

## PSHE Association warns against using Ch4 'My Self-Harm Nightmare' documentary in class

The PSHE Association is deeply concerned about the content of the 'My Self-Harm Nightmare' Channel 4 documentary aired on Wednesday night which contains graphic depictions and description of self-harming, and therefore could be a 'trigger' to young people vulnerable to self-harm. We urge against any school using the documentary in the classroom for this reason.

Our Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Advisor, Dr. Pooky Knightsmith, is a leading expert in this field and comments that:

“You should never go into too much detail about the technical details of self-harm or eating disorders as this could trigger unhealthy responses in any vulnerable individuals in your group. Talking about specific methods of self-harm can be instructive to vulnerable students.

These suggestions may also be taken on board by any students who are currently harming.

Graphic or extreme images of self-harm and eating disorders should also never be shown for the following reasons:

- they act as a barrier to seeking help: if someone who self-harms sees images of more severe cases they are likely to feel that their own self-harming is not severe enough to be taken seriously/they're not yet 'doing it well enough'
- they provide a target to be achieved, or a bench mark to strive to reach for those who are vulnerable to, or who are already self-harming or suffering from disordered eating.

Teachers cannot know who will be harming in their class but should assume that someone in the class is currently self harming, has self harmed in the past or is at risk of doing so in the future and should therefore exercise extreme caution.”

The Association is due to launch guidance this week on teaching about mental health and emotional wellbeing which will provide advice to schools on how to address these issues appropriately. The guidance will be free to download from: [www.pshe-association.org.uk/emotionalhealth](http://www.pshe-association.org.uk/emotionalhealth).