

What is F-TEC Open Minds?

Welcome to Open Minds. Open Minds is a bimonthly newsletter dedicated to the promotion and celebration of British values. Alongside this we will be keeping you up to date with any current and ongoing issues, we aim to keep you well informed whilst giving you an awareness of what is happening within the world. Our goal is to create an inclusive community where everyone feels valued and respected.

What are British Values?

Fundamental British Values underpin what it is to be a citizen in a modern and diverse Great Britain, valuing our community and celebrating the diversity of the UK. These values are:

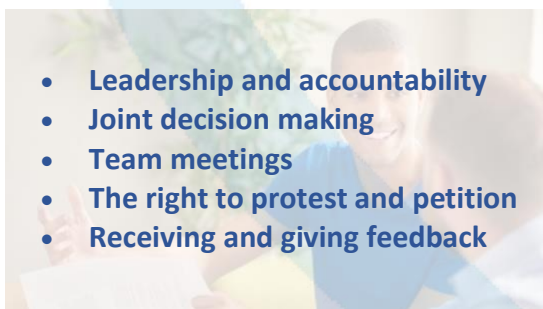
Democracy - A culture built upon freedom and equality, where everyone is aware of their rights and responsibilities.

Rule of Law - The need for rules to make a happy, safe and secure environment to live and work.

Respect and Tolerance - Understanding that we all don't share the same beliefs and values. Respecting the values, ideas and beliefs of others whilst not imposing our own others. Below are some examples:

Individual Liberty - Protection of your rights and the right of others you work with.

DEMOCRACY



- Leadership and accountability
- Joint decision making
- Team meetings
- The right to protest and petition
- Receiving and giving feedback

RULE OF LAW



- Legislation
- Agreed ways of working, policies and procedures
- How the law protects you and others
- Codes of conduct

RESPECT AND TOLERANCE



- Embracing diversity
- The importance of religion, traditions, cultural heritage and preferences
- Stereotyping, labelling and prejudice
- Tackling discrimination

INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY



- Equality and Human Rights
- Personal Development
- Respect and Dignity
- Rights, choice, consent and individuality
- Values and principles

Safeguarding at Christmas

Christmas is often seen as the most magical, family-orientated time of the year. But with this focus on family comes pressure – so much so that same magic can be lost under the expectation of what Christmas SHOULD be.

Whether it's the anxiety that comes with spending extended time around family members or not having a family to spend Christmas with we will look at the many things that need to be to consider ensuring that all of you are safe and responsibilities aren't lost in the craziness of Christmas.



Pressures and expectations

Christmas time comes with a lot of ideals that many households try to reach. This can bring families and groups closer together – but it can also cause tension. Whether it's the abundance of alcohol or being cooped up for longer periods than usual.

Children in particular can have a very specific and idealised version of Christmas in their heads that may not come true in their household. Managing the expectations of those within your circle at Christmas is complicated, but the most important thing to remember is to prioritise the people first.

Pressure creates environments that can facilitate abusive behaviour. So, the key is to create a Christmas atmosphere not based on vanity (presents, lights, and whether you can cook the best dinner), but on welcoming values that make all members feel accepted.

Abuse at Christmas

This season is often called the most wonderful time of the year – or at least that's what the songs say.

However, this period can be an anxiety-inducing one for both adults and children experiencing domestic abuse in all of its forms. It can quickly turn into a frightening time for the victim.



In the UK, there is often a surge in reports of domestic violence from men, women, and children trapped with their abusers. This is usually after the core period; however, Christmas time means there are fewer opportunities to report abuse with many shops, businesses and schools closed, accessing support can prove tricky for victims.

Online Safety



With the prevalence of smartphones and online gaming, children and young people often spend their time over the Christmas holidays digitally connected to both friends and strangers.

These devices are often top of lists for young people and can provide fun for not only them but also the whole family. The catch is, of course, that anything with access to online platforms bring risks of cyberbullying, scams, and seeing content that may not be appropriate for children.

WATCH OUT - Common Christmas Scams

During the festive season cyber threats are heightened as more people are shopping, booking holidays and communicating with each other online. Making sure you're aware of these threats is the first step in protecting yourself.

