



LEARNER NEWSLETTER



DECEMBER 2023

DIRECTORS MESSAGE!

As the month of December progresses, it is impossible to escape the seemingly unending signs of Christmas, as many people throughout the UK prepare to celebrate during the holiday period with friends and family. Not just Christians, but people of all faiths will look forward to coming together during the festive season.

From as early as October we are bombarded with Christmas adverts on TV, shops filled with all the things we are expected to buy, and Christmas music playing everywhere we go. And while many of us will enjoy this time of the year, for some it is a difficult time. Many issues are heightened during the holiday period, from financial problems to domestic violence cases and of course it can be a time of great loneliness for many people.

If you or anyone you know is struggling over Christmas there are people like the Samaritans (www.samaritans.org) who are able to talk and help people at this time along with many other charities.

Another sign of Christmas being on its way, is the movies that we watch for the 100th time! I seem to have watched Arthur Christmas and The Polar Express at least 20 times already this month as my children ask for them over and over.

However, my favourite Christmas movie that I love to watch every year is **"It's a Wonderful Life"**. The story of George Bailey, who has big dreams and ambitions for himself, but keeps getting stuck in his hometown and feeling like his life is not amounting to anything.



At his lowest point, when he feels his life means nothing, he decides that the world and more importantly his family, would be better off without him. As he is about to jump into an icy river and angel called Clarence is sent to help

him. He grants him his request to see a world where he had never been born.

Through this experience he learns just how much he had affected people he came into contact with. He was able to see how so many people were better off because of having him in their lives. Not just people he affected directly, but others who were helped by those he had affected and so on. Our actions can affect people we have never actually met.

Clarence the Angel says at one point in the film:

"Strange, isn't it? Each man's life touches so many other lives. When he isn't around he leaves an awful hole, doesn't he?"

So many of you, our learners, work with people who are vulnerable and provide such an amazing service for those people in your care. Their lives are better for having you in it.

Your Apprenticeship programme can enable you to have an even greater affect as you put in to practice the skills and knowledge you gain during it. Providing you with the tools to enhance people's lives immeasurably.

We have seen many of you complete your Apprenticeship programme in the last few months with Distinctions and Merits, and many who are still progressing through their qualification have had emails from Rick, to congratulate on progress made and outstanding achievements along the way.

We see so many great things happening and hope you can see that our tutors are having a positive affect on you and your career. Work closely with them over the next few months so they can help you learn new skills and use them to help those in your care even more.

From all of us at Achieving Excellence, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Mike Austin
Director



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PREVENT – INTERNATIONAL ABOLITION OF SLAVERY DAY 2ND DECEMBER!

Modern slavery is an umbrella term covering practices such as forced labour, debt bondage, forced marriage, and human trafficking.

Currently, 40.3 million people are in modern slavery, 24.9 million are in forced labour and 15.4 million are in forced marriage.

Forced labour uses deception, threats or violence to coerce someone to work for little to no pay.

This is when someone is forced to work to pay off a debt, this can be an individual working or whole families can be forced to work to pay off a debt. [This](#) video shows the impact of debt bondage and forced labour on families and children.

Forced marriage is illegal in the UK, marriage needs to be consensual and entered into freely by both people, this includes those with learning disabilities and severe mental health conditions.

According to the definition of the United Nations **Human Trafficking** is 'The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of people for the purpose of exploitation'.

This website helps to understand the signs of modern slavery and if these are seen it is your safeguarding responsibility to report your concerns [Spot the signs of modern slavery](#)

[International day for the abolition of slavery](#)
[Justice and Care website](#)
[National Crime Agency](#)



BRITISH VALUES – TOLERANCE OF FAITHS



British Values are vital in all parts of our community and workspaces, we need to understand the different aspects of British Values including Tolerance of Faiths and mutual respect. British Values are also an integral part of apprenticeships and are embedded in our teaching of each subject.

Part of what makes the UK a great country is that we have diverse cultures including different faiths, religions and those with no faiths or religion.

The tolerance of faiths means that, although we may not agree with others faiths or religious beliefs it is vital that we get on with other people and respect their individual decisions, that we also do not impose our own beliefs onto others.

Within the Equality Act 2010 there are 9 'protected characteristics' which means that it is unlawful to discriminate someone based on these protected characteristics, religion and faith is one of those.

To help with the tolerance of faiths this can be done through education, teaching our children about faiths and how to ensure that they are understanding of others beliefs.

