



## ST GEORGE'S SCHOOL

### Safeguarding Newsletter for Parents and Carers

Summer Term 1 (2023)

#### St George's Safeguarding Team

Our Safeguarding Team is available to any student, parent or school staff member to discuss and report any safeguarding concerns.

**Designated Safeguarding Lead: Mrs Jill Farndale**

**Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead: Mr Tom Abbott**

**Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead: Mrs Hayley Shears**



#### **Spotlight on: County lines and CCE**

County lines is when gangs and organised crime groups exploit children to transport and sell drugs, normally between big cities where the exploiters are based to smaller towns, sometimes across county boundaries but also locally and within the borough.

The children have dedicated mobile phone 'lines' for taking orders for drugs; children are used as they are less likely to be stopped by police, allowing adult dealers to avoid the risk of arrest.

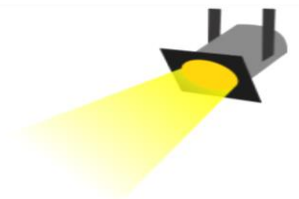
County lines is a form of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE); this occurs where a person or a group of people takes advantage of their contact with and influence over a young person to coerce or manipulate them into carrying out a criminal act.

Children as young as 6 are known to have been targeted by gangs for this purpose. Young people may be recruited for county lines and other forms of criminal exploitation by a process of grooming: At the targeting stage, the exploiter befriends the young person and gains their trust.

Young people may also be recruited through social media and/or through their peer group. Some parents of young people who have been exploited through county lines involvement have reported that they went through a sudden change in behaviour.

Possible indicators of involvement include:

- Unexplained money, clothes or gifts
- Frequent, unexplained phone calls
- New friendship circle that involves older children or adults
- Not attending school
- Carrying weapons



For more information on County lines and Child Criminal Exploitation please follow the link:

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/county-lines>



The children's mental health charity, Place2Be, has launched a new website aimed at helping parents with typical situations they may experience with children.

Advice can be found on over forty topics including:

- ◇ Understanding sibling rivalry
- ◇ My child is lying, what does it mean, what should I do?
- ◇ My child has trouble going to sleep
- ◇ My child says, 'I hate you!'
- ◇ Cultural identity: who am I?



The Parenting Smart website can be found here: <https://parentingsmart.place2be.org.uk/>



**KEEP YOUR CHILD VISIBLE**



It's hard to believe, but there is the same child on the picture below, wearing dark clothes.

Zoom into the picture to see it!

Please make sure your children are wearing bright colours to stay visible for drivers.

Especially during the dark nights (during Autumn and Winter) - it's not worth the risk!

Photo: Christian Thomas, Switzerland  
Please remember to talk to your children about road safety. Here are some websites for you to explore with your child.

<https://www.rosipa.com/media/documents/road-safety/teaching-road-safety-a-guide-for-parents.pdf>

<https://www.brake.org.uk/get-involved/take-action/mybrake/knowledge-centre/advice-for-parents-and-families>

### **Contact Details**

Are your contact details up to date? Do we have more than one emergency contact?

If you change your home phone, address, email, or mobile number, please let the school know, so that we have the most up-to-date contact details.

Safeguarding concerns can present themselves when we are unable to get hold of a parent or carer, especially during an emergency.

**Parenthood..**  
The most rewarding job in the world  
And also the toughest  
Need some advice about your child's behaviour?  
Contact YoungMinds Parents Helpline  
0808 802 5544  
[www.youngminds.org.uk/parents](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/parents)  
**YOUNGMINDS**

# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about SOCIAL MEDIA & MENTAL HEALTH

An estimated one-third of children have a social media account, so it's important that trusted adults know what content young people are consuming, what they're posting and the interactions they're having. On social media, it can be easy to go down 'rabbit holes' that aren't beneficial to our wellbeing. As platforms grapple with managing such 'legal but harmful' content, lives are being impacted – sometimes to tragic effect. We might be daunted by the scale of the tech giants and their content which so enthral young people, but we can still help children to be aware of their mental wellness: recognising when something isn't OK... and knowing what to do about content that upsets them.

