

# Parent / Carer Safeguarding Newsletter

Jan – Feb 2025



Welcome back to the fourth edition of our safeguarding newsletter. We hope you had a good Christmas break, and a very happy New Year!

Keeping children safe at Handsworth Grange Community Sports College (HGCS) is our number one priority, we know that the most effective way for us to support our young people is to work in partnership with their parents / carers. This is why each term we will send out information on this newsletter with fresh topics to keep you informed of issues impacting our community.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch with the safeguarding team by requesting a contact via:

<https://hgcs.co.uk/contact>

You will also find our safeguarding contacts at the end of this newsletter,



Natalie, Sophie, and Chloe.

## Domestic abuse

We know the Christmas period can be an extremely stressful time for families. Police statistics show there is an increase in reports of domestic abuse over the festive period.

### *Do you know about Clare's Law?*

Also known as the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, is named after Clare Wood who was sadly murdered by her partner in 2009, he had a history of violence against women.

Clare's Law allows you to ask Police what information they hold on a person in relation to domestic abuse offences.

You can seek a Clare's Law disclosure by calling Police on 101, or by attending a Police station. If you are a concerned relative or close friend, you can also make a request.

We are an operation encompass school which means South Yorkshire Police share information with us if they have attended a domestic incident. The safeguarding team in school can offer you advice and guidance if you are concerned about domestic abuse, or you can seek support from IDAS by calling:

**0808 808 2241**

## Child Criminal Exploitation

**Child criminal exploitation** (CCE) is a form of child abuse where the young person is groomed by adults in the community or manipulated into carrying out illegal activities. Exploiters / groomers are incredibly skilled at what they do, often young people do not disclose abuse when it is happening as they do not realise they are a victim. The young person may be given things such as money, presents, drugs or alcohol, vapes, or perceived status to coerce them into doing something in return. This can then include carrying out illegal activities such as dealing or couriering drugs.

Sometimes, children are forced to carry out criminal activity in places outside of South Yorkshire - this is known as **county lines**. This is when gangs use children to transport weapons, money or drugs across counties to other towns or perhaps more rural areas.

Many children who are exploited do not realise they are being abused. Their abuser will spot any vulnerabilities the child has and learn to understand their wants and needs in order to manipulate them. Alternatively, they will apply fear, intimidation or threats of violence, in order to force the child to do their bidding.

There are many ways that exploitation can begin, and children can be groomed in different ways - they may even be coerced by their own friends, who are under the influence of a gang. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, online grooming has significantly increased, with criminals approaching children through social media or online gaming.

Here are *some* of the changes you might see if a child is being exploited:

- becoming withdrawn, anxious, angry, secretive, distant or fearful of others
  - skipping school or going missing regularly
- socialising with much older friends, or having a much older partner
- unexplained gifts such as a new, second phone, alcohol, money, vapes

South Yorkshire Police have a dedicated exploitation team in Sheffield and Rotherham to support such victims and investigate these type of crimes. Don't hesitate in calling 101 or school if you have any concerns your child is being exploited.





## Child Sexual Exploitation

**Child sexual exploitation** (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse where the young person is coerced, manipulated or deceived into sexual activity in exchange for things that they may need or want like gifts, drugs, money, status and affection. Children and young people are often tricked into believing they're in a loving and consensual relationship so the sexual activity may appear consensual. This is called grooming and is a type of abuse. Sometimes abusers use violence and intimidation to frighten or force a young person, making them feel as if they have no choice.

When a child is being sexually exploited online, they may be forced to:

- send or post sexually explicit images of themselves
  - film or stream sexual activities
  - have sexual conversations

Once an abuser has images, videos or copies of conversations, they might use threats and blackmail to force a young person to take part in other sexual activity. They may also share the images and videos with others or circulate them online.

### Sexual Health and Relationship advice

The safeguarding team in school have been specially trained by Sexual Health Sheffield in providing accurate sexual health and relationship advice to young people. As part of that support in school, we are able to help our young people to recognise harmful relationships and when to seek support. We help students understand consent and educate them on how they can keep themselves safe online or with new partners.

If you have concerns about child sexual exploitation or a relationship your child has, then please speak with a member of the safeguarding team in school.



## Vaping – illegal vapes

We continue to see a rise in the amount of young people who are addicted to vaping, and this is the case nationally.

The Law - it is illegal for any child under the age of 18 to vape, and it is illegal for an adult to sell a vape to a child or buy a vape on behalf of a child. Vaping is not meant for children as their developing lungs and brains are more sensitive to its effects, and nicotine is more risky for young people as evidence suggests they become more addicted.

Nicotine vaping products are covered by regulations to protect users, including maximum nicotine strength and bans on certain ingredients. But some disposable vapes on sale are illegal and don't meet UK quality and safety regulations. They might look like the real thing, but they aren't so it is impossible to know what's actually in them.

Vapes that are not legal in the UK include:

- Vapes with more than 600 puffs
- Vapes with a tank size greater than 2ml
- Vapes with a nicotine strength greater than 20mg/ml



Molly Evans from The Corner

One of the biggest worries we have around young people vaping is that they are more likely to use illegal vapes which are untested and can contain a range of harmful toxins, or illicit substances. Exploiters / groomers find it easy to get children addicted to illicit substances such as THC, spice, and even heroin by selling them vapes containing these substances. Young people often assume the vape is a nicotine vape, until it is too late.

To help keep our students safe and to help educate them on the risks of vaping, The Corner were in school for two weeks last term delivering assemblies as well as lunch time stalls to talk to our young people on the risks. The Corner can provide confidential one-to-one support to young people. They also have a dedicated family support worker who provides advice and information to family members who may be worried or affected by a young person's vaping / drug use. You can find how to refer by following this link:

**[thecornersheffield.com/referrals.html](https://thecornersheffield.com/referrals.html)**

We also work closely with Smokefree Sheffield who can also complete confidential one-to-one support to help a young person quit smoking. Smokefree Sheffield work with all ages, so if you would like to make a referral for either yourself or your child you can call:

**0114 553 6296**

## Mental Health Champions

Last term we celebrated our Mental Health Champions due to the excellent work they have been doing to raise awareness of mental health across school. They have created their own tutor time activity which they have rolled out to ensure our students can ask for help when needed, as well as help other students learn how to talk about their emotions more confidently by using zones of regulation tools.

Since we lost Manny Francis last year, a lot of his closest friends and year group felt it was important to continue his legacy of kindness. Those who worked closely with the bereavement counsellor felt they wanted to give something back to their school community. Amarni stated that he 'wanted to help others in school like I had been'.

We are extremely proud of them, and we look forward to seeing what more they get up to this year!





# Handsworth Grange Safeguarding Team

Here at HGSC, we believe in exceptional education for every student every day and as such Every Person Matters.

We all must take responsibility for looking after each other and making sure we are safe and happy.

If you are worried about something or someone then you should share it.

**The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) at HGSC is Mrs Hirst**



Designated Safeguarding Lead / Designated Teacher for Children Looked After / Online Safety Coordinator

Deputy Headteacher

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The Deputy Safeguarding Leads are Chloe Reeves, Natalie Tuffnell and Sophie Lewis



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Safeguarding Manager

**Chloe Reeves**

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