Causes of self-harm

The causes of self-harm are the things that set it off in the first place - not necessarily what makes the individual continue to self-harm.

The causes of self-harm may be:

- bullying
- abuse (sexual, emotional or physical)
- neglect
- school/work pressures
- family financial difficulties
- housing problems
- relationship troubles
- family problems
- bereavement
- loneliness/isolation
- eating disorders
- drug/alcohol problems
- coming to terms with sexuality

...or any experience or event causing feelings, thoughts or tensions of a negative nature.

Sometimes individuals go for months without harming themselves, while others self-harm daily.

For some individuals, an episode of self-harm may be triggered by a significant life event, but for others the day to day fluctuation in their thoughts and feelings are too much to bear. Simple stresses such as breaking a glass, or running late for an appointment might be enough to create a tension so overwhelming in the individual that they self-harm to cope with this. For some, self-harm can become a habit; something they routinely do to survive on a day to day basis because they don’t know what else to do.

Sometimes, even 'positive' experiences can create overwhelming feelings in the individual that they do not know how to manage.

For all individuals the starting point of recovery is to become aware of their reasons for, and drives to, self-harm; it is armed with this knowledge that they can then learn to respond differently to their difficulties. Recovery is always possible, however lost and overwhelmed the person feels.