

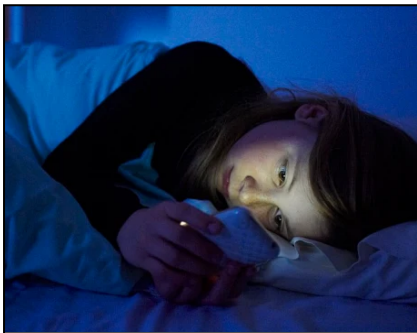
Latest Advice and Information for Parents, Students and Staff 2024 Spring Term Edition

Welcome to the Spring edition of Safeguarding News. The aim of this newsletter is to highlight some of the current themes, provide the latest advice and guidance and to link to resources that we can all use in keeping students safe.

Click [HERE](#) to go to the page on our website where you can find our Safeguarding Team poster and past editions of the newsletter.



Safeguarding in Focus : Who is in your child's bedroom?

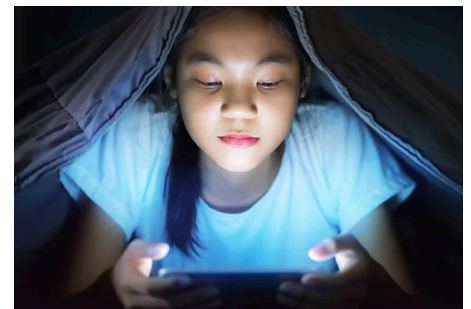


I asked a parent who was in their child's bedroom at night. The parent said "no one, of course". The parent was thinking about another person physically being there. We had a discussion about their child having a phone or computer in their room and that ***anyone could be with their child in their bedroom***

Phones and tablets have no place in a child's room at night. They can be the ***source of sleep deprivation*** at one end of the scale - imagine staying up and then being woken with notifications pinging away!

Apps are designed to be addictive. That is why we see people scrolling endlessly as they "just check their phone". Apps have an inbuilt "infinite scrolling" method to get users looking at content - both adults and children.

The inevitability of unsuitable / pornographic content. The most recent survey indicates that 90% of children ages 8 to 16 have seen online porn; and the average child is viewing porn by age 11. Other types of material are also inevitable - we have seen an increase in extremist content and content around the topic of body image. All having a negative impact on young people.



Tom Kirsting, author of *Disconnected: How to Reconnect Our Digitally Distracted Kids* is often asked, ***"At what age should you get your child a smartphone?"*** His answer is ***"Whenever you feel comfortable with your child viewing porn."***

What else is the impact of late night use of phones (or any other device)?

- Behaviour problems and aggression
- Poor school performance
- Depression and moodiness
- Stress and anxiety
- Lack of energy and alertness
- Weakened immunity
- Sleep terrors and/or nightmares
- Increased risk of suicide

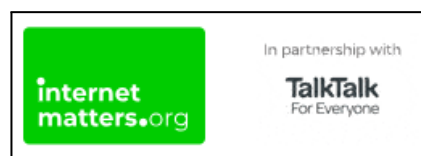
What can you do as a parent/carer?

There is lots of advice around the use of phones / devices and young people. Lots of the advice has a similar theme - **talking to your child about their use of the phone** and **setting boundaries and limits** to the use of the phone. Here are some suggestions:



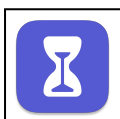
These have a very good section on starting conversations and setting boundaries on the use of phones. Click [HERE](#)

How to choose the right device for a young person. Which devices are recommended for different ages - from basic phones to smartphones. Click [HERE](#)



Parental Controls

Both Apple and Android have built-in parental controls to allow you to control what your child can access and also what times they can use their phone or device.



Apple have **Screen Time** and you can find out more [HERE](#)

Android have **Family Link** and you can find out more [HERE](#)



Smartphones / devices in school ...



As a school we took the step of saying to parents that we would only allow feature phones (basic) phones at school. Any phone brought into school is switched off and in the bag / zipped blazer pocket. Any phones that are confiscated are then returned only to the parent / carer. This change has dramatically reduced the number of times phones have been confiscated in school. We thank parents/carers for their continued support. If you would like any further help or advice on phones then please do not hesitate to let your Pastoral Manager know.

Safeguarding in Focus : Self-Harm

Why do people self-harm? Self-harm is when you hurt yourself as a way of dealing with very difficult feelings, painful memories or overwhelming situations and experiences. Self-harm can be for a number of reasons including:



- express something that is hard to put into words
- turn invisible thoughts or feelings into something visible
- change emotional pain into physical pain
- reduce overwhelming emotional feelings or thoughts
- have a sense of being in control
- escape traumatic memories
- express suicidal feelings and thoughts without taking their own life

The reasons children and teenagers self-harm will be different for everyone. They might not be able to name any one reason they're self-harming.

