

NICE guideline NG225

In September 2022, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) published the NG225 guideline entitled: Self-harm: assessment, management and preventing recurrence. The recommendations within the guidelines apply to all staff regardless of their setting. The broad application of NG225 aims to support individual who self-harm regardless of the service from which they seek support, to standardise the quality of care and support received, hence the inclusive scope of this guideline. Further guidance is being developed by the NHS on the implementation of NG225, which can be adapted to the counselling and psychotherapy professions.

Which client group do the guidelines impact working with?

The guidance applies to children and adults alike, unless a recommendation states it is specifically relevant to one group only.

What do candidates need to know and do?

- understand what the guideline recommends
- understand how the guideline impacts their therapeutic work
- reflect on how the guideline informs their practice and ensure they engage with clients taking into account the recommendations below

What does this guideline recommend that is different to recommendations in the past?

The guideline recommends that counsellors and psychotherapists do not use risk assessment tools and scales to:

1. predict suicide or repetition of self-harm (1.6.1).
2. determine who should and should not be offered treatment or who should be discharged (1.6.2)

See page 19 of the guideline for further information.

How does the guideline impact on therapeutic work?

Risk assessment tools and scales are now to be used to facilitate an open and holistic conversation with the client. They are no longer to be used as a tool to predict whether there is likely to be repetition of suicide or self harm in the future.

A collaborative conversation with the client might typically include the following areas:

- current difficulties or challenges the client faces
- current risks
- existing strengths and resources

- protective factors
- historical factors and experiences

Suggested exercises for Level 4 trainees

- 1) Candidates to work in groups of 3-5 (depending on the size of the group). Each group to be given one of the areas listed above and to research and document examples of answers a client may give. Candidates to reflect on areas which may be outside of their limit of proficiency and areas which require further study or personal reflection.
- 2) Ask candidates to work in pairs as counsellor and client on a personal challenge. The counsellor introduces the emotion wheel explaining the purpose of it and encouraging the client to engage with the emotion wheel, using it to identify their feelings around the personal challenge and facilitate a discussion around the client's feelings.

Resources:

BACP Good Practice in Action fact sheet 042: Working with suicidal clients in the counselling professions GPiA 042

BACP Good Practice in Action fact sheet 120: Working with risk within the counselling professions GPiA 120

Emotional Wellbeing Service Cardiff and Vale: A Self-Harm self-help workbook for young people in secondary school (emotion wheel is on page 8)

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence website

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence NG225 Guidance webpage

therapistaid.com

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