

Welcome to this week's SMRT Safeguarding Update...

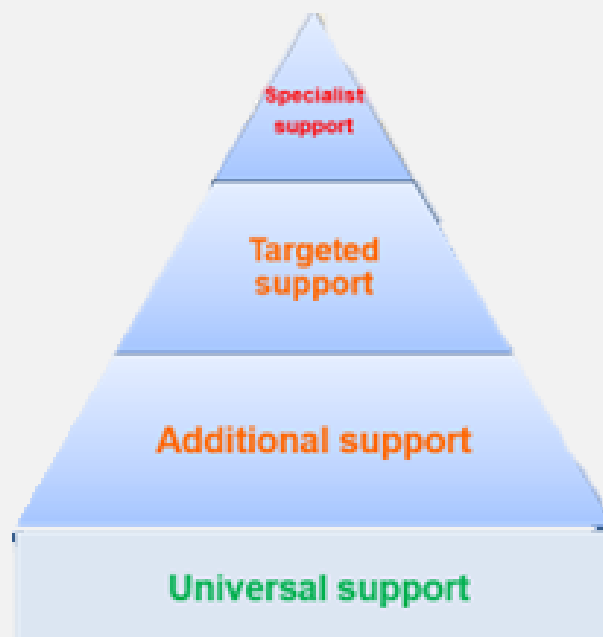
# WAKE UP WEDNESDAY

## Mental Health and Wellbeing Support for Students at SMRT

St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School is committed to protecting our students and ensuring their safety and wellbeing – whilst in school but also in the community.

The [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#) defines mental health as “a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. It is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in.”

The School promotes positive mental wellbeing for all students and supports them to develop the skills needed to keep themselves healthy. We use a combination of universal, targeted and specialist approaches, dependent on need, and work collaboratively as professionals, as well as



with external agencies where relevant.

### Universal and Additional Support

The first and most important aspect of our provision is **universal support**, which normalises the fact that we all have mental health and that it is normal for this to fluctuate at different points in our lives. This stage is also about supporting the prevention of students' mental ill-health and of the escalation of any low-level difficulties. It emphasises high quality and responsive care from

form tutors, as well as all school staff promoting a positive relational approach when interacting with students.

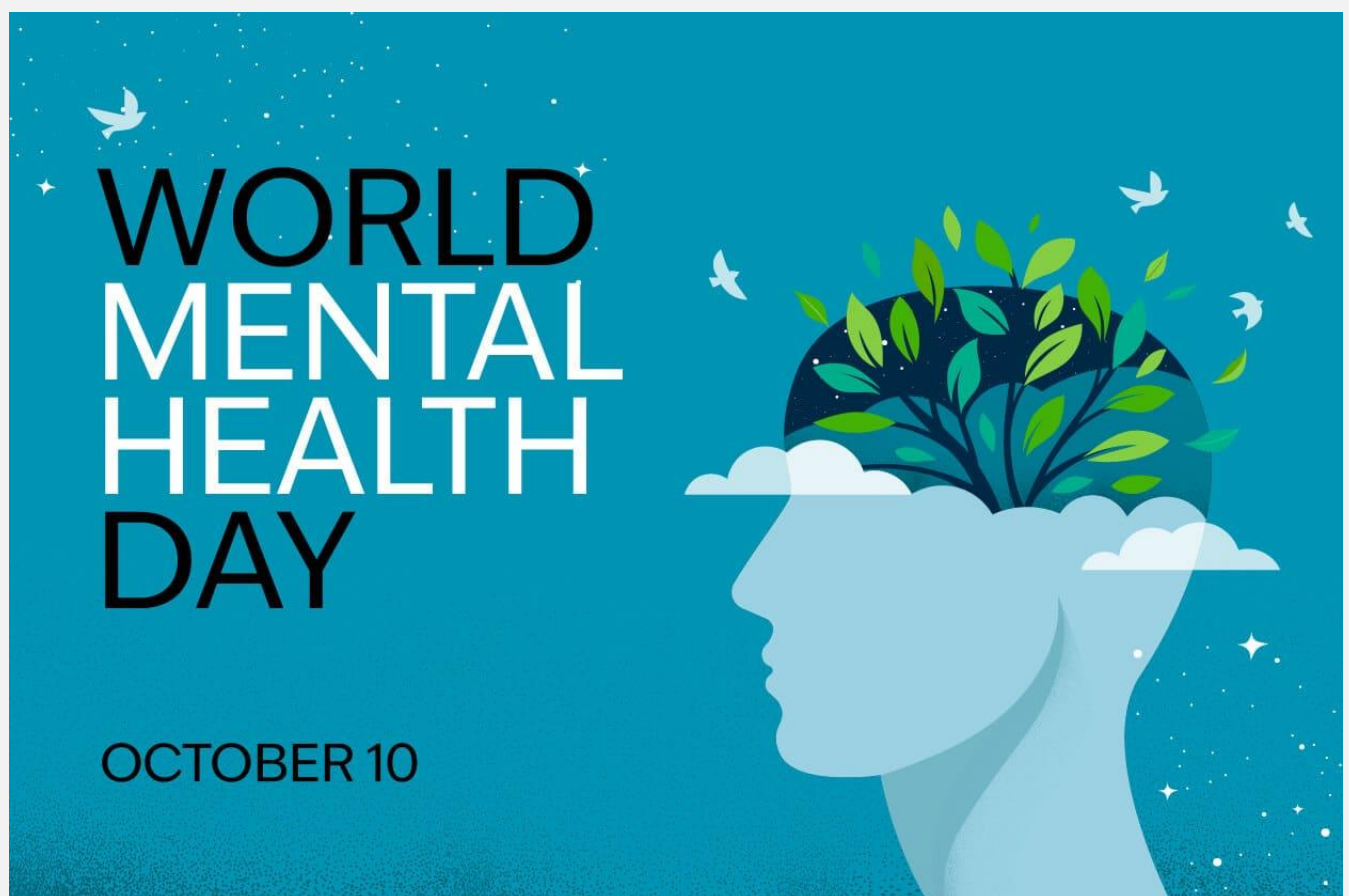
This stage also incorporates universally accessible **additional support** e.g. from learning mentors, school health nurse drop-ins or dropping in to speak with Chaplain Josh (in school) or through a referral to Off the Record (outside of school).

