

Hello! This newsletter will give you an update about safeguarding in College. There is also a focus on a specific safeguarding issue affecting young people and further links to extra support/ reading. This issue's focus is about online safety and online gambling.

College updates

It is great to see students back in college and we have been very pleased with how well the testing process has gone in College. We thank our students for the maturity and responsibility they have shown in wearing masks, their hand hygiene and social distancing.

Tutors are conducting face to face individual consultations with their students over the next few weeks. Students are being asked to book appointments using the link that has been sent to them by e-mail and on Teams. Conversations will focus on the students' wellbeing and how well they are coping with the transition back into college, as well as their academic progress and routines. Please encourage your son/daughter to contact their tutor if they have any worries or concerns. They do not need to wait until their appointment time.

Tutorials will continue to be delivered remotely while we are operating our current timetable structure. Students should continue to log in to their tutor Teams page to complete the tutorial activity. Activities this academic year have reflected the current need communicated to us by students and include; sleep routines, anxiety in the context of COVID, mental health awareness, healthy relationships & consent, drugs awareness and sexual harassment.

We are delighted that 45 students signed up and received mental health peer awareness training in January. This excellent training was delivered by Suzanne Allies from the University of Worcester. Some of the students have now formed a group to champion and raise awareness of mental health issues. They have lots of ideas for activities and events. Any students that would like to join this group can do so by contacting Lisa Watson in the tutorial hub or e-mailing lisa.watson@wsfc.ac.uk

LINK is a new scheme that was set up in September to support students to connect with others. It has been really successful and helped a number of students who may otherwise have found it difficult to form friendship groups in a new college environment. For more information about this please contact Breege Seville breege.seville@wsfc.ac.uk

Wellbeing bulletins - once again, as last year I sent out a wellbeing bulletin to students each week during lockdown. These contained links and information about all aspects of wellbeing, social topics and ideas of things that students could get involved with, even while in lockdown. These are also on our website <https://www.wsfc.ac.uk/for-parents/safeguarding/>

Stay safe everyone, and take care, Julie Ferman

Safeguarding focus - Online safety

We have recently purchased E-safe, an online SG filter which is on all machines in college and operates using keystroke technology. Alerts are sent to Julie Ferman to investigate and then appropriate support can be put in place. E-Safe's recent blog from their work in schools and colleges highlights the concern about online grooming and child sexual exploitation as explained below.

The growing problems of grooming and child sexual exploitation

While lockdown measures seek to make us all safer, sadly, for some vulnerable children and young people, the opposite is true -

61% involved children and young people talking to strangers, on chat platforms like Omegle.

42% were image based incidents. This means the evidence of safeguarding risk was found in moving imagery (such as webcam activity) and in static imagery (photographs and illustrations). Much of this image-based evidence pointed to the users viewing/sharing pornography or sexting.

Expert bodies in the field, including the NCA and the NSPCC, warn about the heightened risk of children and young people being approached or groomed by strangers online - and that organised "communities of sex predators" are looking for opportunities to coerce, groom and exploit more children and share child sexual abuse material online.

In their latest report, the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF - the UK charity responsible for finding and removing images of child sexual abuse from the internet) warns about the "grave and widespread threat" to children in their bedrooms from predatory online groomers, as they highlight the record-breaking scale of child sexual abuse imagery on the internet in 2020. This report also reveals a dramatic 77% increase in the amount of "self-generated" abuse material – including content that has been created using webcam, often in the child's own bedroom - as more children, and more criminals, spend longer online. In many cases, children are groomed, threatened or deceived into producing and sharing a video of themselves. This has become such a concern that a national inquiry into the rise of "self-generated" indecent images of children online has now been launched and the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Media's inquiry - "Selfie Generation: What's behind the rise of self-generated indecent images of children online?" - will investigate the causes behind this phenomenon and recommend ways to combat it.

While the online behaviour of children and young people has changed and evolved in response to lockdown measures, evidence points to the formation of new online habits - that have become ingrained and normalised over the course of the pandemic and very likely to continue when we emerge from this. Furthermore, the strong 'domino effect' we are already seeing in respect of surges in related safeguarding risks - for example, young people talking to strangers morphing into young people being groomed and exploited - means that what may appear to be a high volume of relatively low level safeguarding risks on the surface will, without timely intervention, often lead onto serious and lasting risks to welfare and wellbeing. The step from one safeguarding concern to another is now more fluid than ever, with many young people not being aware of what is happening until it's too late.

More information about online safety can be found on our website pages <https://www.wsfc.ac.uk/support-for-remote-learning/> and in our 'Help & Support' booklet <https://www.wsfc.ac.uk/for-parents/safeguarding/>

Below is a reminder of the safeguarding team and contact details

Safeguarding team

Julie Ferman – Designated Safeguarding Lead & Head of Year j.ferman@wsfc.ac.uk

Graham Williams – Deputy DSL & Head of Year g.williams@wsfc.ac.uk

Sara Payne – Deputy DSL and Learning Support manager sara.payne@wsfc.ac.uk

Carl Rusby – Head of Year carl.rusby@wsfc.ac.uk

Sarah Mills – counsellor (appts booked in student services 01905 362635)

Tutors are also part of the wider safeguarding team

01 What's the difference between gambling and harmful gambling?

Gambling is simply defined as 'to stake or risk money', or anything of value, on the outcome of something involving chance. Usually, gambling is a fun and safe leisure activity involving games chance for money or material goods, however, when a person has the urge to continuously gamble despite negative and harmful consequences or the desire to stop, this is identified as 'harmful gambling' and will often require specialist intervention and support to address the issue

Why it matters

According to the gambling commission's annual survey on young people in 2019, 11% of young people aged 11-16 had spent their own money on a gambling activity in the previous 7 days. This equates to approximately 350, 000 11-16 year olds across Great Britain, 55000 of whom are classified as having a gambling problem. This survey also showed that for the young people who have heard of 'in-game items', 44% have paid money to open loot boxes, crates or packs to get other items within a game they were playing, and 6% have bet with in-game items on external websites or privately (e.g with friends)

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07 What to do next?

Young people, parents/carers and professional supporting young people can find information, advice and support through the National Gambling Helpline on 0808 8020133 (24/7).

This service is provided by GamCare who also provide a dedicated website at www.bigdeal.org.uk

03 The Impact

The level of impact of harmful gambling on both the individual and affected others include: mental health and wellbeing issues, higher risk of suicidal ideation/intent, drug and alcohol misuse, financial crisis, problems with education & work, criminality, relationship difficulties and the associated social and psychological impacts on affected others.

Indicators of harmful gambling

The indicators that an individual's gambling behaviour is problematic and harmful include; often thinking about or planning to gamble, needing to gamble with more money to get excitement, negative emotions when trying to cut down on gambling, spending more time & money than you plan to, gambling to try to win back money that has been lost, lying to friends, family, stealing money to fund gambling and putting personal relationships at risk

Skins betting

Skins are mostly cosmetic items players can purchase in a variety of games for players to customise their characters. Players can buy, sell and exchange these items. When these items are used as virtual currency to bet on the outcome of professional matches or other games of chance, that is defined as skins betting. **In-game purchasing** can be a very easy way to run up a significant bill. With one tap, players can buy bonuses, level ups, hints etc., and quickly lose control of spending limits.

E-sports -Though proportionally there is little gambling on e-sports taking place in the mainstream market, there are more opportunities to place bets in unregulated markets. This is a of particular concern in relation to young people. eSports matches are also streamed for free on the web, via sites like twitch.tv, which can also include promotion for different forms of gambling.

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