Who do you report any discrimination to in your workplace?

How do you celebrate all faiths and beliefs in your workplace?

Could you do more within your community to encourage the tolerance of faiths?

Further information

[Training on tolerance of faiths](#)

[Equality Act 2010](#)



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SAFEGUARDING – BREAST IRONING

“The process during which young pubescent girls’ breasts are ironed, massaged, flattened and/or pounded down over a period of time (sometimes years) in order for the breasts to disappear or delay the development of the breasts entirely.”
National FGM centre

Breast ironing happens to girls from when they start puberty to prevent breasts from growing and therefore giving the girl a more womanly appearance. The UN estimates that up to 3.8 million girls worldwide are affected by breast ironing.

Breast ironing happens due to thoughts that it will:

- Make teenage girls look less ‘womanly’
- Prevent pregnancy and rape
- Enable the girl to continue her education
- Prevent dishonour being brought upon the family if the girl begins sexual relations outside of marriage
- Deter unwanted attention

Although there is no specific law against breast ironing in the UK it is physical abuse and a child would suffer significant harm and it is therefore a safeguarding concern and should be reported.

The long-term impacts of breast ironing is that a girl may have permanent tissue damage, be in severe pain and have a long term impact on the girls mental health and psychological wellbeing.

A girl who has had breast ironing may be embarrassed about her body, talks about family members who have had breast ironing, goes to another country for a ‘special ceremony’, talks about elders who are involved in bringing up children and support breast ironing.

It is our responsibility to report any signs, suspicion or evidence of breast ironing, this can be done via 999 or you can contact the foreign and commonwealth office if a girl is being taken abroad for, what you suspect, is breast ironing on: 020 7008 1500.

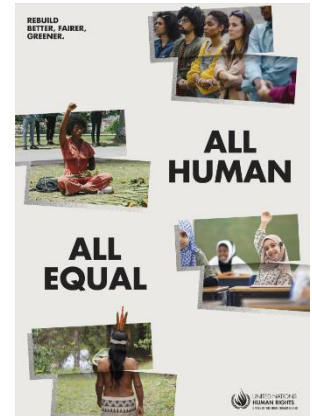
Talking about cultural practices that are illegal in a sensitive way, ensuring that individuals know that it is illegal and that it should not be happening and offering support to those who may have had their breasts flattened.

[Information on breast ironing](#)

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY – HUMAN RIGHTS DAY, 10TH DECEMBER

Human rights day has been celebrated on the 10th December since 1948. This year the theme is Equality – reducing inequalities, and advancing human rights.

We are fortunate that, within the UK we have human rights laws where we are all entitled to live in a way that promotes equality, freedom and a safe way of living. However, this is unfortunately not the case across other parts of the world.



The Human Rights Act 1998 sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms that everyone in the UK is entitled to. It incorporates the rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into domestic British law. The Human Rights Act came into force in the UK in October 2000.

The Human Rights Act covers;

- right to life,
- freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment,
- freedom from slavery and forced labour
- right to liberty and security
- right to a fair trial
- no punishment without law
- respect of your private and family life, home and correspondence
- freedom of thought, belief and religion
- freedom of expression
- right to marry and start a family
- protection of discrimination in respect of these rights and freedom
- right to peaceful enjoyment of your property
- right to education
- right to participate in free elections
- abolition of the death penalty.

Further information

[Human Rights Act](#)
[Human Rights Day](#)



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HEALTH AND WELLBEING – WORLD AIDS DAY

Within the UK there were an estimated 105,200 people who were living with HIV in 2019. Within these statistics 72.5% are male, and 54.6% identify their ethnicity as white, and the highest percentage of those affected are between 35 and 49 years old.

Although we have known about HIV And AIDS since the 1980s there is still a stigma around the illness that it is contracted by gay men, however, this is not the case. Due to societal views on HIV and AIDS individuals who have the infection often do not get it diagnosed at an early stage, which is lifesaving.

World AIDS day hopes to work with society to change how the infection is viewed and therefore save lives and prevent the spread of the illness as much as possible. It is also working to end the epidemic by providing testing to countries who do not currently have it.

HIV is transmitted by; semen, vaginal fluids including menstrual blood, breast milk, blood and the lining inside of the anus. Other body fluids such as saliva, sweat and urine do not contain enough of the virus to be able to infect another person. Sharing needles when taking part in drug activity can also transmit the infection if they have been used by someone who is HIV positive.

