



SAFEGUARDING

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ISSUE 3

Welcome to our Parent Safeguarding Newsletter Issue 3

The focus for safeguarding in College last term through assemblies and the tutorial program was 'My Digital Footprint'. Below is some information for parents to support positive online parenting.

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WHAT IS A DIGITAL FOOTPRINT?

Every time you do anything online, whether it's visiting a website, making an online purchase, having a conversation on an online game, using a search engine or posting on social media, it leaves a digital trail or 'footprint'. The internet is a public place, meaning that the things your child does online can be seen by anyone and can be difficult to get rid of altogether.

A lot of young people see the online world as a natural extension of their offline world, meaning they might not be as cautious as they should be when it comes to expressing themselves and posting things online. This can have implications for their privacy but also on their reputation in real life. Remind your child that anything you do online can be shared, copied or saved by others - **once it's out there, you can't take it back.**

SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?

Research from Microsoft found that almost half of recruiters across Europe look for information about potential candidates on social networking sites. So you do need to make sure that they understand the long-term impact their digital footprint could have.

It is possible for your child to use their digital footprint to their advantage and cultivate an online presence which will be an asset to them in the future. They can share information about clubs, volunteering or extra-curricular activities they're involved in, for example, which future school or college admissions tutors, or future employers would be interested in.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MY CHILD?

You can take action to help your child protect their privacy and minimise the risk of embarrassment or harm to their reputation:

- Encourage them to check the privacy settings on their social media and blogs so that they're only sharing information with their friends.
- Remind them that the internet is a public place and that anyone could see what they post. They probably know that already but teenagers can forget in the heat of the moment. They should use the 'billboard rule' – if they wouldn't want that photo, comment or post put up on a billboard for everyone to see, they shouldn't post it.
- Make putting their name into Google to check their digital footprint a regular part of your routine. It's worth doing it together so that they get into the habit of checking their profile as well.
- Talk to them about the consequences of sharing intimate or naked images online or via their mobile or device (called "sexting") – you can find out more information about this on the Digital Parenting website

It's a good idea to tell them that you want to check their social media profile and ask if you can do it together.

The websites listed below offer lots of useful advice about digital footprint, privacy and more:

<https://www.vodafone.co.uk/digitalparenting>

www.parentinfo.org/

www.antibullyingpro.com/

www.common sense media.org/

www.internetmatters.org/

NATIONAL HOT TOPIC

Over the course of the year many families have been under an extraordinary amount of pressure; the consequence of this is sometimes conflict. The impact of parental conflict can **affect children's and young people's physical and mental health**. Parental **conflict** may also **affect child** risk-taking behaviours, such as smoking, drug use and early sexual activity.

WHAT IS PARENTAL CONFLICT?

Conflict between parents is a normal part of relationships and family life. Not all conflict is damaging, but the way conflict manifests - its frequency, intensity and how it is resolved - can negatively affect children.

Latest research tells us that conflict of this type can harm children's outcomes.

- Evidence shows reducing conflict between parents is one of the most effective ways to reduce mental health problems in children.
- Family conflict costs the public sector around £46 billion a year through related services.
- Exposure to frequent conflict between parents is associated with a range of problems for children and young people. This can include poorer academic outcomes, negative peer relationships, substance misuse and poor future relationships.

Where conflict between parents is frequent, intense and poorly resolved, it can harm children's outcomes - regardless of whether parents are together or separated. This includes family contexts not usually regarded as 'high risk', not just where parents have separated or divorced or where there is domestic violence.

Conflict can affect children in all types of parental relationships, which includes:

- Parents who are in a relationship with each other, whether married or not.
- Parents who have separated or divorced.
- Biological and 'step' parents.
- Gay and lesbian parents.

Conflict can range across a continuum of severity, from constructive to destructive conflict, to domestic violence and abuse in its most extreme form.

Destructive conflict behaviours which put children's mental health and long term life chances at risk include aggression, non-verbal conflict or 'the silent treatment'.

By contrast, **constructive conflict** - where there continues to be respect and emotional control, and conflict is resolved or explained - is linked to lower risks of child distress.

This suggests conflict resolution skills are an important focus for intervention to improve child outcomes.

PARENTAL CONFLICT OR DOMESTIC ABUSE?

Parental conflict and domestic abuse are two separate things, but it can sometimes be difficult to work out if your relationship is abusive or just in a bad place.