### Targeted Support

Beyond our ability to offer additional support, **targeted support** can include low-intensity CBT sessions with our Education Mental Health Practitioners, who come into school once a week and work with students in both the main school the sixth form. It can include one-to-one sessions with the Mental Health Lead (Ms Meredith). It can also include pastoral staff requesting consultations from our Primary Mental Health Specialist – our school's CAMHS link.

### Specialist Support

**Specialist support** takes the form of counselling in school from Butterfly Creative Therapy, or outside of school via CAMHS. It can also include the creation of safety plans if there are specific risks that need to be accounted for. We will always liaise with and potentially refer on to specialist mental health services where it is clear that the level of need falls beyond what we are equipped to deal with in school.



## World Mental Health Day Friday 10 October

In the lead up to World Mental Health Day on Friday next week. A series of assemblies have been delivered to all students that focussed on the strategies students could use to support their mental health. The assemblies also covered who they can go to for support in school, online and at home as well as the ways poor mental health can be recognised and addressed in ourselves and others.

There will also be morning tutorials that have input about World Mental Health Day and ways we can recognise this across SMRT and our wider community. The pastoral curriculum and VIP lessons continue to have regular mental health content and, currently, Year 10 are focusing on this issue in their VIP lessons.

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## General Signposting and Support for Parents

There are many places to obtain information and advice relating to the wellbeing of your child. Below are some of the organisations that we have found to provide useful information. Click on the links to for easy access to their websites.

- [YoungMinds](#) is a charity with an excellent website with advice and resources to support with many different aspects of mental wellbeing.
- [Childline](#) has advice and support covering a whole range of topics such as friendships, bullying and schoolwork to name just a few.
- The [NSPCC](#) provide support and advice for parents on a range of topics including how to deal with tantrums, abuse and substance misuse.

This is a helpful starting point for having conversations about mental health with your child:

[https://www.youngminds.org.uk/media/yewavutz/young-minds-conversation-starters\\_final-003.pdf](https://www.youngminds.org.uk/media/yewavutz/young-minds-conversation-starters_final-003.pdf)

We will be happy to signpost you to other organisations that offer further guidance and support around specific issues, such as bereavement, self-harm, disordered eating etc.

If you have a concern about the health and wellbeing of your child that you would like to share with the school, please get in touch with your child's form tutor, who will be able to liaise with the Head of Year and Mental Health Lead as appropriate. Alternatively, you can email [safeguarding@smrt.bristol.sch.uk](mailto:safeguarding@smrt.bristol.sch.uk) and one of the team will contact you.

## Social Media and Mental Health

Wake up Wednesday again continues our theme of supporting students with online safety, with the focus this week being on how the use of social media relates to mental health.

Social media provides opportunities to stay up to date with news and friends. However, the algorithms and content feeds of these sites can also often provide access to unpleasant or distressing content.

Please see the next page for a resource on ***What Parents and Carers Need to Know About Social Media and Mental Health***. The resource is also included as a separate attachment.



# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about SOCIAL MEDIA & MENTAL HEALTH

An estimated one-third of children have a social media account, so it's important that trusted adults know what content young people are consuming, what they're posting and the interactions they're having. On social media, it can be easy to go down 'rabbit holes' that aren't beneficial to our wellbeing. As platforms grapple with managing such 'legal but harmful' content, lives are being impacted – sometimes to tragic effect. We might be daunted by the scale of the tech giants and their content which so enthralls young people, but we can still help children to be aware of their mental wellness: recognising when something isn't OK... and knowing what to do about content that upsets them.

## 1. UNDERSTAND THE ALGORITHM

Algorithms rank content by user interest: someone who regularly interacts with sports news, say, will see the latest results at the top of their feed. Likewise, if a user browses content that can cause harm, that's what will be recommended to them in future. Someone who's had a bad day and looks for posts which reflect their mood will find similar content being suggested to them more and more.

## 2. AVOID THE MAIN FEEDS

Avoiding the default feeds on social media platforms limits the amount of recommended content that's shown. Users can opt to only scroll through the accounts they follow, use restricted modes, or highlight posts that they don't want to see more of. Explore the platform safety settings to see how you can take control of what your child's phone shows them when they open the app.

## 3. DISCUSS WHAT THEY'VE SEEN

Chatting about what your child's seen online keeps you aware of the content they're interacting with. Don't assume that platforms are screening out inappropriate material, or even that your child would recognise content as being harmful. Discuss who they follow, what posts they like and what comes up in their feeds: if alarm bells ring, it could be time for a more in-depth talk or to seek support.

## 4. LEARN HOW TO HIDE CONTENT

If your child stumbles across unsuitable content on social media, there's the option to hide that post as well as indicating you'd prefer any similar material not to be suggested in future. On some platforms, you might also be able to block posts that contain specific words, which is an excellent way to start taking control of what your child sees online.

## 5. SET DAILY LIMITS

Phones and most apps can tell you how much they're being used. Spending too long online can mean a child misses out on other activities that are important to all-round wellbeing. You could set some family rules – for everyone to follow – around device use, such as screen time limits and tech-free spaces. Involving your child in creating this agreement makes them more likely to stick to it.

## 6. MONITOR THEIR ACTIVITY

Keeping a discreet eye on how your child is using social media can help ensure they're not entering potentially dangerous situations. As they grow up, of course, children need space to exercise their independence – but you can still occasionally ask to see what they're looking at. Be transparent about your own social media use and try not to sound judgemental about your child's.

## 7. TURN OFF PUSH NOTIFICATIONS

Even for adults, it's tempting to check an email or message as soon as the alert sound pings. Push notifications encourage people to open their apps and spend time on their device, so turning them off will help your child to practise mindful use of tech. Most of us have other things that we need to focus on as a priority – and those notifications will still be there later, when we have more time.

## 8. USE DEVICES TOGETHER

Giving children internet-enabled devices and complete freedom to explore platforms on their own can result in exposure to hugely damaging content. You could consider making a particular area at home a designated space to use phones, tablets and so on – making it much easier to monitor what content your child is viewing and (if necessary) steer them away from any potentially harmful paths.

## 9. ENCOURAGE OTHER ACTIVITIES

Mental health professionals often highlight the importance of exercise, quality time with loved ones, a balanced diet and restful sleep for our mental wellbeing. Spending hours on social media can cause us to sacrifice other activities that our brains need to feel well – so encouraging your child to put down their phone and enjoy something that doesn't involve a screen can be immensely beneficial.

## 10. TALK ABOUT PEER PRESSURE

Most platforms default children's accounts to private, so only people they've accepted as friends can see their posts. This reduces the risk of bullying or unkind comments, but – just like offline life – the digital world can still make children feel as if they need to act or look a certain way to fit in. Talk to your child about peer pressure, and listen to any concerns so you can provide the support they need.

## Meet Our Expert

Shazia Sarwar-Azim is executive headteacher at a specialist primary school and, as an emotional therapy coach, works with school leaders to focus on the SEND, mental health and wellbeing agenda. A passionate advocate for vulnerable learners, Shazia is a Fellow of the Chartered College of Teaching and the author of *The Rainbow Within*, a book which supports children with SEMH needs.



Sources: <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-55204555>  
<https://www.nos.co.uk/news/social-media-uk-2021-01>

**NOS** National Online Safety®  
 #WakeUpWednesday

As always, if you have any immediate concerns about safeguarding issues, students, or the school site, please get in touch via:

[safeguarding@smrt.bristol.sch.uk](mailto:safeguarding@smrt.bristol.sch.uk)