



A Very Happy New Year to you all.

Welcome back to the latest addition of open minds, I hope you are all refreshed after the holiday break and raring to go again for the next year ahead.

Our focus this month is on LGBTQ+. Across the globe, individuals within the LGBTQ+ community face unique challenges regarding their safety and wellbeing. From physical violence and discrimination to mental health disparities and social isolation, these concerns necessitate specialised safeguarding measures. Understanding the specific vulnerabilities this community faces and implementing proactive strategies is crucial to creating a world where every individual, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, can thrive.

Creating a Culture of Acceptance:

Safeguarding LGBTQ+ individuals go beyond implementing policies and procedures. It requires cultivating a culture of acceptance, respect, and understanding within families, communities, and institutions. This means actively challenging discrimination, promoting open dialogue, and celebrating diversity.

By working together, we can create a world where all LGBTQ+ individuals feel safe, supported, and empowered to thrive.

Remember, creating a safe and inclusive world for the LGBTQ+ community is an ongoing process that requires continuous effort and collaboration. By working together, we can build a future where everyone can thrive, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

I hope this article provides a helpful overview of LGBTQ+ safeguarding. If you have any further questions or would like to learn more about specific resources, please visit the below websites.

Definition of mental health:

Mental health is 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. Mental Health is a basic human right.



Mental health is a subject that many of us find difficult to discuss, primarily because of a fear of saying the wrong thing and making matters worse. Mental ill health is however a prevalent issue, with it being estimated that around 1 in 6 children will experience some form of mental ill health at some point in their childhood. If you think about the place that you work in, this could mean that there are a lot of children and young people who may experience some form of difficulty around mental health, and research suggests this number is increasing. As with adults, the reasons behind a child's mental ill health can be varied, and whilst some children and young people do self-harm or contemplate taking their own lives, this is not the case for everyone.

It is therefore important that we do not turn a blind eye and hope it all goes away. Stigma is a significant issue when suffering from mental health ill health and so it is important that we lead by example and that we also ensure that when working with individuals or groups of children and young people we educate them about mental ill health and how to help friends who may be experiencing problems. As per the title of our in-depth safeguarding insight on children and young people's mental health, Knowledge dispels fear (and therefore reduces stigma).

How can we support?

- Talk with the child or young person – talking is often key. It may be that the initial conversation is nothing to do with their mental health and instead is more general, but this will build up trust and understanding.
- Identify places where the child or young person can find appropriate support material to go over in their own time at their own pace.
- Encourage a healthy lifestyle (e.g. nutrition and exercise).
- Help the child or young person understand what they are feeling – for example everyone has fears and worries about things and part of growing up is learning how to deal with these.
- Get support for yourself – you don't need to know all the answers, however you do need to be sure that there is nothing further that can be done.

Segment taken from the safeguarding network.

'Five ways to Wellbeing'

1. Connect with others.

Try to connect with the people around you: your friends and family, your colleagues, and the people you see day-to-day. Spend time developing these relationships. Talk to a friend you've not seen in a while, in person or over the phone. You could even have a short conversation with the next person who serves you in a shop.



You can also connect with your inner self through mindfulness and meditation. There are various apps available that aim to enhance wellbeing by helping you to meditate, such as Headspace.

2. Physical activity

If exercise is not currently part of your daily routine, try adding it. Exercising two to three times a week has been found to significantly decrease symptoms of depression. Don't think that you have to go to the gym to be active - go for a walk, cycle or play a game of football, dance or even do a spot of gardening! Find an activity that you enjoy and make it a part of your life.

3. Learn new skills

Continued learning throughout our life enhances self-esteem and encourages social interaction and a more active life. Evidence suggests that engaging in work or educational activities can help lift people's mood. The practice of setting goals, which is related to adult learning in particular, has been strongly associated with higher levels of wellbeing. You could try researching something online that you're curious about; do a crossword or Sudoku puzzle; or read a new book.

4. Give

Participation in social and community life has attracted a lot of attention in the field of wellbeing research. Individuals who report a greater interest in helping others are more likely to rate themselves as happy! Research into actions for promoting happiness has shown that committing an act of kindness once a week over a six-week period is associated with an increase in wellbeing. Even the smallest act can count, whether it's a smile, a thank you or a kind word. Larger acts, such as volunteering at your local community centre, can improve your mental wellbeing and help you build new social networks.

5. Pay attention to the moment (mindfulness)

Be more aware of the present moment, including your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you. Some people call this awareness "mindfulness". It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges. Notice the little things; listen to the sounds around you.

Segment taken from Mental Health Matters.



Each other: [How We Can Challenge Racism In Our LGBT+ Communities](#) | [EachOther](#)

LGBTQ+ Community Network: [LGBT Community Network](#) | [LGBT Community Network \(lgbtcn.org\)](#)

Contact a Samaritan: 116 123
[Contact Us](#) | [Samaritans](#)

Mind
[Get HELP now](#)

Mental Health UK
[Information and Support](#)

Turning Point – Substance Abuse Support
[Turning Point Website](#)

Young Minds – Welfare
0808 802 5544
[Young Minds Website](#)

Childline – Welfare
0800 1111
[Childline Website](#)

If you need any help or advice, please contact –

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By Steve Barnes Jan 2024