



Welcome to December's issue of DSL & DT briefing. We hope that the countdown to Christmas allows everyone to stay healthy and well, ready to enjoy what hopefully will be, a normal Christmas holiday! Christmas can be one of the hardest periods for our vulnerable children so if there is any further support or advice you might need please do get in touch.

A few reminders for DTs:

- Academic data for the autumn term **must be added to ePEP**. If you need any assistance please contact your VS case worker and they will be only too happy to help.
- Please check in with your children, Christmas can be a really triggering time for those not with their families. There are a few resources/website recommendations within this briefing to support you in schools with any discussion.



On Tuesday 2nd July 2024 we will be hosting our Annual Virtual School Conference at The Crowne Plaza Reading East (Wharfedale Road, Berkshire, South East, RG41 5TS). More details will be sent in the January DSL & DT briefing but please make note of the date.

response to our Conference last year and we aim to build on that in 2024!



OFSTED have been particularly busy in our authority this term and we know that this can cause much anxiety amongst staff which was referenced in the latest Annual Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills Report.

The report provides a valuable insight into the national picture, and provide a good guide as to where your establishment is sitting within the greater currents running in education nationally.

Within her final letter Amanda Spielman states:

There is also limited school sector understanding of the wider framework of public accountability for public services, where health, adult social care, police forces, fire services and prisons are all inspected with the same or a very similar grading system. The judgement model Ofsted uses in early years, schools, colleges, other post-16 education and children's social care is in fact entirely in line with other inspectorates .

Click [here](#) for the full report.

Whats On

- ★ Monday 4 December 2023 PEP/PP+ Deadline
- ★ Friday 15 December 2023 Last day of term (WBC)
- ★ Tuesday 2 January 2024 WBC Spring Term Begins
- ★ Monday 15 January 2024 Primary/Junior School Application Deadline
- ★ Tuesday 16 January 2024 - 15:30 - 16:30 ePEP Refresher Training
- ★ Tuesday 30 January 2024 Emotional Based School Avoidance training (Shute End)
- ★ Monday 12 February 2024 - Friday 16 February 2024 Half Term (WBC)
- ★ Thursday 22 February 2024 - 15:00 - 16:30 Wokingham DSL Meeting (Virtual)



Managing a disclosure of sexual harassment or assault

Ofsted's review of sexual abuse told us that sexual harassment has become so commonplace in schools that young people don't see the point in reporting incidents. If a young person chooses you as the person they trust with their disclosure, how you support them can have a profound impact on their lives.

As we all know being an educational professional is never easy. We are acutely aware that dealing with parents, children, older pupils and colleagues is all in a days work and presents ongoing challenges for our DSLs & DTs in schools.

The disclosure of sexual harassment, assault or abuse to you can be one of the most difficult things you will face in your career. However when it occurs, which sadly it almost certainly will, it is important that you are prepared to handle it.

The Brook Organisation, whose work has previously been featured in other briefings, have prepared a course intended to prepare you as much as possible for what to do and how to handle it. If you are interested please click [here](#) which will take you to the free course is to equip school staff with the skills and knowledge needed to confidently manage a student's disclosure of sexual harassment or sexual assault or sexual abuse.

"THEY MAY FORGET WHAT YOU SAID BUT THEY WILL NOT FORGET HOW YOU MADE THEM FEEL."

CARL BUECHNER .



Child Protection in Sport Unit

We all know the benefits of sport in supporting our physical and mental well being. Sport is a fantastic outlet for many children and young people. It helps to support them with socialisation, keeps them fit and more importantly can introduce them into an interest for life.

Sports will increase our quality of life far into the future, setting good habits and instilling values and self-discipline. Engaging children with sports can show children with new directions for their lives and expand their opportunities.

Unfortunately there are, like with anything, risks attached to sports. Away matches, interactions with non-school staff such as coach drivers, out-of-school coaches and other personnel can create vulnerability windows that could be exploited.

To help with prevention of some of these potential problems, the NSPCC has created a page dedicated to offering guidance on how to keep pupils safe in sporting environments. To find out more please click [here](#).

REMINDER OF SEXPLOITATION VIDEO FROM KENT POLICE:



Kent Police have released a video on their YouTube page, designed to raise awareness of this activity. If interested please

follow the link below:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AddVGsFIV_s



Christmas is coming and for most children, young people and their families, this creates feelings of excitement and joyful anticipation as they recall their memories of Christmas past; family coming together, the magic, the surprise, the gifts, the food.... Unfortunately, Christmas isn't like that for everyone.

Children and young people with developmental trauma may recall Christmas as the time when the adults around them, who perhaps were always unpredictable, frightening and abusive, become even more so - for these children and young people, Christmas may be anticipated with terror.

