**Book review**

‘Understanding and Responding to Self-Harm: The One Stop Guide’. Allan House. Profile Books. ISBN: 978 1 78816 027 8.

Allan House, Professor of Liaison Psychiatry at the University of Leeds, has penned a short book in the ‘One-Stop Guide’ series that takes the complexity of self-harm, and breaks it down into manageable ‘parts’, and subsequently chapters, that are simple to read, comprehend, and retain, intended for those who struggle with self-harm, those who know someone who self-harms, and professionals who are in contact with people who self-harm.

The book is interspersed with regular and complementary pseudonymised quotes from people and professionals affected by self-harm, and boxed case studies augment the surrounding text. House professes this is not an academic book, and to his word, there are no scientific references and jargon is well explained. Each chapter can be read, taught, or reflected on separately, or appreciated in the natural order of completing a book.

Part one and two elucidate what self-harm is, and why people self-harm. House grapples with the academic conundrum of what the term ‘self-harm’ denotes, and does well to describe this clearly. Risk factors for self-harm are summarised and reasons for self-harm explored. To many, self-harm signifies uncontainable personal distress, but to a few, self-harm serves a positive function: generating a sense of control, pleasure, or strength.

Part three and four offer practical advice on how to help yourself, help others, and how to seek help from the health service. There are five very sensible tips for looking after yourself, three important points for when nearing a crisis, and seven virtuous suggestions for when you are concerned about someone’s self-harm. As a GP, the advice outlined in preparation for seeing your GP is accurate and welcome. The ‘list for my GP visit’ is an essential consideration if it is difficult openly talk and all GPs will find this helpful, even if immediately handed over.

Reasons for people not receiving the self-harm care they desire are centred on poor knowledge of self-harm, unsatisfactory communication with those who self-harm, and a scarcity of dedicated self-harm services or services not offering psychosocial support for self-harm. Every GP has an experience of managing a patient with self-harm, but we know most GPs find it challenging. This thoughtfully compiled guide will assist to dispel confusion about self-harm, and is a crucial resource for all in general practice to open.