



Prevent Education Officer

Kent and Medway

Newsletter May 2020

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I hope this Newsletter finds you all well during this difficult and uncertain time. It certainly has been a time of change and adapting to a new way of working for us all. It has been amazing how quickly and professionally Kent & Medway schools have responded to the challenges faced.

During this period of Home schooling I appreciate that schools have a vast amount of Safeguarding responsibilities to consider. The rise in students now accessing online information for longer periods of time is inevitable. It is important to understand that with an increase in young people accessing the internet we will also see an increase in groups/individuals looking to exploit their curiosity, vulnerabilities and passions around certain subjects. We are already aware that individual groups are using the Covid 19 pandemic to further their cause and fuel a blame culture.

You may be aware of students and staff who are affected personally by this crisis. They may have lost a relative or loved one and are hurt and angry. This could be an extremely vulnerable time for them, especially if they start to read the various conspiracy theories that are online around Covid 19.

It is important to highlight that the Kent & Medway Prevent teams are continuing to work remotely during this time. I am available to discuss any concerns you may have and offer support and guidance. Now, more than ever it is important that we continue to share our concerns and help protect our young people during this time.

I appreciate that you are very much reliant upon parents and carers during this time to highlight concerns. It may be a parent notices some changes in behaviour, or that their own child notices something concerning on a friend's social media account? It is likely that they may still contact the school for advice and support. I am happy to discuss any concerns that may be raised to you my contact number is 03000 413439.

The Let's Talk About It website has some excellent resources and information on spotting the signs of radicalisation. The fact sheet below is aimed at parents and guardians and has information about how radicalisers may take advantage of the pandemic to further their cause. Please disseminate as widely as possible.

<https://www.ltai.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Parent-Guardian-Online-Radicalisation-Information-and-Support-V.2.pdf>

Vulnerable Child Definition from DFE

I would like to draw your attention towards the [recently revised DfE Guidance on Vulnerable Children/Young People](#) (as of 19th April), in case you had not seen it already.

The revised guidance helps to make it clear that vulnerable children and young people' are defined as those who;

- i) are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the children act (Child In Need Plan, Child Protection Plan, Looked After Children)
- ii) have an education, health and care (EHC) plan whose needs cannot be met safely in the home environment
- iii) ***have been assessed as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities, and who are therefore in need of continued education provision***

It may be that any young person who presents with safeguarding concerns around Prevent related matters could be offered a school place if deemed appropriate for Safeguarding.

Domestic Abuse and Extremism. (Update)

You may recall from my March newsletter I reported on the links between Domestic Abuse and Extremism. I wanted to keep this fresh in your minds as we are sure to see a spike in Domestic related incidents during this period of Lockdown. I have included the original article below:

I recently attended a very good presentation from colleagues who have carried out some research into the links between Domestic Abuse and Extremism. I thought it would be helpful to share some of the points with you on how this may present in the young people you work with.

Push Factors: A child living in a domestic abuse household may seek relief from the issues they face at home. They may seek attention, understanding and friendship from groups and individuals who can offer them a “way out” from the pressures at home. This may be face to face or online. It is important to understand that the sense of belonging offered by these groups can be very appealing to a child in a domestic abusive household.

Desensitised to Violence: A young person living in a violent household may have become desensitised to violence and offensive language. The normalisation of violence in their everyday lives may make them vulnerable to exploitation by extremist groups who use violence for their cause.

Hypervigilance: Hypervigilance is an increased state of vigilance and awareness that may be caused by [fear](#) and [anxiety](#). In children and young people living with domestic violence this may be prevalent as the child seeks to keep themselves safe from their situation. This may present as behavioural issues in school. Students may become obsessive at avoiding perceived threats. This may easily be misdiagnosed as a “fixation” or undiagnosed condition such as ADHD. It is important to consider DA should this increased state of alertness present itself.

The below link is to the government’s advice and support pages on Domestic Abuse during the pandemic. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-and-domestic-abuse/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse>

Media Updates- Covid19 Propaganda

In the UK, the British National Socialist Movement has disseminated a poster on messenger app Telegram titled “What to Do If You Get Covid-19”. The advice it proffers is about as far from socially beneficial as you could imagine, encouraging those infected to visit local mosques and synagogues, as well as spending time in ‘diverse neighbourhoods’ and on public transport. Anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim sentiments interwoven with the intended exploitation of a national health crisis.



In the United States, far-right actors are capitalising on the coronavirus outbreak to peddle a variety of divisive and unfounded conspiracies. American neo-Nazis on social media platforms such as Telegram – including ‘accelerationists’ who seek to bring an end to liberal democratic society and the establishment of a white ethno-state – are deep in discussion over how to exploit the COVID-19 pandemic in order to recruit young people to their cause.

Further highlighting the overlap between far-right extremism and gaming subculture, one ‘pathway’ considered is stepping up radicalisation efforts through in-game chat features – taking advantage of coronavirus-related school closures which are likely to result in young people spending more time playing on their games consoles.

Extremists are using the pandemic to promote themselves as supporters of the community and spread fake information

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/25/far-right-hijack-coronavirus-crisis-to-push-agenda-and-boost-support>

Terrorist groups spin COVID-19 as God's 'smallest soldier' attacking West
<https://abcnews.go.com/International/terrorist-groups-spin-covid-19-gods-smallest-soldier/story?id=69930563>

How the 5G conspiracy theories took hold

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/audio/2020/apr/22/how-the-5g-conspiracy-theories-took-hold>



You can see from these few news reports that there are a lot of conspiracy theories circulating that young people may have an interest in. It is important to understand how these may impact on the mental health and wellbeing of young people and what we can do to support this. Please get in touch if you have any Prevent related concerns you would like to discuss.

Training

All face to face Prevent training is currently postponed. I will be in touch with all organisations who had staff/pupil sessions booked to rearrange these in due course. It may be that during this time you are looking to update your Safeguarding policies and procedures. If you would like any advice on the Prevent duty please drop me an email and I will be happy to help.

Stay Safe and Stay in touch.

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