



ST MARY'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

SAFE@ST MARY'S

Spring Safeguarding Newsletter

Anxiety

It is not surprising that the number of people experiencing poor mental health has significantly increased over the past year, and this includes teenagers. The disruption to education, routine and socialising has had an impact on many of our young people, and this can manifest itself in various ways. Anxiety is one of the most commonly reported issues in our society today, but what exactly is it and what can we do about it?

Anxiety is a feeling of worry or fear that is experienced as a combination of physical sensations, thoughts, and feelings. We all experience periods of worry and stress in our lives- it is both normal and necessary at times. We understand that if we are worrying about an upcoming event or challenge, that once it is over, we will return to a state of calm. It is temporary. However, anxiety can become a problem if fear, worry, and nervousness are the constant and dominant emotions. There are many factors that can trigger anxiety, including relationships, pressure of work, experiencing trauma, and having disproportionate levels of responsibility. If a person feels trapped by negative feelings for a long period of time, it can trigger physical symptoms as well as emotional ones.

Symptoms and signs of anxiety vary depending on the individual, but the most common signs include:

- Feeling sick
- Feeling like you cannot breathe/ fast breathing
- Panic attacks
- Light-headed/ wobbly
- Dry mouth
- Negative thoughts
- On edge/panicky
- Withdrawn
- Sensitive to noise/light/movement
- Self-harm

It is important to remember that there are actions we can take to manage anxiety and promote positive mental health:

- **Mindfulness and meditation** are great for managing a panic attack and for relaxation in general. Focussing on your senses helps to centre the brain and distract from the feelings of worry- what can you hear/see/smell/feel/taste? [How to Meditate with Anxiety - Mindful](#)
- **Grounding techniques** are coping strategies to help reconnect you with the present and bring you out of a state of panic or distress. [8 Grounding Techniques for When You're Feeling Overwhelmed | Talkspace](#)
- **Talking to someone we trust**- sharing our worries allows others to help us gain perspective and provide the opportunity for reassurance.
- **Exercise** is great for releasing endorphins, the 'feel good' hormone which helps us cope with pain and stress.
- **Going outside and being surrounded by nature** is scientifically proven to reduce the level of cortisol in our bodies which is our main 'stress' hormone.
- **Doing enjoyable activities** such as art, cooking, watching a film or reading a book.



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If you or your child are suffering with anxiety and it is becoming unmanageable, always seek medical advice.

Please follow the links for more information on how to manage your anxiety and support your child if they are suffering with it:

[Anxiety | Every Mind Matters | One You \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Self-care for anxiety | Mind](#)

[Helping Your Child With Anxiety \(youngminds.org.uk\)](#)

[Anxiety - for teenagers | stem4](#)

[Wellbeing activities: being kind to yourself | British Red Cross](#)

[Anxiety in children - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

Self-harm

Self-harm is a coping strategy used by some people to try and manage difficult feelings or situations by hurting themselves. This can often happen if a person is unable to express or articulate how they are feeling at that moment or communicate a past trauma. This is why self-harm is particularly prevalent among teenagers, as they have often not yet fully developed their emotional intelligence or vocabulary to recognise and communicate negative emotions or experiences.

It is important to remember that self-harm is a coping mechanism and a sign that something is happening emotionally to that person. It can be worrying and even scary if you notice a loved one is self-harming, but try not to panic. There is a lot of support and understanding out there, and try to remember that it is unlikely to be a constant behaviour if the underlying issues that are triggering the self-harm can be addressed.

If your child is self-harming, please talk to a professional to get advice. The following links are a great place to start to get an understanding of what self-harm is and how to support your child if they are self-harming.

[What is self-harm? | Mind](#)

[Where to get help for self-harm - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Self-harm - what you need to know. \(rethink.org\)](#)

[Parents Guide To Support - Self-harm \(youngminds.org.uk\)](#)

[Self-harm in young people - for parents and carers | Royal College of Psychiatrists \(rcpsych.ac.uk\)](#)

[Home | Papyrus UK | Suicide Prevention Charity \(papyrus-uk.org\)](#)

County Lines & Criminal Child Exploitation

The NSPCC defines County Lines as:

County Lines is the police term for urban gangs exploiting young people into moving drugs from a hub, normally a large city, into other markets - suburban areas and market and coastal towns - using dedicated mobile phone lines or "deal lines". Children as young as 12 years old have been exploited into carrying drugs for gangs. This can involve children being trafficked away from their home area, staying in accommodation and selling and manufacturing drugs.



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Criminal exploitation is child abuse where children and young people are manipulated and coerced into committing crimes.

Nationally, it is reported that:

- **46,000** children in England are thought to be involved in gangs. It is likely that there are many more.
- **90%** of English police forces have seen county lines activity in their area and the violence is getting worse.
- **1,000** different County Lines operating in the UK.
- Children aged **15 to 17 years** are those most commonly identified as victims of County Lines exploitation, although those younger and older are also at risk of exploitation.

Signs to look out for that may suggest a young person is being criminally exploited or is involved in County Lines:

- Frequently absent from and doing badly in school.
- Going missing from home, staying out late and travelling for unexplained reasons.
- In a relationship or hanging out with someone older than them.
- Being angry, aggressive or violent.
- Being isolated or withdrawn.
- Having unexplained money and buying new things.
- Wearing clothes or accessories in gang colours or getting tattoos.
- Using new slang words.
- Spending more time on social media and being secretive about time online.
- Making more calls or sending more texts, possibly on a new phone or phones.
- Self-harming and feeling emotionally unwell.
- Taking drugs and abusing alcohol.
- Committing petty crimes like shop lifting or vandalism.
- Unexplained injuries and refusing to seek medical help.
- Carrying weapons.

What to do if you are worried that your child is being criminally exploited:

- **Talk to them and listen-** speak to them honestly about the consequences of being involved in criminal activities, explain to them what exploitation is and that they can get out of it- the Police will help.
- **Be aware and alert-** try your best to know where your child is going, who their friends are and what they are doing on social media.
- **Seek help and advice-** contact the Police, the Designated Safeguarding Lead at school (Miss H McKay), Call Derbyshire [Call Derbyshire - Derbyshire County Council](#) or the NSPCC [Contact us | NSPCC](#) as soon as possible,
- **Support positive life changes-** extra-curricular clubs, how to manage mental health positively and planning their future- college, apprenticeships, or university.



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Use the following links to find out more about County Lines and how to support your child if they are being criminally exploited:

[Criminal exploitation and gangs | NSPCC](#)

[County Lines & Child Exploitation | The Children's Society](#)

[County Lines: Criminal Exploitation of Children – Safe4Me](#)

[4206.1-County-lines-leaflet-final-web.pdf \(cscp.org.uk\)](#)

[County Lines - Fearless](#)

[County lines | Derbyshire Constabulary](#)

Key Safeguarding Staff

IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS ABOUT THE WELFARE OF YOUR CHILD OR ANOTHER PUPIL AT ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL, PLEASE CONTACT MISS MCKAY OR MR BREDON.

Designated Senior Person for Safeguarding & Child Protection – Miss H McKay hmckay@stmaryschesterfield.org.uk

Designated Deputy Person for Safeguarding & Child Protection – Mr A Breton abredon@stmaryschesterfield.org.uk

IMPORTANT: If you think a child is at immediate risk of significant harm, please contact:

Call Derbyshire: 01629 533190

Sheffield Safeguarding Hub: 0114 273 4855