As a general guide, if your relationship with your partner, ex-partner or a member of your family is abusive:

- They will want to hold all the power and control.
- You might be afraid of them.
- The abuse will have happened more than once, or you will notice patterns

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Responding to parental conflict is not the responsibility of any single individual or agency. Rather because people need relationship support at different points in their family life, any individual, practitioner or volunteer who works with families can have an impact. Universal, targeted and specialist services all have a role to play in the prevention and treatment of parental conflict. The Early Help service through Rutland County Council uses a collaborative and co – operative approach to support.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT CAN ALSO BE SORT THROUGH:

Relate: <https://www.relate.org.uk/relationship-help/help-relationships/arguing-and-conflict/i-cant-seem-stop-arguing-my-partner-what-can-we-do>

CAFCASS: <https://www.cafcass.gov.uk/grown-ups/professionals/ciaf/resources-for-assessing-harmful-conflict/>

GAMBLING TEENS

Most children have gambled by the age of 15. For children and teenagers, the most common forms of gambling are card games at home, lottery tickets and scratchy cards. Some children move from these games to more serious types of gambling in later adolescence, like racing and other sports betting. Gambling has become a more popular activity due to the increased access to a variety of platforms and payment methods.

The definition of Gambling participation is: The number of 11-16 year olds who have gambled in the last seven days. This includes illegal types of gambling and legal types of gambling such as private bets for money, playing cards for money with friends or 16 year olds playing the National Lottery.

The most recent finding from the Young People and Gambling survey suggests that this activity indicates an important relation between adolescent gambling behaviour and serious psychological, social and financial consequences.

PLACES TO SEEK SUPPORT OR OTHER INFORMATION:

YGAM: <https://www.ygam.org/>

GamCare: <https://www.gamcare.org.uk/?cn-reloaded=1>

Be gamble aware: <https://www.begambleaware.org/>

Big Deal?: <https://www.bigdeal.org.uk/>

SELF HARM

HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD?

Self-harm, or self-injury, describes a wide range of things people deliberately do to themselves that appear to cause some kind of physical hurt. It can still be very hard for parents and carers to know about - or witness - self-harming behaviour in their children.

Cutting the arms or the back of the legs is the most common form of self-harm, but it can take many forms, including burning, biting, hitting oneself, banging head onto walls, pulling out hair (trichotillomania), inserting objects into the body or taking overdoses. Some argue that risky behaviours such as smoking, drinking, taking drugs and having unprotected sex are also a form of self-harming.

REASONS FOR SELF-HARM

A person may self-harm to help them cope with negative feelings and difficult experiences, to feel more in control, or to punish themselves. It can be a way of relieving overwhelming feelings that build up inside, to:

- reduce tension
- manage extreme emotional upset
- provide a feeling of physical pain to distract from emotional pain
- express emotions such as hurt, anger or frustration
- regain control over feelings or problems
- punish themselves or others

The feelings or experiences that might be connected to self-harm include

- anxiety, <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/conditions/anxiety/>
- depression, <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-depression-and-low-mood/>
- low self-esteem, <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-self-esteem/>
- poor body image
- gender identity
- sexuality,
- abuse, <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-abuse/>
- school problems
- bullying
- social media pressure
- family or friendship trouble
- bereavement

Over time, self-harming can become a habit that is hard to stop.

SELF HARM

IS MY CHILD SELF-HARMING?

As a parent, you might suspect that your child is self-harming. If you are worried, keep an eye open for the following signs:

- Unexplained cuts, burns, bite-marks, bruises or bald patches.
- Keeping themselves covered; avoiding swimming or changing clothes around others.
- Bloody tissues in waste bins.
- Being withdrawn or isolated from friends and family.
- Low mood, lack of interest in life, depression or outbursts of anger.
- Blaming themselves for problems or expressing feelings of failure, uselessness, or hopelessness.

It can be difficult to know what to do or how to react if you find out your child is self-harming. Here are some things that can really help:

- Avoid asking your child lots of questions all at once.
- Keep an eye on your child but avoid 'policing' them because this can increase their risk of self-harming.
- Consider whether your child is self-harming in areas that can't be seen.
- Remember the self-harm is a coping mechanism. It is a symptom of an underlying problem.
- Keep open communication between you and your child and remember they may feel ashamed of their self-harm and find it very difficult to talk about. Here are some ways you could start the conversation. <https://youngminds.org.uk/starting-a-conversation-with-your-child/starting-the-conversation/>
- Talk to your child but try not to get into a hostile confrontation.
- Keep firm boundaries and don't be afraid of disciplining your child. It is helpful to keep a sense of normality and this will help your child feel secure and emotionally stable.
- If you feel confident, you can ask the whether removing whatever they are using to self-harm is likely to cause them use something less sanitary to self-harm with, or whether it reduces temptation. This can be a difficult question to ask and if you are not confident to ask this seek professional advice.
- Seek professional help. Your child may need a risk assessment from a qualified mental health professional. Talk to your GP and explore whether your child can be referred to your local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- Discovering and responding to self-harm can be a traumatic experience – it's crucial that you seek support for yourself. It's natural to feel guilt, shame, anger, sadness, frustration and despair – but it's not your fault.

Further information can be found through YoungMinds <https://youngminds.org.uk/>