

February 2026



Safeguarding Newsletter



The Safeguarding Team



Mark Soady

Apprenticeships Head of Learner Services



Clare Stuart

Designated Safeguarding Lead & Safeguarding Team Leader



Jaspreet Hothi

Deputy Designated Safeguarding & Prevent Lead

Safeguarding Specialists



Alana



Jamie



Tina



Vix



Joanna

Safeguarding support options, ways to access support at QA if you are worried for yourself or someone else:

- Call us on **07808 050273** or email safeguarding@qa.com
- Complete a Safeguarding Self-Referral Form if the concern relates to you. [Safeguarding Self-Referral Form \(Learners\) QA Ltd](#)



Contents

- 3** What is Safeguarding?
- 4** Prevent
- 5** British Values
- 6** Regional Safeguarding
- 7** Wellbeing
- 8** Safeguarding
- 9** Your Space: U18 Safeguarding Update
- 10** News of the Month
- 11** Learner Feedback
- 12** Helpful Links



Safeguarding?

What is Safeguarding?

Safeguarding is the process of protecting people's health, well-being, and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse, and neglect. It's especially important when working with children, young people, and vulnerable adults.



Safeguarding means protecting your right to live safely, free from abuse, neglect, exploitation, or harm. It's about making sure you feel safe and supported whether you're learning at work, online, or in training environments.

It covers: Physical safety, Mental health and Emotional wellbeing Protection from bullying, Discrimination, or Abuse, Online safety, Support with personal challenges.

Safeguarding applies to everyone!

Why You Shouldn't Be Put Off by Safeguarding.

We get it! words like "**safeguarding**" can sound serious or even intimidating. But here's the truth:

- **It's not about judging you.** It's about supporting you.
- **It's not just for emergencies.** It's there for everyday wellbeing too.
- **It's not a sign of weakness.** Asking for help shows strength and self-awareness.

Safeguarding is here to help you thrive not just survive.

Whether you're struggling with stress, worried about someone's behaviour, or unsure about something online, you deserve to feel safe and heard.



What to Do If You're Worried

If something doesn't feel right, trust your instincts. You can:

- Speak to your **Safeguarding Team at QA** or your **Tutor, DLC or Skills Coach**.
- Use your organisation's **reporting channels**
- Reach out to support services- links are at the end of this newsletter.

Just talking to someone is a powerful first step.

Remember:

- ✓ **Safeguarding is for you**
- ✓ **You're never wasting anyone's time**
- ✓ **You deserve to feel safe, respected, and supported**





Prevent



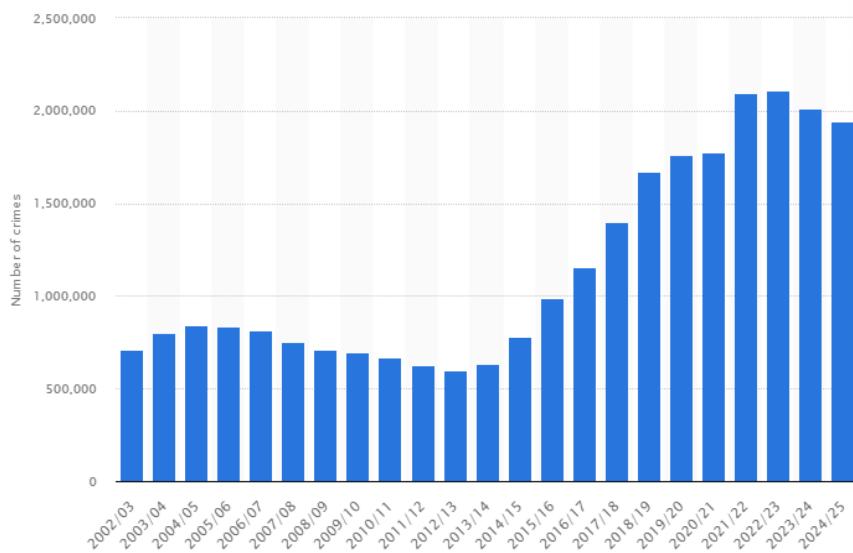
Jaspreet Hothi
 Prevent Lead &
 Safeguarding
 Specialist