(Acord Education and Care, 2020)

Research

Fundamental to supporting children and young people with developmental trauma is establishing a sense of safety.

Critical to this is known carers providing reliable, predictable daily routines and boundaries, a consistency of communication and response and clarity of expectations within containing and sensory balanced environments.

Christmas however, often means a complete change in the norm—the environment is decorated, the lighting is different, bedtimes and getting up times may vary, the bedtime routine may be different in preparation for Santa, meal times may happen at different times, there may be unknown visitors, secret whispers and hiding, lots of surprises, loud noises, singing and nativity practise, unstructured timetables and references to sought-after gifts.

It would seem then, at a time when a traumatised child or young person is in most need of feeling safe, a time when they are anticipating terror, everything that may bring that sense of safety, changes.

(Acorn Education, 2020)

Research shows that children and young people with developmental trauma are hypersensitive to danger and are thrown back into their primitive drive for survival, adopt states of 'Flight/Flight/Freeze' and within these present with many behaviours:

- * Not focused
- * Not listening
- * Clumsy
- * Daydreaming
- * Aggressive
- * Disruptive / loud
- * Hyperactive
- * Running away / hiding
- * Silly voices
- * Controlling

(Bowlby, 1969)



Strategies for Home

Try to make Christmas a predictable, planned event:

- * Talk about Christmas beforehand. Explore fears and hopes. Think about coping strategies.
- * Involve the children in the planning, allow them to have some control over the events.
- * Prepare a schedule for Christmas— who is around, what will happen and when.
- * Use the advent calendar as the countdown and schedule of events.
- * Prepare your children ready for the next school term— what will they be learning, why the classroom will look different (the decorations will be put away before they are at home, displays will change etc).

Keep to the house routines:

- * Try to maintain the daily routines; particularly the child or young person's individualised routines for getting up, washing, dressing, bedtimes and meal times, even Christmas dinner.

Keep to the house rules:

- * Stick to the house or individual rules about time on social media or gaming consoles.
- * Maintain the usual boundaries and behavioural expectations.

Provide opportunities for emotional regulation:

- * Build in quiet times to the festive days, after each exciting point providing time to calm, regulate and touch base.
- * Make time to get some fresh air or take some physical exercise.
- * Be thoughtful about noise levels, allocating a 'quiet room' where noisy games and activities are kept away from.

Strategies for School

Routines and Structure:

(Beacon House, 2021)

- * Do more of what works (rather than less): Children may need more of your presence, more supervision, more scaffolding and more support than usual. How can time for this be built in? How can you build up your emotional reserves to give you the energy you need?
- * KNOWLEDGE is empowerment: Making the Christmas schedule explicit and predictable lowers stress for all. Draw it out, write it out, repeat it lots, keep as much as you can as the same as usual. Share the timetable with parents who can support their children with their daily routines.
- * Provide opportunities for emotional regulation: Build in quiet times to the festive days, after each exciting point providing time to calm, regulate and touch base.

Zones of Regulation and Emotional Check-ins:

- * EXPLORE the anticipation of Christmas: "Christmas is coming, what's that like for you?" "Where do you think you are today?"
- * EXCITEMENT is just the other side of the coin: Anticipate that excitement can often feel the same as stress for traumatised children. It's okay to keep things low key and by reducing excitement you are reducing stress.
- * CONNECT then REFLECT: "I can have a hard time when Christmas is over too—especially when I was a kid.... Here's what we could do together to get back into a routine we enjoy..."

Naughty or Nice list:

- * Help the child to know that giving and receiving presents is not dependent on them being good. They are loved and worthy regardless of their behaviour. Similarly, you are thinking of them over the break, perhaps give them some colouring to bring back in January that you are very much looking forward to seeing!
- * Elf Cams and Santa's watching—be mindful that this can be stressful for children who feel shame and rejection.



Beacon House is passionate about developing freely available resources so that knowledge about the repair of trauma and adversity is in the hands of those who need it.

Please visit their website for the whole range of resources available:

[Resources \(beaconhouse.org.uk\)](https://www.beaconhouse.org.uk)

Virtual Schools

A Virtual School acts as a local authority champion to promote the progress and educational attainment of children and young people who are or who have been in care and those who have had social services involvement, so that they achieve educational outcomes comparable to their peers. Ensuring that they receive a high-quality education is the foundation for improving their lives.

Useful contact information



Don't forget the virtual school are here to assist you should you require any support. You can email us at the following addresses and we promise we will respond within 24 hours.

Jane Everton Head of Virtual School and Vulnerable Learner Support

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Here's how to
CONTACT US!