

Safeguarding your Child/ren and Young People at Home Information for Parents & Carers

This newsletter has been designed to give you current safeguarding information and helpful tips and strategies to support you while your child/ren are at home. Regular updates will follow over the coming weeks.

Current CoVID-19 advice on social distancing particularly relevant to young people is:

- Avoid large and small gatherings in public spaces as infections spread easily in spaces where people gather together
- Avoid gatherings with friends and family. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media
- Keep your distance, stay at least 2 metres apart from others.

This will probably be the hardest problem you will encounter as young people struggle to understand that they cannot go out and meet their friends. There are plenty of activities and resources online for all ages of children to help keep them interested and active.

CHILD EXPLOITATION & COUNTY LINES

This is a current issue affecting some young people in Yeovil, the surrounding local area and the Country as a whole.

School provides a safe place and supervision for children, and it is a real concern that without this they may be more at risk of being targeted by criminals /gangs seeking to exploit them due to, unsupervised free time, wanting to be out with friends, being online more frequently.

Self / family isolation, social distancing and spending more time at home should play a part in reducing this risk to young people as well as being firm and consistent with their boundaries. A young person being exploited or involved in County Lines may display some of the following signs:

- persistently going missing from home, or being found out-of-area
- unexplained acquisition of money, clothes or mobile phones
- excessive receipt of text or phone calls
- relationships with controlling, older individuals or gang association
- leaving home or care without explanation
- suspicion of self-harm, physical assault or unexplained injuries
- parental concerns
- significant changes in emotional well-being
- You know your child best, keep talking to them, make sure they know they can come to you or another trusted adult or ensure they know who to contact online for advice & support.

<https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/report/child-sexual-exploitation-cse>

<https://www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/protecting-children/cse>



Please check out our safeguarding page on our website.

There is a host of information, advice and links to excellent websites to offer support and guidance in these very difficult, uncharted times.

If you need to contact the safeguarding team at Westfield Academy please use the reporting form on our website or use the following email address safeguarding@westfieldacademy.co.uk. This will only be available during normal school hours.

IF THIS IS URGENT AND THE YOUNG PERSON IS AT RISK OF HARM PLEASE CALL the Police on 999 or Children's Social Care (Somerset Direct) on Tel:0300 123 2224. Out of hours service please call Emergency Duty Team on Tel:0300 123 2327

ONLINE SAFETY



The internet is a brilliant place to **connect** with others, to be **creative** and to **discover** new things and will, in most cases, be the only way we can safely communicate with each other for a while. To help your child/ren stay safe online please help them to follow these rules:

Top tips for 11-19s

- Protect your online reputation. 'think before you post.' Content posted online can last forever and could be shared publicly by anyone.
- Know where to find help: Check out where the reporting tools are. There is one on the Westfield Academy Safeguarding page . If something happens that upsets you online, it's never too late to tell someone.
- Don't give in to pressure: if you lose your inhibitions you've lost control; once you've pressed send you can't take it back.
- Know who you are talking to : Remember safe friends are people you have met in person. Do NOT share anything personal with friends you have never met! NEVER share anything online you would not want your parents /grandparents to see.

Unfortunately there is a very dark side to the internet where evil, devious will people try to exploit vulnerable people in our society. This is usually done through 'grooming'

WHAT IS GROOMING?

Grooming is when someone builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child or young person so they can manipulate, exploit and abuse them. It can be difficult to tell if a child is being groomed – the signs aren't always obvious and may be hidden. Older children might behave in a way that seems to be "normal" teenage behaviour, masking underlying problems

A child is unlikely to know they've been groomed. They might be worried or confused and less likely to speak to an adult they trust.

Some of the signs you might see include:

- Being very secretive about how they're spending their time, including when online
- Having an older boyfriend or girlfriend
- Having money or new things like clothes and mobile phones that they can't or won't explain
- Underage drinking or drug taking
- Spending more or less time online or on their devices
- being upset, withdrawn or distressed
- Sexualised behaviour, language or an understanding of Sex that's not appropriate for their age
- Spending more time away from home or going missing for periods of time

Be interested and curious about what your child is doing online. Check the content. If there is nothing to hide, they will be happy to share.

Useful Websites include:

- <https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers>
- <http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk>

MENTAL & EMOTIONAL HEALTH



The current news on COVID 19 may make many of us feel overwhelmed and stressed. Please recognise that this anxiety is normal and it's how we manage and present it to our young people is the key, be that positive role model to them.

Here are some things you can do:

- Decide and keep routines in place at home
- Make plans how to spend your time and stay positive
- Be creative about new activities and exercise safely
- Limit consumption of the news and social media
- Stay in touch virtually - connect with people
- Arm yourself with the Government facts and know what to do
- Encourage talking about how we feel
- Eat well and stay hydrated
- Find things that make you and your children feel calm and relaxed
- Be kind and look after yourself and others around you

For support and advice:

- <https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-you-re-anxious-about-coronavirus/>
- <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/anxiety-stress-panic/worries-about-the-world/coronavirus/>