Bondi Beach Terror Attack: Antisemitic Shooting at Hanukkah Event

The Bondi Beach attack on 14 December 2025 was carried out by Sajid Akram (50) and his son Naveed Akram (24). Both attackers pledged allegiance to ISIS. Naveed had previously been investigated in 2019 for links to an ISIS-linked cell, but no charges were brought. The attackers used rifles, shotguns, and attempted to deploy homemade bombs. Their radicalisation journey appears to have been influenced by online extremist propaganda and familial reinforcement of ideology.

This incident reflects a broader global trend of rising extremist violence. There were approximately 1.94 million violence against the person crime offences recorded by the police in England and Wales in 2024/25, compared with almost 2.01 million offences in the previous reporting year.

Socially, the attack has strained interfaith relations and increased demand for security at religious events. Wider society faces challenges in balancing security measures with civil liberties and addressing misinformation that fuels division.



Talking Points:

- How could earlier interventions have prevented this incident?
- What are the psychological and social consequences for survivors?

British Values

**+ Democracy + The rule of law
+ Individual liberty + Tolerance of
those with different faiths and beliefs.**

Justice secretary wants jury trials scrapped except in most serious cases **Rule of Law + Democracy**

Justice Secretary David Lammy is proposing to massively restrict the ancient right to a jury trial by only guaranteeing it for defendants facing rape, murder, manslaughter or other cases passing a public interest test.

The proposals are an attempt to end unprecedented delays and backlogs in courts, and do not apply to Scotland or Northern Ireland. The Ministry of Justice presentation, produced earlier this month, says Crown Courts are facing record backlogs with more than 78,000 cases waiting to be completed.

In practice, this means that suspects being charged with serious crimes today may not have a trial until late 2029 or early 2030. Officials predict in the document that the caseload will grow to more than 100,000 before then, unless there is further action.



To find out more click [here](#).

Talking Points:

- If jury trials are reduced or removed, does the justice system become more distant from the public?
- Is a justice system still democratic if ordinary people no longer play a role within it?



Regional Safeguarding

CyberSafe Scotland

Aberdeen-based organisation focused on online child protection, working with schools, parents and local authorities to help protect children from online exploitation and abuse.

[Website](#)

NWCRC (North West Cyber Resilience Centre)

A police-led partnership helping organisations (including education settings) improve resilience against online crime, with guidance and support to reduce cyber risk.

[Website](#)

SWGfL (South West Grid for Learning)

South West-based charity dedicated to safe and secure use of technology, and a major UK online-safety organisation (also part of the UK Safer Internet Centre partnership).

[Website](#)

NEN (The Education Network)

Regional schools network providing online-safety guidance and resources for schools (and signposting to wider support).

[Website](#)

LGfL: DigiSafe / SafeguardED

Provides a wide range of online safety and safeguarding support for schools across London (and widely used resources such as audits, policies, and training).

[Website](#)



Wellbeing

Looking After Yourself While Juggling Everything

Balancing work, study, family life, caring responsibilities, and everyday pressures can leave very little time for yourself. When you're focused on meeting everyone else's needs, it's easy to put your own wellbeing last. This page is about self-esteem, confidence, and small ways to support yourself when life feels full.

SELF-ESTEEM

What Do We Mean by Self-Esteem?

Self-esteem is how you see yourself and how much value you place on your own needs, abilities, and experiences.

It isn't about feeling confident all the time. It's about believing that you matter, even on difficult days.

For many adults, self-esteem is shaped by life experiences, relationships, health, and responsibilities — not just achievements.

