

SAFEGUARDING BULLETIN

Issue 4 (April 2022)



Welcome to our fourth ALNS safeguarding bulletin where we are hoping to share with you the latest knowledge, tips and support services for various issues in order that we can work together to keep your children safe. Each bulletin will focus on a different area of safeguarding.

Key Focus – Harmful Sexual Behaviour

What do we mean?

Exploring their sexual identity is normal as young people grow up. Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) is developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour displayed by children and young people which is harmful or abusive. Peer-on-peer sexual abuse is a form of HSB where sexual abuse takes place between children of a similar age or stage of development. It can refer to on or offline behaviour such as sexual harassment, sexual violence, up skirting, sharing of “nudes”, sexual activity inappropriate to their developmental stage or below the age of consent. The most common issues according to children reporting it are online sexual abuse and sexual harassment. Children typically talk about sexual violence as taking place in parks or at parties (basically where adults are not!).

Child sexual abuse offences have risen hugely since 2013 (by 267%) and in 25% of cases the perpetrator is also under 18.

What does the law say?

Consent – the age of consent for sexual intercourse in the UK is 16.

A child under the age of 13 CAN NOT consent to **any** sexual activity.

Up skirting – this is a specific act of taking a photo of underneath someone clothes without their permission - it became a crime in 2019.

Youth Produced Sexual imagery – this is the “official” term for what children call sending “nudes” (although luckily, they are very often not fully nude!) – it is very important that they understand that producing the imagery (taking the photo – even if of themselves), sending it and storing on their camera roll or similar is all against the law. This is on the increase and girls talk about boys being persistent in wanting images. Equally 50% of boys say they have been sent images they didn’t want.

In School Support

- If your child feels they have been a victim of any form of harmful sexual behaviour, they can speak to any member of staff they feel most comfortable with. The staff will discuss this only with either Mrs Holness (the Designated Safeguarding Lead) or Mr Fenner (the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead). The staff member will not promise confidentiality to your child and home will be kept informed of all disclosures of this nature, unless it is unsafe to the child to do so.
- All staff have had specific training this year to support children who are victims of sexual harassment, abuse or violence and how to deal with a disclosure.
- Children, and families, can be reassured that we do not “immediately ring the police” or take any other actions that might make a child afraid to disclose a concern to us. We discuss and work with the family and the child to decide the best course of action that a) safeguards the child but also b) they are comfortable with and won’t cause further distress. They are in control – this is very important.
- No child will be made to feel they are at fault at all or that they have done anything wrong.

How can you support your child?

Useful resources:

- www.stopitnow.org.uk – Harmful sexual behaviour prevention toolkit. Designed for parents, this toolkit is designed for parents, carers, family members and professionals, to help everyone play their part in keeping children safe. It has links to useful information, resources, and support as well as practical tips to prevent harmful sexual behaviour and provide safe environments for families.
- www.nspcc.org.uk lots of resources and support as well as information about what is and isn't harmful sexual behaviour.
- www.barnados.org.uk Lots of safeguarding information in general but also search for their "Harmful sexual behaviour parent guide"

If you have any concerns you want to discuss at school please contact your child's tutor, their Head of House or the designated Safeguarding Lead – Mrs Holness.

Talk Talk Talk!

- Talk to your child - especially about the dangers connected with online behaviour – sending and receiving images often get into the wrong hands.
- Talk about consent – there is a very good short video that might help get these conversations going:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQbei5JGiT8>
(Or look up "tea consent video") – it talks about the issue of consent by looking at how someone can choose whether or not to have the cup of tea you offer them, and they can even say yes to tea and stop drinking it halfway through etc (you get the picture!). Some students will have seen it, but it is worth a watch together.

Observe!

- Keep your eye out for changes in behaviour – you might spot both extremes – e.g., withdrawn or overtly "misbehaving", emotional changes too - anything out of the ordinary is worth exploring. Most children will not disclose a problem and it is up to us as adults to notice that something is not right.

Check!

- A bit of a stuck record on this one – check their phones – the most common platforms for sharing material between young people are WhatsApp and Snapchat. There is also a new App called "Yubo" (it used to be called yellow) - being referred to as a Tinder for kids! (Advice we have been given is that this is a magnet for sexual predators).

Bear in mind children who identify as LGBTQ+ are more likely to experience child sexual abuse and less likely to report it (perhaps for fear that this then involves "coming out" alongside other worries about disclosing what is happening to them.

