



# SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

Working together to keep our young people safe

FEBRUARY 2024 | SECONDARY

In this month's issue:

- Spotting the signs of poor mental health
- How to support mental health
- Support: Kooth | Young Minds

## RECOGNISING THE SIGNS THAT YOUR CHILD MIGHT BE STRUGGLING WITH THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

### Change in academic behaviour

Has their response to school or school work changed? They may be reluctant to go to school or to engage in school work or related activities.



### Change in behaviour

Have you noticed any recent changes in your child's behaviour? This could be shifts in mood, altered reactions to others, or the quality of their relationships beginning to decline.



### Poor sleep

Are you noticing differences in their sleep patterns? Perhaps they are having difficulty falling asleep or waking up frequently throughout the night.



### Changes in social habits

Has there been a change in the way your child socialises? They may be avoiding social situations with friends or family.



## Mental Health: We all have it!

As we approach Children's Mental Health Week, it's a great opportunity to take stock of our children's well-being. Mental health should be treated with the same level of importance as physical health. We all possess it, and it is our responsibility to care for it. This involves being able to identify when something isn't quite right, as well as implementing preventative measures to ensure our children's mental health is in good condition.

## Understanding Depression and Anxiety in Children

Depression and anxiety are the most commonly recognised mental health conditions and often go hand in hand, with anxiety being a symptom of depression. Although symptoms vary from child to child, there are some common features. If you believe your child is experiencing any of these, the first step is to schedule an appointment with their GP. In addition, reaching out to the school is crucial as there are many resources available to provide support.

## Signs of depression and anxiety

### Depression

- » Sadness or low mood that is present more than not
- » Little interest in the things they used to enjoy
- » Exhaustion all of the time
- » Talking about feeling worthless
- » Having suicidal thoughts or self-harm

### Anxiety

- » Finding it hard to concentrate
- » Not sleeping or night waking
- » Not wanting to eat
- » Getting angry or irritable
- » Constantly worrying or having negative thoughts
- » Complaining of feeling unwell

# SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

## Tips for Nurturing Your Child's Mental Health

Maintaining good mental health is an ongoing process, especially when it comes to children. Here are some helpful tips to prevent potential mental health issues from arising and promote healthy well-being for your child.

### The importance of sleep

Children are developing physically, intellectually and emotionally, and their development is aided by good quality sleep. Young people who have poor sleep will find it harder to cope with daily life and will not develop resilience.

Tips for improving sleep:

- Have a set bedtime and create a calming environment
- Put electronic devices away 30 minutes before bedtime
- Have good eating and exercise habits during the day
- Avoid caffeine in the evening

## 4 ways to support your child with their mental health



### ●●● Encourage good physical health

Encourage healthy habits, such as a balanced diet, regular exercise, and good personal hygiene in children. Set a good example at home and talk to them about it.



### ●●● Set boundaries with devices

Children should have designated times to disconnect from social media, the internet, and gaming for alternative activities that promote social interaction.



### ●●● Have open conversations

To eliminate stigmas, talking to children about mental health is crucial. Using personal experiences and relatable examples from TV shows can help start the conversation.



### ●●● Create healthy habits

Encourage healthy hobbies, social activities, and connections to promote mental well-being and prevent unhealthy patterns, obsessions or addictions.

## Kooth: The Online Community for Mental Well-being

For children and young people seeking support, Kooth provides instant access to a supportive online community of peers and experienced counsellors. The platform also includes a range of useful activities and guidance, and can be accessed through a convenient app.

## Young Minds - A Charity Committed to the Mental Health of Young People

Young Minds is a charity that offers assistance and resources to both young individuals and parents. Their website contains plenty of valuable guidance and advice, including a helpline for parents and children in need of support.