Things That Can Affect Self-Esteem

Low self-esteem doesn't mean you're doing something wrong. It often reflects how much you're carrying.

Things that can impact self-esteem include:

- Constant tiredness or mental load
- Caring responsibilities
- Feeling pulled in multiple directions
- Comparing yourself to others
- Having little time to recharge
- Feeling behind, even when you're doing a lot

What Self-Esteem Can Look Like in Everyday Life

Self-esteem often shows up in small, quiet ways, such as:

- Feeling able to ask for help without guilt
- Noticing when you're being hard on yourself
- Allowing yourself to rest without feeling you've failed
- Accepting that you can't do everything perfectly

Small Ways to Support Your Self-Esteem

Improving self-esteem doesn't require big changes. Small, realistic steps can help.

- Acknowledge what you are managing, not just what's unfinished
- Set boundaries where you can, even small ones
- Notice negative self-talk and gently challenge it

Improving self-esteem isn't about becoming someone else — it's about being kinder to yourself where you are now.

When It Might Help to Reach Out

If low self-esteem starts to affect your mood, sleep, motivation, or relationships, it may help to talk to someone. Support isn't about being at breaking point. It's about not carrying everything on your own.

Reflection - What is one small thing you could do this week to be kinder to yourself?

Safeguarding

Sexual Abuse & Violence Awareness Week

2nd – 8th February

Sexual Abuse & Violence Awareness Week is a national initiative dedicated to shining a light on all forms of sexual harm and supporting survivors. The aim is to raise awareness, challenge misconceptions, and encourage safer communities where everyone feels able to speak up and access help.



1 in 4
women
have experienced sexual abuse.

1 in 5
men
have experienced sexual abuse.

1 in 6
children
have experienced sexual abuse.

Only 1 in 6 victims (17%) of sexual abuse ever report their experiences to the police. Reasons given include fear of not being believed, self-blame, humiliation, and embarrassment. (Crime Survey for England and Wales 2020).

Why This Week Matters

Sexual abuse and sexual violence can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender, background, or relationship status. Many people do not disclose due to shame, fear of not being believed, or not recognising that what they experienced was abuse.

This awareness Week acts as a reminder that: Support is available. Survivors are not alone. Everyone has the right to safety and respect. If you or someone you know is affected, the Safeguarding Team is here to listen and support without judgement.

Safeguarding in Relationships

Healthy relationships are based on trust, equality, respect, and communication.

Whether they are romantic, friendships, family or digital connections it is about recognising signs of unsafe behaviour and knowing where to turn for help.

Signs of a Healthy relationship:

You feel safe, valued, and heard
Your boundaries are respected
You can express opinions without fear
You are free to make your own choices
Conflict is managed respectfully

Signs a Relationship May Be Unsafe:

Pressure, manipulation, or guilt-tripping
Being monitored, controlled, or isolated
Threats, shouting, humiliation, or gaslighting
Feeling fear, confusion, or "walking on eggshells"
Being pushed into sexual activity you don't want or haven't consented to (This is classed as Sexual Abuse and sexual violence)

Where to go for support:

[SARSAS home](#)

[The Survivors Trust - Rape & Sexual Abuse Services UK](#)
[Home | RASASC | Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre](#)

Remember: Consent must be freely given, enthusiastic, informed, reversible, and specific

Talking point : Would you be able to recognise the difference between a healthy and unhealthy relationship?

Your Space

U18 Safeguarding Update

ONLINE SAFETY AND BOUNDARIES – STAYING SAFE IN YOUR DIGITAL WORLD



Know Your Online Boundaries

- You choose what you share
- You choose who you talk to
- You choose your time online

Boundaries aren't about being rude - they're about protecting yourself

The online world is a brilliant place to learn and have fun. Just like in real life, your safety and comfort matter. Setting boundaries helps you stay in control and enjoy your digital spaces with confidence.

