Safeguarding News

Latest Advice and Information for Parents, Students and Staff
2024 Autumn Term & Christmas Edition

The magic of Christmas - the anticipation of the big day … gifts, presents and everything that goes with the celebration of Christmas - lots of sweets and chocolates, Christmas dinner with all the trimmings …it is also the time when safeguarding incidents increase.This can range from domestic violence, online exploitation, scams, poverty related issues and mental health concerns.

Nights are dark early …

Since the clocks have gone back, the days are getting shorter. **All students must go straight home after school.** We would like to ask parents and carers to ensure that all students get home as safely and quickly as possible. Students are not allowed to go to the shops after school, and make their way home either by walking, on a bus or by cycle at the end of the day.

Family Lives : Parenting Courses

There are no manuals for parenting. One area that we see more regularly is when relationships break down or are strained between parents or parent and child. We have young people at school at odds with previous generations or are part of families that are more dispersed across the world.

Family Lives offers a number of online parenting courses to help with these challenges we, as parents, face. You can see and join the courses by following this **LINK** to their website.

Family Lives also offers a confidential and free helpline service for families (previously known as Parentline). They can be contacted on **0808 800 2222** for emotional support, information, advice and guidance on any aspect of parenting and family life.

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, emailing **office@alperton.brent.sch.uk** or by using the MCAS (My Child at School) app.

Young people, technology and Christmas

Young people and technology seem to be inseparable. Many young people receive technology as a gift - a new phone, games console or laptop. There is lots of advice for parents or carers on giving young people technology - not just for Christmas but at any time as the benefits and dangers remain the same all year round.

Top tips for giving technology to young people at Christmas (and any other time):

1. **Set up the device before wrapping it up.**
   The easiest way to explore the safety settings, reporting tools, and other features on the device you've just bought is by testing it yourself. If you can, charge it up and have a go navigating the safety tools, parental controls and resources provided.

2. **Discuss your expectations**
   Points could include daily screen time allowances, where the device is kept at night, approving friend requests, and permission to download or purchase apps.

3. **Give practical safety tips**
   One of the most important things you can do before giving technology to a young person is talk to them about it. Having a conversation demonstrates that you are engaged and interested in their online lives and shows you are always available to help them should they need it.

4. **Keep the conversations going!**
   Finding natural, regular opportunities to start conversations around life online will show you are engaged and interested in your child's activities, and will help your child feel confident that you can help them. Conversation starters to facilitate these discussions could include:

   - What do you like best about this app or game?
   - Can you teach me how to play this game?
   - What tips can you give me about spending time online?
   - What is okay or not okay to share online?
   - How would you help a friend if they were worried about something online?

   You can get lots of advice from Childnet **HERE**. UK Safer Internet Centre **HERE**

In the **Spring 2024 edition of Safeguarding News** I looked at the dangers of young people having devices in private spaces such as bedrooms. I have republished the article in this edition as it seems appropriate given that we are coming into a 2 week holiday where technology may play a bigger part in your child's day.

Safeguarding in Focus : Who is in your childs' bedroom?

I asked a parent who was in their childs' 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 / Smart 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.

Coping at Christmas … help and advice from Childline

Christmas can be an exciting time when people get together to celebrate. But it can also be difficult. If you're feeling lonely, worried or stressed, we're here for you. You can find out more by clicking **HERE**.

Alpertons Safeguarding Team

I'm Mr Hart, the Designated Safeguarding Lead for our school. Working with me I have a team of Designated Safeguarding Officers that students can raise any concerns with. These are colleagues who work with our students everyday and really get to know them.

Click **HERE** to go to our website where you can find our Safeguarding Team and past editions of the newsletter.

School is closed but there is lots of help available …

Brent	Brent Family Front Door 020 8937 4300
Ealing www.ealing.gov.uk	Ealing Children's Services 020 8825 8000
childline ONLINE, ON THE PHONE, ANYTIME	Childline 0800 1111
kooth	Kooth www.kooth.com
METROPOLITAN POLICE	Metropolitan police 999

Supporting you with the cost of living

Tackling tough times together

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**.

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 part of our Safeguarding Team.

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**