If you're online, then these are the key threats to look out for:

- **Phishing scams:** These are fraudulent emails or messages that try to steal your personal and financial information. Watch out for fake Royal Mail or UPS emails for those last-minute presents
- **Fake websites and ads:** Misleading sites and adverts designed to trick you into buying online or revealing sensitive information
- **Malware and ransomware:** Malicious software that can infect your devices, leading to data breaches or taking money
- **Social media scams:** Fake giveaways and impersonations that aim to gather personal details

How to protect your social media presence

Social media activity tends to spike during the Christmas period as people share festive moments and connect with friends and family. Making sure you're aware of how to protect yourself online:

- **Review privacy settings:** Make sure your social media accounts are set to private and review who can see your posts
- **Limit sharing personal information:** Avoid posting sensitive information such as your address, travel plans, or details that could be used for identity theft

- **Be wary of giveaways and promotions:** Check that social media giveaways and promotions are legit before taking part. Scammers often use these tactics to gather personal information

Homelessness at Christmas

For many of us, December is a time spent with friends and family—soaking up all the festive activities, getting cosy, and most likely overindulging in all things Christmas. For those experiencing homelessness, it couldn't be more of a stark contrast.

Where there were once friends and family, there's now increased isolation and fear. Many of the people are in volatile and vulnerable situations where they may not feel the safety they once did, especially if the people around them have rejected them.

Where there were once warm drinks and hearty meals, there may be question marks over where the next meal is coming from. Where there may have been a cosy, warm place to sleep, there's uncertainty over where to bed down each night. Will there even be a place to sleep at all?



It's a far cry from the supermarket advert idea of a 'picture perfect Christmas'.

How can you help this Christmas?

- **Check in on family and friends** - The conversations we're having here aren't only applicable to those who are sleeping rough. Hard economic times might make this Christmas a more difficult time for many families. Check in with any family members, friends or colleagues you think might be struggling, letting them know you're there could be a lifeline.
- **No one is invisible, but so many are lonely** - Even if you're unable to offer practical support, simply saying hello or smiling at somebody as you pass them on the street can go a long way. Loneliness is such a common problem among people facing homelessness, with many often-going hours or days without speaking to someone. If you see someone in distress or in need of urgent medical attention, please be sure to call 999 for an emergency ambulance.



- **Donate to a charitable organisation** - Your donations can help charities expand outreach teams and continue creating relationships with those experiencing homelessness. Only with these trusting relationships can we support people in breaking the cycle of homelessness for good.

Know your gambling triggers

A trigger is a stimulus that ignites an urge or craving. Triggers can be people, places, and things. Being aware of your potential triggers can help you put strategies in place to overcome them.

The Christmas period can be a triggering time for many reasons. Some common gambling triggers and coping strategies during this time might include:



Financial stress

- Plan a budget and put limits on spending
- Pre-plan family gatherings and events
- Discuss gifts and be specific.

Family conflict

- Express the topics you'd like to avoid prior to meeting up
- Practise self-care before interactions so you're in a calm headspace
- Have an exit strategy for when you feel stressed or provoked.

Festive events

- Spend time around positive influences
- Avoid locations and situations that make you want to gamble, and offer an alternative location to catch up (e.g. instead of the pub, suggest the park)
- Let your friends and family know you want to reduce your gambling.

Increase in substance use

- Know your limits and stick to them
- Avoid gambling when drinking or using drugs
- Request no holiday gifts in the form of alcohol or substances.

Feelings of loneliness and additional free time

- Stay in regular contact with loved ones
- Fill your time with hobbies and activities
- Avoid social media and comparing your experience to others.



From all of us here at F-TEC, we hope you have a fulfilled festive season and stay safe along the way! If you need any help regarding any subjects above, please refer to our Open Minds Keeping Safe at Christmas, which has a variety of links for any help you may need. We look forward to welcoming you back in the New Year.

If you need any help or advice, please contact –

Designated Safeguarding Lead –

Arizona Sykes

Emergency Mobile: 07425 783919

Office: 01793 384449

Arizona.Sykes@f-tec.org.uk

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead –

Sarah Engley

Office: 01793 384449

Accounts@f-tec.org.uk

Segments from this article taken from:

<https://www.bucks.ac.uk/study/apprenticeships/safeguarding-student-welfare/examples-british-values#:~:text=What%20are%20British%20Values%3F,Respect%20and%20Tolerance%2C%20Individual%20Liberty.>

<https://www.childprotectioncompany.com/safeguarding-children/safeguarding-at-christmas/>

<https://www.admiral.com/magazine/guides/christmas-cyber-scams>

<https://www.metacompliance.com/blog/cyber-security-awareness/christmas-scams#:~:text=Gift%20cards%20are%20a%20popular,too%20good%20to%20be%20true.>

<https://simononthestreets.co.uk/news/homeless-at-christmas-a-far-cry-from-the-most-wonderful-time-of-the-year#:~:text=Latest&text=In%202023%2C%20it%20was%20expected,they%20did%20five%20years%20ago.>

<https://www.gamblinghelpqld.org.au/blog/how-overcome-gambling-triggers-holiday-season#:~:text=Know%20your%20gambling%20triggers,triggering%20time%20for%20many%20reasons.>