## 1. UNDERSTAND THE ALGORITHM

Algorithms rank content by user interest: someone who regularly interacts with sports news, say, will see the latest results at the top of their feed. Likewise, if a user browses content that can cause harm, that's what will be recommended to them in future. Someone who's had a bad day and looks for posts which reflect their mood will find similar content being suggested to them more and more.

## 2. AVOID THE MAIN FEEDS

Avoiding the default feeds on social media platforms limits the amount of recommended content that's shown. Users can opt to only scroll through the accounts they follow, use restricted modes, or highlight posts that they don't want to see more of. Explore the platform safety settings to see how you can take control of what your child's phone shows them when they open the app.

## 3. DISCUSS WHAT THEY'VE SEEN

Chatting about what your child's seen online keeps you aware of the content they're interacting with. Don't assume that platforms are screening out inappropriate material, or even that your child would recognise content as being harmful. Discuss who they follow, what posts they like and what comes up in their feeds: if alarm bells ring, it could be time for a more in-depth talk or to seek support.

## 4. LEARN HOW TO HIDE CONTENT

If your child stumbles across unsuitable content on social media, there's the option to hide that post as well as indicating you'd prefer any similar material not to be suggested in future. On some platforms, you might also be able to block posts that contain specific words, which is an excellent way to start taking control of what your child sees online.

## 5. SET DAILY LIMITS

Phones and most apps can tell you how much they're being used. Spending too long online can mean a child misses out on other activities that are important to all-round wellbeing. You could set some family rules – for everyone to follow – around device use, such as screen time limits and tech-free spaces: involving your child in creating this agreement makes them more likely to stick to it.

## 6. MONITOR THEIR ACTIVITY

Keeping a discreet eye on how your child is using social media can help ensure they're not entering potentially dangerous situations. As they grow up, of course, children need space to exercise their independence – but you can still occasionally ask to see what they're looking at. Be transparent about your own social media use and try not to sound judgemental about your child's.

## 7. TURN OFF PUSH NOTIFICATIONS

Even for adults, it's tempting to check an email or message as soon as the alert sound pings. Push notifications encourage people to open their apps and spend time on their device, so turning them off will help your child to practise mindful use of tech. Most of us have other things that we need to focus on as a priority – and those notifications will still be there later, when we have more time.

## 8. USE DEVICES TOGETHER

Giving children internet-enabled devices and complete freedom to explore platforms on their own can result in exposure to hugely damaging content. You could consider making a particular area at home a designated space to use phones, tablets and so on – making it much easier to monitor what content your child is viewing and (if necessary) steer them away from any potentially harmful paths.

## 9. ENCOURAGE OTHER ACTIVITIES

Mental health professionals often highlight the importance of exercise, quality time with loved ones, a balanced diet and restful sleep for our mental wellbeing. Spending hours on social media can cause us to sacrifice other activities that our brains need to feel well – so encouraging your child to put down their phone and enjoy something that doesn't involve a screen can be immensely beneficial.

## 10. TALK ABOUT PEER PRESSURE

Most platforms default children's accounts to private, so only people they've accepted as friends can see their posts. This reduces the risk of bullying or unkind comments, but – just like offline life – the digital world can still make children feel as if they need to act or look a certain way to fit in. Talk to your child about peer pressure, and listen to any concerns so you can provide the support they need.

## Meet Our Expert

Shazia Sarwar-Azim is executive headteacher at a specialist primary school and, as an emotional therapy coach, works with school leaders to focus on the SEND, mental health and wellbeing agenda. A passionate advocate for vulnerable learners, Shazia is a Fellow of the Chartered College of Teaching and the author of *The Rainbow Within*, a book which supports children with SEMH needs.



Sources: <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-52246925>  
<https://iproutsource.com/insights/social-media-algorithms/>

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#WakeUpWednesday



[www.nationalonlinesafety.com](http://www.nationalonlinesafety.com)



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