Spotting Red Flags Online

- 🚩 Pressure to share personal info or photos
- 🚩 Being asked to keep secrets
- 🚩 Flirty, intense or uncomfortable messages
- 🚩 Anger if you don't reply quickly
- 🚩 Requests to move to private chats or video calls

If something feels off, trust your instincts.

Handling Peer Pressure Online

Online pressure isn't always obvious- and it can be hard to spot

- Being pushed into group chats
- Feeling expected to reply instantly
- Being dared to send screenshots or photos
- Being encouraged to join risky trends or challenges

Real friends respect your boundaries



Your Space

U18 Safeguarding Update



Staying Safe on Social Media

- Keep accounts private
- Think before you post
- Be selective with friend requests
- Turn off location tagging
- Avoid sharing daily routines

If Someone Makes You Uncomfortable Online

- ◎ Leave the chat or game
- ◎ Block the person
- ◎ Take screenshots if safe
- ◎ Tell a trusted adult. Tutor, DLC, Skills Coach or the Safeguarding Team



Gaming Safely

- Use mute, block and report tools
- Avoid voice chat with strangers
- Don't share personal info in usernames
- Take breaks for sleep and mood
- Stick to age-appropriate games

If a game doesn't feel safe, you can leave

GAME OVER

Online Grooming (Breck Foundation)

In Feb 2014, 14-year-old Breck Bednar from Surrey was groomed online by an 18-year-old male he met through gaming. Over several months, the older individual manipulated Breck into trusting him and distancing himself from his family. Breck was lured to a flat under false pretenses and was fatally stabbed. The offender later pleaded guilty and received a life sentence with a minimum term of 25 years.

Following Breck's death, his mother set up the Breck Foundation in his memory to raise awareness of online grooming, exploitation and digital risk, and to educate children, families and professionals so that other young people are better protected when using online spaces.

Today, the charity works nationally with schools, parents and professionals to improve understanding of online harm, gaming-related grooming and digital resilience, using Breck's story to help prevent similar tragedies and strengthen safeguarding practice around online safety.

Their website resources are available here: <https://www.breckfoundation.org>

TALKING POINT

"Do you think someone your age could still be groomed or manipulated online, even if you feel confident and experienced online — why or why not?"



News of the Month

Children's Mental Health Week

9-15 Feb 2026

As apprentices, you juggle learning, work expectations, deadlines, new environments and sometimes complex personal lives. That's why recognising and supporting mental health is so important. This year's Children's Mental Health Week theme, **"This Is My Place,"** is all about feeling like you **belong** — in your training, workplace, friendships, and community. When you feel valued and included, it supports your confidence, motivation and overall wellbeing.

Why Belonging Matters

Even though you're stepping into adult roles, our 16-18 year old apprentices are still classed as young people — and belonging plays a crucial role in wellbeing at this stage of life. Belonging helps you feel:

- **More confident** in tackling new tasks
- **Safer and supported** in your workplace
- **More motivated** to learn and grow
- **More able to cope with stress** and change

A strong sense of belonging has long-term positive impacts on mental health, education and relationships — all essential to your apprenticeship success.

What 'This Is My Place' means for you

Feeling like "This is my place" could look like:

- **Feeling welcomed by your team or training provider**
- **Knowing who to ask for help**
- **Feeling safe to share your ideas**
- **Being recognised for your strengths**
- **Feeling accepted for who you are**

This year's campaign encourages the adults and systems around young people — including training providers and employers — to create inclusive environments where you feel you belong.

Get Involved!

Start conversations about wellbeing:

Use the week to talk with your work colleagues and QA staff about;

- What helps you feel included
- What barriers you've faced
- What support helps you do your best

Reflect on your learning environment:

Ask yourself...

- Do I feel comfortable asking questions?
- Do I have someone I trust at work or in training?
- What would help me feel more at home here?

These reflections support better communication with your provider and employer.

