



# Use of Ligature Cutters

The Resuscitation Department

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# Objectives

- To explore the use of the BIG FISH CUTTER used across the Trust
- To explore the deployment of the TUFF CUT SCISSORS used for the removal of a ligature
- To describe the actions required in response to finding someone who has tied a ligature



## Things to avoid..

- Placing patients at risk of harm in areas where constant supervision would be a challenge?
- Avoid the patient having access to pendant lighting
- Avoid areas with electric sockets at chest height



# Things to empower..

- Effective risk assessments
- Observe the policy for use of ligature cutters
- Effective Mental Health assessments
- Engage Mental Health services at the earliest practicable opportunity
- Seek advice if unsure and ask questions
- Engage and work with support services



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# What works well...

- Involve service users
- Assess ligature risk in small teams
- Be clear on accountabilities
- Location of Patients on wards (visible)
- Listen to research
- Focus on recovery



# What is a Ligature!

Its anything that can be used to make a loop or a noose with the intention of deliberate or accidental self harm by hanging or asphyxiation



## Potential materials (not exhaustive)

- Light/pull cords
- Bedding (intact or torn into strips)
- Clothing
- Shoe laces
- Electric cords/pull bells/phone chargers
- Plastic bags
- Guitar strings
- Plastic aprons



# What is a Ligature Point!

its any fixed point where a ligature can be tied to, wedged around or behind, or held in place by any means which enables the ligature to bear weight (wholly or partially) of a person attempting to harm themselves by hanging or asphyxiation.





# What is an anti-Ligature Point/fitting!

An anti-ligature fitting is any fitting that is designed in such a way as to prevent an individual or group attaching a ligature to it for the purpose of self harm.

# Ligature risk assessment...

- Should be undertaken annually in all areas and following a significant event or a structural change
- They should be undertaken by a trained assessor
- Always consider the self harm care plan of a patient who is at risk and reflect any identified ligature points.
- Any risk assessment will inform the decision making process and the required level of observation needed.
- The service user **MUST** always be involved in the decision making process regarding their safety and should be documented.
- If the service user declines or lacks capacity, engage relevant stakeholders and clearly document and regularly review.

# On discovering a potential ligature point or hazard

- **REPORT** it to the Nurse in Charge
- **REMOVE** if safe to do so
- **COMPLETE** a Untoward Incident Report (UIR)
- **COMPLETE** or update your risk assessment
- **REVIEW** your level of observations and document accordingly



# Ligature Cutters

The following ligature cutters were selected following a process of best practice and testing

**TUFF-CUT SCISSORS**  
**BIG FISH SAFETY KNIFE**

# TUFF – CUT SCISSORS

- **USED FOR:**
- Clothing
- Seat belts/nylon
- Leather
- Denim
- Plastic ties
- Ropes



# BIG FISH SAFETY KNIFE

- **USED FOR:**
- Strapping
- Bubble wrap
- Tape
- Rope
- Some wires
- Shrink wrap
- Plastic ties



# Ligature cutting equipment

- Must be available in all clinical areas
- Stored on the CRASH Trolley or Grab Bag
- All staff must be aware of their locations
- The location must be tag locked to avoid tamper
- Checked daily/monthly as part of the mandatory checks or following deployment of the trolley
- Cutters **MUST** always be available
- They are replaceable via the centralised resuscitation store (DRO 051 or ART 002)



# Training on the use of Ligature Cutters

All clinical staff should view the training video on the use of the ligature cutter following this presentation





# What to do on finding someone who has used a ligature

- **GET HELP** – pull the emergency buzzer dial **2222/9999** (state medical emergency and your exact location)
- Request ligature cutters from the CRASH trolley with defibrillator
- **SUPPORT** the persons weight (if safe to do so)
- As soon as possible release the tension on the ligature
- Keep the body weight supported or the tension off the ligature until cut
- **ALWAYS** attempt resuscitation in line with CORP/PROC/083
- In situations where the person resists staff attempts to remove the ligature it may be necessary for staff to use appropriate physical intervention.
- If on the acute site Dial 5555 and request support from the hospitals SAFETY TEAM

# Reporting a ligature incident

- Every incident requires a UIR
- Ensure all staff involved are requested to HOT **DEBRIEF** and complete statements for later action
- Consider **POLICE** engagement if necessary
- Consider **FORENSIC** evidence
- Consider if the scene needs securing
- Liaise with the Nurse in Charge of the Hospital

# AFTER a ligature incident

- ALL ligature cutters must be checked and blades replaced (via central resus store)
- Replace TUFF-CUT SCISSORS if used and re tag
- Consider retaining the used equipment in the event it is required by the police
- If the cutters are contaminated during the incident check with relevant leads/police prior to decontamination
- All sharps **MUST** be disposed of as per Trust policy

# Preserving FORENSIC evidence

## **If the person is pronounced dead on scene/following resuscitation**

- Follow procedure for an unexpected death
- Do NOT cut or untie the knot of the ligature end that is attached to the ligature point, in order to preserve forensic evidence
- Used equipment **MUST** be stored in a place of safety until police collection
- Complete all written records as required by policy
- Ensure contemporaneous records are made of the event and your involvement as soon as practically possible following the event.



## In summary

### On completion of this presentation you will know:

- What is a ligature
- What is a risk assessment
- What to do on finding someone with a ligature
- An understanding of the Trust's ligature cutters
- How to use ligature cutters
- What to do following a ligature incident
- The importance of Police and forensic involvement
- About the importance of contemporaneous record keeping



# Please watch this video for a practical demonstration of the ligature cutters

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EHcdiTPePW>  
[E&feature=youtu.be](#)