following repeated self-harm will focus on triggers/reasons behind the self-harm, alternatives, strategies, whether further support could be provided, if they could benefit from being signposted/referred to other services/organisations etc. If the self-harm happened on the premises **without** the **prior** knowledge of the Battle Scars team, or by **staff**, without informing a colleague or a manager **prior or as soon as possible following the self-harm**: • they will be reminded of the conditions about self-harming on the premises. • If the behaviour continues, they will be issued a verbal warning. • Service users who are unable to moderate their behaviour may be informed they can no longer use our services. • Volunteers whose behaviour does not change will be issued with a written warning. If the behaviour remains unchanged, their volunteering will be terminated. • If this is perpetrated by staff and behaviour remains unchanged, the Disciplinary Policy will be applied.
Increase in self-harm severity	• If we become aware that someone's self-harm severity has significantly increased (e.g. if self-harm cuts now require medical attention when they didn't previously) we will aim to explore the reasons with them, ensure they obtain medical attention or have available to them supplies to care for their injuries. • Advice about wound care should only be provided by those trained in delivering first-aid unless the advice is basic (e.g. signs of infection, cleanliness). *See First-aid section below* • They may need to be reminded about certain aspects of this policy.

Self-harm on premises – children using services (under 18)	• We cannot knowingly permit children under the age of 18 who are using services to self-harm on the premises but we will encourage them to speak to a member of the Battle Scars team if they need to self-harm or have self-harmed and, if appropriate or necessary, also signpost or refer to other services. • If medical attention is required, an ambulance will be called, with the child's knowledge **if possible** and overriding any objections *(also see Notifying parents of children section below).*
Notifying parents of children	• It is presumed that any child attending Battle Scars services self-harms. • Staff working with children will encourage them to talk to their parents/carers and/or other trusted adults about their self-harm and will assist them to do so. • If the child is adamant about their parents/carers not being told and the self-harm is of low risk to health/life, Battle Scars will provide them with ongoing support if possible, signposting or referral to other services if appropriate or necessary. The Battle Scars Safeguarding Children policy will be followed. • If there is risk to life or the self-harm requires medical attention, the parents/carers will be informed and/or crisis/ emergency services will be contacted. • The section of this policy will be reviewed once such services are set up whether a review is due or not.
First-aid	Unless the Battle Scars representative is first-aid trained they must only offer the first-aid kit to the injured person and assist only if both parties are happy with that, for example, to apply a bandage by holding the end, to assist with the application of wound closure strips. Gloves must be used which are easily available within the Battle Scars premises. First-aid supplies are located in more than one room in Battle Scars premises. If the injured person refuses treatment and the injury is not severe enough to require emergency medical attention, or if advice to seek medical attention is not heeded, Battle Scars will hold no further responsibility to act. The calling of an ambulance will happen with the person's knowledge **if possible**.
Informing others of the rules	Printed copies of the below will be available within Battle Scars premises or for the service user and member of the Battle Scars team to go through together. It will be explained in more detail to new staff and volunteers: "DECLARATION: Battle Scars, their trustees, staff and volunteers cannot be held responsible for any self-harm taking place on the premises. External self-harm is allowed in a certain area on these premises, but these rules must be followed: • You must be an adult (18+). • Speak to a member of the Battle Scars team. • Make it clear you need to self-harm. • Engage with the Battle Scars team member who will try to support you and answer their questions to determine how safe you can remain.

	• **We expect everybody to try and practice safe self-harm**. • Self-harm by **self-poisoning, overdosing or ligaturing is not allowed on the premises** but if you need help, speak to a member of the Battle Scars team or request/access medical attention by attending A&E or ringing 999. • A sharps bin is available in the designated room. Please dispose of any sharps safely. • **Please do not self-harm in the toilets.** Ask to use the designated room (there are no guarantees the room will be available) where you can be comfortable, safe and can keep injuries cleaner. • You can lock the room for privacy. The Battle Scars team member will agree with you how long before they check up on you (for example, after 10 minutes). They will not enter the room unless concerned or asked to so please respond to their knock or enquiry about your wellbeing. • First aid supplies will be available to you if you need them but we cannot promise to have everything you need. • You are responsible for disposing any sharps in the sharps bin, cleaning the room and disposing anything contaminated in the bin provided. • Speak to the member of staff or volunteer facilitator afterwards or let them know if you need more help. If they need to call an ambulance or put a referral to the crisis team, they will let you know. • All incidents of self-harm will be recorded for everybody's safety. Only Battle Scars staff have access to this. • We expect you to show consideration towards other users of the space. Battle Scars staff have the right to prohibit self-harm on the premises for safety or personal reasons. Please be considerate and respect their wishes.
Other considerations	

Self-harm 'tools' and tablets	• Self-harm 'tools': We cannot stop people bringing their self-harm tools in the premises but such tools must be for personal use only and kept securely and privately (e.g. in pocket or handbag).
	• Staff can keep a self-harm kit on the premises as long as it's securely stored.
	• Sharing of self-harm tools is prohibited.
	• If someone asks Battle Scars team members to dispose of self-harm tools or tablets:
	  o the sharps bin will be offered
	  o other tools will be disposed of appropriately
	  o tablets will be locked away and taken to a pharmacy for disposal at the earliest convenience by a staff member who can remain safe with them.
	• If someone asks Battle Scars team members to **safekeep** their self-harm tools: this is up to each team member's discretion. **Battle Scars does not expect staff or volunteers to take on this responsibility.** They will explain what they are prepared to do before accepting them:
	  o Refuse to safekeep.
	  o Accept to dispose of only.

	○ Accept but then hand over to another member of the team with no guarantee they will be returned. ○ Accept to safekeep and willing to return if safe to do so. ○ If not claimed within a month, they will be disposed of. ○ If tablets are handed over to a member of the Battle Scars team they will always be disposed of and not returned. Any tools that are safekept must be placed in a dated zippy bag with the person's name on, date they were handed over and securely stored. Any tools that have not been claimed for a month will be disposed of. Such actions must be added to the Self-harm log and a manager must be notified of all such incidents to ensure staff/volunteer wellbeing and possibly follow up these cases.
Interrupting someone while they self-harm	**Under no circumstances physically stop someone from self-harming.** Talk to them, assess risk and • allow them to continue in privacy offering to come back in a few minutes • call for help or • if the risk is too high, call 999.
Wounds & scars	• All open wounds need to be dressed for hygiene purposes and to avoid triggering others. • Partially healed wounds that would benefit from not being dressed can be visible. • Healed or mostly healed scars can be visible.
Volunteer & staff recruitment and self-harm	It is expected that volunteers and staff have lived or living experience of self-harm. At the selection process they will be asked (if not already known) whether their struggles with self-harm are current or past. Battle Scars managers may privately enquire about the nature of the self-harm, if current, to be aware of and manage potential risks; also to assist the volunteer/staff with staying safe. For certain roles, experience as a carer of a close loved one who self-harms is required instead. This can be discussed during the selection process.
Food-related self-harm	To avoid triggering people struggling with food-related self-harm: • No food will be allowed in the group room during groups and similar activities. All food will be kept in the kitchen and can be consumed in other parts of the building or grounds. • When groups take place in other venues, consumption of food will not be allowed in the room the group is in.
Other policies	We will follow the following Battle Scars policies: • Confidentiality • Data Protection • Health & Safety • Personal Safety & Boundaries
Policy review	
Responsibility	It is the responsibility of the CEO to review this policy unless the task has been delegated to an appropriate volunteer or employee before the policy review date.
Procedure	All volunteers and employees can have input in this policy's review via their supervision.

Timing	The review must be completed within a month of the review date.