Practice Kindness in your workplace

Kindness boosts both your own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others. Research shows acts of kindness lower stress levels and help people feel more connected — perfect for building a positive workplace culture. Small steps matter:

- Asking how someone's day is going and pausing for an answer
- Offering help to a colleague
- Including others in conversations
- Showing appreciation

Belonging is a **basic human need** — and it's just as important in a workplace or training setting as it is in school or at home. When you feel connected, included and valued, your wellbeing improves, your learning strengthens, and your future career becomes brighter.

Heart Learner Feedback



My journey has been greatly aided by Jaspreet, from talking to me about different coping strategies, helping me realise some of my coping methods weren't exactly healthy. and helping me become a better person in terms of how I respond to things that would trigger me. she always was accommodating and when events came up around safeguarding, I would partake by sharing my story in q&a sessions which were seen by people from various teams in QA, and external people too.



Jamie has gone above and beyond in his support, playing a key role in helping me progress with my assignment while also supporting my overall well-being. He assisted me in selecting a more suitable course, provided thoughtful support with personal challenges (including relationship difficulties), and helped me develop effective structure and time-management strategies for my degree, all of which have had a meaningful and lasting positive impact on my academic progress and personal stability.



"I felt that Tina was warm and welcoming. I especially liked how Tina managed expectations up-front, explaining what person-led therapy is about and how it works in practice. I felt listened to, and Tina went above and beyond to investigate local services that may be available for me to independently access. During discussions, Tina was patient and was able to provide suggestions on approaches to alleviate symptoms of trauma. I really valued and welcomed Tina's support; she helped more than she realised. Thank you for all you have done."



Vix has been incredibly supportive during my safeguarding sessions. She is consistently friendly, approachable, and creates a welcoming environment that immediately puts me at ease. She offers thoughtful and practical advice, and ensures I feel listened to by providing a genuinely safe space to express my thoughts and feelings. Her support has been invaluable, and I am very grateful for the care and professionalism she brings to her role.



Helpful Links

If you find that either yourself, a learner or a loved one is struggling with either their mental health or other life circumstances please have a look at these helpful links:

Personal Challenges

Mind - support for mental health and informative resources on mental illness
<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helplines/>

SANE - a leading UK mental health charity improving quality of life for anyone affected by mental illness -
<https://www.sane.org.uk/>

Hub of Hope - [Mental Health Support Network provided by Chasing the Stigma | Hub of hope](#)

Samaritans – 24/7 support online or by phone for those struggling – Open Christmas Day
<http://www.samaritans.org/>

Respect Men's Advice Helpline - [Domestic Abuse Helpline for Men | Men's Advice Line UK \(mensadviceLine.org.uk\)](#) (Targeted at men)

National Domestic Abuse Helpline - [Home | Refuge National Domestic Abuse Helpline \(nationaldahelpline.org.uk\)](#) (Targeted at women)

Work

ACAS - [Acas | Making working life better for everyone in Britain](#)

Accommodation / Homelessness

Shelter – Support for Homelessness – [Get help from Shelter - Shelter England](#)

Citizens Advice - [Citizens Advice](#)

[Help if you're homeless or about to become homeless - GOV.UK](#)

[Support for those at risk of homelessness | The Salvation Army](#)

Financial

MIND (Cost of Living Support) - [If this speaks to you, speak to us: cost of living – Mind](#)

Turn2us - [Tackling Financial Insecurity Together | Turn2us](#)

Step Change - [StepChange Debt Charity. Free Expert Debt Help & Advice](#)

[Citizens Advice: Financial Guidance](#)

Concerned about a child harmed or at risk of harm? A child is anyone under the age of 18

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk>

[Childline | Free counselling service for kids and young people | Childline](#)

Prevent – extremism and radicalisation, criminal activity

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-referral-to-prevent>

[Independent UK charity taking crime information anonymously | Crimestoppers](#)

February 2026



Learn. To Change.

