Learning Opportunities

SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

May 2023

Advice for Parents and Carers

Welcome to our latest Safeguarding newsletter.
We aim to provide you with useful links, tips and the latest, relevant help and advice on issues we feel will be of importance to you.
If you would like any more information, please do not hesitate to contact the school

Mental Health Awareness Week

15 – 21 May 2023 – "Anxiety"

We all have mental health. Mental health is about our feelings, our thinking, our emotions and our moods. Looking after our mental health is important.

At Learning Opportunities, promoting positive Mental Health and Wellbeing is an important aspect in all we do to support students to manage stress, manage relationships and make choices. We believe that it is important to all of us, at every stage of our lives.

Studies show that children and teens are more stressed today than ever before. This is particularly relevant when we consider that this is the exam period and some of our students will be preparing to move on to college and other training providers.

Anxiety is a normal emotion in us all, but sometimes it can get out of control and become a mental health problem.

Ways to support a child or young person

Be there to listen

Regularly ask your child how they're doing, to help them get used to talking about their feelings, and know there's always someone there to listen. You can get tips on Young Minds: How to talk to your child about mental health.

Support them through difficulties

Pay attention to how your child is feeling or behaving and try to help them work through difficulties. It may not be easy facing challenging behaviour, but try to help them understand what they're feeling and why. Learn more from the Maudsley Charity on difficult behaviour.

Stay involved in their life

Show interest in their life and what's important to them. It not only helps them value who they are but also makes it easier for you to spot problems and support them.

Encourage their interests

Support and encourage your child to explore their interests. Being active or creative, learning new things and being a part of a team helps connect us and boost our mental wellbeing.

Take what they say seriously

Listening to and valuing what they say makes them feel valued. Consider how to help them work through their emotions in constructive ways. Anna Freud Centre's guide on ways to support children and young people has more on this.

Build positive routines

Try to have structure around regular routines, especially around healthy eating and exercise. A good night's sleep is also important, so have a fixed time for going to bed and getting up. The Sleep Charity has relaxation sleep tips for children.

YOUTH VAPING

Vapes (also known as electronic cigarettes or e-cigarettes) seem to be everywhere. While vapes where initially marketed as a 'quit tool' for smokers, one trend on the rise is youth vaping – it has been reported that children as young as 8 years old have been found vaping in schools across the UK.

The increase in youth vaping has coincided with the arrival on the UK market of a new category of cheap and attractive disposable vapes that have proven particularly popular with children and young people and have been promoted extensively on social media.

WHAT IS VAPING? Vaping is the use of an electronic device to inhale vapour derived from a heated liquid. Most e-liquids also contain nicotine.

VAPES ARE NOT HARMLESS Short-term effects can include: • coughing • headaches • dizziness, and • sore throats. **Long-term effects are, as yet, unknown**.

THE LAW AND VAPING Vapes and vaping products containing nicotine, like tobacco, are age restricted. It's illegal to sell them to under 18s, and for adults to buy them on their behalf.

For more information about vapes and stopping smoking, visit freshquit.co.uk

Children and Young people can find out more information on vaping on the FRANK website: talktofrank.com/drug/vapes Or

read the ASH Briefing: ash.org.uk/uploads/ASH-brief-for-local-authorities-on-youth-vaping.pdf

Talk to your child

Set a positive example by being tobacco-free.

Avoid criticism and encourage an open dialogue.

Remember, your goal is to have a conversation, not to deliver a lecture.

HAVING CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR CHILD ABOUT VAPING?

Find the right moment when you see someone vaping, walk past a vape shop or see advertisements.

Ask questions what do they think about vaping? Do they know people who vape? Why do they think people vape?

Listen to them learn from them, but also use your knowledge to help them understand the facts and that vapes are not harmless.

Talk about your expectations explain your concerns and tell them why you don't want them to vape or smoke and to make clear that although neither are recommended, smoking is the far greater risk.

Let them know that you care about them explain that those who knowingly sell vapes to under 18s don't care who they sell to and they are just interested in making money

Talk about the different reasons why children may vape give examples such as wanting to fit in, curiosity, stress. Talk through effective ways to respond if they ever feel pressured to try it and practise responding together.

If your child is vaping try to understand why they are vaping by asking questions like "What do you enjoy about vaping?" Or "How does vaping make you feel?". Understanding this might help you to understand their needs and discuss other ways to meet those needs.

GROOMING

Finding something in common. Telling personal stories. Sharing something just a little bit vulnerable and creating a bond. We all do this to build trust. But what if someone takes that trust to a place where we never want it to go?

Grooming can happen quickly or over time, but at its core it is a process of exploiting trust to shift expectations of what safe behaviour is and control fear and shame to keep a child silent.

Over the past three decades of the internet, online relationships between individuals have become normalised. Young people and increasingly children, get to know people they've never met through video games, Instagram and snapchat. But this has gone hand in hand with an increase in child-grooming using these devices.

Preventing grooming can't be done through a single conversation, and it won't be accomplished just by telling young people not to go online or by restricting access to technology. Remember that grooming can look a lot like making a good friend—it might not be clear it's happening for a long period of time.

It is important that young people feel safe enough to come to us if a decision they make goes wrong. Not starting these conversations doesn't protect them from the harm—it leaves them ill-equipped to handle it when it happens.

Building a foundation of trust, where the child feels safe all of the time, can build the safety net they need to be able to come to you when something scary happens.

Who can help?

Victim Support/You&Co – you can contact your nearest Victim Support office, call the 24/7 Supportline, contact us via live chat, or if you are 16 or older, you can create a My Support Space account. This is a free, safe and secure online space where you can work through interactive guides to help you move forward after crime..

Rape Crisis – information and support for women and girls who have been raped or experienced sexual violence: 0808 802 9999.

Childline – 24-hour support for young people, both on the phone and through online chats and message boards, on grooming, sexual assault and a range of other issues: 0800 1111.

The Mix – information and support for under 25s on a whole range of issues, including rape and sexual assault as well as safe sexual relationships.
Get confidential help by email, text, webchat or phone: 0808 808 4994.

Victim Support, have put together a page which focuses on this issue. On it you'll find a guide to what grooming is, and how young people can help themselves be aware of the issue. Please follow the link:

https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/you-co/types-crime/sex-crimes/grooming/

Social Media – NGL!

NGL (Not Gonna Lie) is another of those 'bolt-on' apps which is designed to work alongside a major social media network. In this instance, the 'host' platforms are Instagram and Twitter – with NGL inviting a user's friends and followers to ask them questions anonymously. An intriguing novelty, perhaps – but also not without risk. The attached guide highlights a number of potential risks including oversharing, cyber-bullying and potentially costly subscription fees.

Capture, who's looking after the children?

Definitely worth watching

Please use the link below to watch a drama starring Jodie Whittaker (Dr Who), which looks at online harm, regulation, and responsibility.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UY2HOpuTlk

WHO TO CONTACT IF YOU HAVE A CONCERN ABOUT A CHILD

If you are worried about a child's safety, please do not hesitate to contact the Designated Safeguarding Leads straightaway.

If a child is in immediate danger, call the Police on 999

Our Safeguarding Team are always available to offer support and guidance on any safeguarding issues or concerns.

Our Safeguarding Team

Simon

Kev

Cath

Our School website features a Safeguarding area which includes links to our policies and our parents / carers & visitors Safeguarding leaflet

https://learningopps.org/safeguarding/

Please contact Simon Graydon (Designated Safeguarding Lead) if you have any Safeguarding / Child Protection concerns: simong@learningopps.org 01304 381906 / 07394 984289 / 01304 371527