For many young people, the physical pain is a distraction from the emotional pain they're struggling with.

Spotting the signs of self-harm

If you are worried your child may be self-harming, here are some things to look out for:

- **unexplained** cuts, burns, bite marks, bruises or bald patches
- **keeping themselves covered**, for example wearing long sleeves or trousers even during hot weather, not wanting to change clothes around others or avoiding activities like swimming
- **seeming low or depressed**, for example withdrawing from friends and family
- **blaming themselves** for problems or expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or hopelessness
- **outbursts of anger** or argumentativeness



How to support a child who self harms

When the urge to self-harm does build in the moment, having a list of other things they can do straight away can also help your child to 'ride the wave of' their intense feelings without self-harming.



Different things will work for different people, and that what helps will usually depend on the feelings your child is trying to manage. Some young people will want to do something soothing like wrapping themselves up in a comfy space, while others might want to do something very active to burn off the energy in their body

Talk to your child about different strategies they could try, while also giving them space to find their own ways of coping and figure out what works for them. Strategies could include:

- Making and using a [self soothe box](#)
- Writing down how they're feeling in a journal
- Writing down difficult feelings on pieces of paper and then ripping them up
- Listening to music
- Having a shower
- Doing some exercise
- Going for a walk outside, or taking the dog for a walk
- Focusing on their breathing – how it feels in their body to breathe in and out
- Wrapping up in a blanket or duvet
- Talking to someone – a friend, family member or calling a helpline
- Doing a hobby they enjoy that helps them feel calm, such as drawing, colouring-in, watching TV, playing video games, cooking or baking
- Your child might want to use an app like Calm Harm or Kooth so they have something on their phone that suggests different techniques they can try when they feel the urge to self-harm

Lots of help and advice is available. If you are worried then please contact your Pastoral Manager or there are lots of excellent resources online.

Mental Health - Finding Advice and Guidance



We have now launched Kooth with all our students. This was done with a speaker from Kooth explaining how it works and how young people can access support.

All young people in Brent have **free access** to an excellent mental health resource called **Kooth**.

Kooth is an app that can be found on your app store. It enables young people to talk, get advice and explore other resources about their mental health in a way that is familiar. To help you, Kooth has put together some useful guides:

Students FAQ can be accessed [HERE](#).

Parents can read the guide [HERE](#).

Their video explains how Kooth works [HERE](#).

If you want to know more about Kooth then visit their website [HERE](#).



Young Minds is an organisation dedicated to the wellbeing of young people. Please click [HERE](#) for their information, advice and guidance on anxiety and stress.

Are all your contact details up to date?

If you change your home phone / email / mobile number please let the school know so that we have the most up to date contact details. Please let the school know by calling in or emailing at office@alperton.brent.sch.uk



Need help & advice?

I need help! There is help available - lots of advice and guidance is available online that you can use - including family digital agreements. If you are worried then please contact your Pastoral Manager who is a Safeguarding Officer.

If you are worried about a child or you have a concern then the NSPCC can help. You can contact them either via their website [HERE](#) or by calling them on 0800 1111 or 0808 800 5000.



If you have an **immediate concern** about a child then please call **999**

Cost of Living Support & Advice

As a school we want to help our families with the cost of living crisis that we all now face. If you or a family that you know is struggling to meet the cost of living there is help available from school and Brent.

Brent Council has put together a comprehensive package for residents.



**Supporting you
with the cost of living**

Tackling tough times together

Icons: lightbulb, house, family, bar chart, house with dollar sign, piggy bank

**SUPPORTING YOU WITH
THE COST
OF LIVING**

Brent

Get help and advice at
brent.gov.uk/costofliving

- **Money and debt** - Can you get financial assistance from Brent?
- **Facing Homelessness?** - Get help and advice from Brent Housing
- **Energy & water bills** - Both financial and energy saving advice
- **Food and essentials** - information about saving money and using a food bank
- **Childcare & school** - get help with school meals, travel and childcare costs
- **Jobs and training** - training & employment services to find a local job

Use your phone camera to scan in the QR Code that will take you to the **Brent Cost of Living Help & Advice** page where you can find further help.

You can also call in to one of the **7 Brent Hubs** set up to get help. Our nearest ones are in : **Ealing Road Library** and **Brent Civic Centre**



SCAN ME



Live in Ealing?

Ealing has a similar offer to Brent. You can access the **Ealing Cost of Living Help & Advice** page [HERE](#). Ealing also has a link to the Community Support Directory for residents to find local support [HERE](#).

Alperton Community School

We have a number of ways that we can help families and students who come to Alperton. One problem we have is **KNOWING** about families that need help. **Please let us know if you are struggling (or you know if a family is struggling) and we will help.** Please contact your Pastoral Manager or email us confidentially on:



familysupport@alperton.brent.sch.uk