



3rd April 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

SLI/JHR/Safeguarding

Re: Wellbeing and Safeguarding

As we adjust to our new circumstances, I would like to share some suggestions for supporting your son or daughter's emotional wellbeing during the period of closure at The Leigh Academy.

Talking to your child about Coronavirus

Many young people will be affected by worries about Coronavirus and difficulties adjusting to self-isolation. There are a number of useful sources of support for young people and their parents, including youngminds.org.uk and childline.org.uk. Young Minds recommends the following tips for talking to young people about Coronavirus.

1. Try not to shield your child from the news, as it's likely they will find out somehow from school, being online or from friends.
2. Talk to your child about what is going on. You could start by asking them what they have heard.
3. Try to answer their questions and reassure them in an age appropriate manner. Remember, you do not need to know all the answers, but talking can help them feel calm.
4. Reassure your child that it is unlikely they will get seriously ill, and if they do feel ill, you will look after them. Your child might be concerned about who will look after you if you catch the virus. Let them know the kind of support you have as an adult so that they don't feel they need to worry about you.
5. Give some practical tips to your child about how they can look after themselves. For example, show them how to wash their hands properly, and remind them when they should be doing it.
6. Keep as many regular routines as possible, so that your child feels safe and that things are stable.
7. Spend time doing a positive activity with your child (e.g. reading, playing, painting, cooking) to help reassure them and reduce their anxiety. This is also a great way of providing a space for them to talk through their concerns, without having a 'big chat'.
8. Encourage your child to think about the things they can do to make them feel safer and less worried.
9. Be aware that your child may want more close contact with you at this time and feel anxious about separation. Try to provide this support whenever possible.
10. Remember to look after yourself too. If you yourself are feeling worried, or anxious about Coronavirus, talk to someone you trust who can listen and support you.

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Starting conversations about e-safety

Regular conversations with young people about their online lives can help them develop the skills to use the Internet safely and recognise and report harmful behaviour and content. Please refer to the Online Safety letter sent recently from Mr Piggott which has a lot more detailed information.

Extremism and radicalisation

When a young person is vulnerable or socially isolated, they are potentially at increased risk of being drawn into extremist ideologies. Mainstream platforms where young people share ideas and socialise can be used by extremists from both far right and islamist groups to groom and ultimately radicalise them by promoting racist, homophobic and misogynistic ideologies and a “them and us” narrative. You can report any illegal or harmful behaviour, information, pictures or videos at www.gov.uk/report-terrorism.

Commercialism and financial exploitation:

Children can be at risk of commercial exploitation online. This can include games, apps, advertising or marketing schemes that can make them spend money online. Turn off in-app purchasing on devices where possible. Make your child aware of scams that may seek to gain access to their accounts, and advise them to be wary in following links or opening attachments in emails that appear to be from organisations such as banks and service providers.

If you are worried - Be alert to any changes in behaviour, language and attitude in your child that may indicate that something is upsetting them online, for example, if your child starts to withdraw from family and friends or becomes secretive about their online behaviour.

If your child discloses an online issue or concern to you, ensure you **listen** to them.

- Avoid being angry or blaming them; reassure them that they have done the right thing by telling you.
- Take their concerns seriously; even if you feel they are overreacting or their worries are unfounded, it is important not to dismiss their feelings as this can prevent them from coming to you for help again in the future.
- Support your child to report and block people online who may have tried to contact them or have sent them nasty or inappropriate messages or content.
- Help your child to report to the site or service where the concern happened. Depending on the issue, you can report specific concerns online.

Please see below a list of websites that can be used that offer support to safeguard your son/daughter. The Leigh Academy are also proud to work alongside Hummingbird counselling service and during this difficult time we're still able to access professional support. Please do get in touch if you have any concerns at this most unusual time.

- Inappropriate content: <https://reportharmfulcontent.com/>
- Terrorist content: <https://act.campaign.gov.uk/>
- Child Sexual Abuse Imagery: <https://www.iwf.org.uk/>
- Online Child Sexual Abuse: <https://ceop.police.uk/>

Please direct all safeguarding concerns (online or other) to stuart.lindars@leighacademy.org.uk and I will respond to your concern asap.

For urgent safeguarding concerns, you can contact the Kent Central Duty Team on: **03000 411111** (out of hours **03000 419191**).

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Take care.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stuart Lindars', with a long, wavy tail extending to the right.

Stuart Lindars
Darwin Head of College
Designated Safeguarding Lead