What is the difference between HIV and AIDS?

Every person who has AIDS has HIV but not everyone who has HIV will contract AIDS due to treatment. HIV is a virus that attacks the immune system and if it develops into AIDS due to a lack of treatment or early detection an individual will die from the condition.

Additional information

[Elton John Aids Foundation](#)

[World Aids Day](#)

[Support for those living with HIV](#)

GETTING TO KNOW US!



Name: **Juliet Kunda-Tairu**

Role: **Tutor**

Hobbies or interests: **Playing golf and swimming.**

Favourite movie: **Second chance**

Favourite music or song: **'Suddenly' by Billy Ocean**

Favourite quote: **'Success of my goal'**

Advice to an apprentice: **Sky is the limit if you plan your future from today.**

What do you want invented within next 25 years? **Peace**

What would you be if not a tutor? **Air force traffic Control officer.**



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HEALTH AND WELLBEING - VAPING AND ITS HARSH REALITY!

In recent news, the story of 12-year-old Sarah Griffin <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-67081855> has brought to light the severe consequences of vaping.

Sarah, who had asthma and was a heavy vaper, suffered a lung collapse and spent four days in an induced coma. Her experience has ignited concerns about the side effects of vaping, particularly among children and adolescents.

The NHS advises that vaping should only be used by adults (over the age of 18) to help them quit smoking but Sarah's story underscores the importance of understanding the side effects and risks associated with vaping among children and young people. In her case, vaping not only had severe health implications but also led to addiction at a very young age.

The Side Effects of Vaping

- Lung Complications:** Vaping has been linked to various lung issues, including lung inflammation, bronchitis, and in severe cases, lung collapse, as seen in Sarah's situation. The inhalation of vaporised chemicals and additives can irritate and damage the respiratory system.
- Nicotine Addiction:** Most vaping products contain nicotine, a highly addictive substance. This addiction can develop rapidly, making it difficult to quit. For young people like Sarah, nicotine addiction can be particularly harmful, interfering with their development and well-being.
- Mental Health Implications:** Vaping can also have psychological side effects. Nicotine is known to impact mood and may contribute to anxiety and depression, particularly in young users.

How Many Young People Are Vaping?

Sarah's case is not an isolated incident. Youth vaping has become a concerning trend. Recent figures indicate that one in five children aged 11-17 in the UK has tried vaping, a threefold increase from 2020.

It's essential to understand that young people often underestimate the health risks associated with vaping. They are drawn to attractive flavours, colourful packaging, and the misconception that vaping is harmless. The reality, as Sarah's story shows, is starkly different.

Government's Response to Children Vaping

Recognising the urgency of this issue, the UK government has announced plans to restrict the marketing and sale of vapes targeted at children. These proposals include limiting flavours and descriptions, regulating packaging to make vapes less appealing to children, and exploring the possibility of increasing vape prices to deter young users.

The sale of disposable vapes, which are harmful to both health and the environment, is also under consideration for restriction.

Health experts, such as Professor Chris Whitty, England's chief medical officer, acknowledge the potential utility of vaping as a smoking cessation tool for adults. However, marketing vapes to children is deemed "utterly unacceptable." The government's measures aim to strike a balance between harm reduction for adult smokers and the protection of young people from the dangers of vaping.

Just because the side effects of vaping aren't as significant as smoking, they can still be potentially life-altering. It's vital for young people, educators, and society as a whole to be vigilant and informed about the risks that young people face when they are enticed by vaping.

"Quitting can be tough, but you are tougher."

- If you need help with quitting vaping we highly recommend this website <https://teen.smokefree.gov/quit-vaping>.

Here are the tips summarised:

Commit to Quitting:

- Choose a quit date in the near future and prepare
- Avoid stressful days for quitting like the day before an exam
- Mark your quit date on your calendar!

Create a Quit Plan:

- Identify triggers and cravings - certain people, places, feelings, or situations can cause you to want to vape
- Plan how to resist temptations, such as taking a temporary break from friends or what you'll say if someone asks you to vape

Build a Support System:

- Seek help from friends, family, or professionals and be specific in asking for a type of support e.g. tough love
- Offer support to others wanting to quit vaping

Dealing with Unsupportive People:

- Distance yourself if needed
- Reaffirm your commitment to quitting
- Ask for respect for your decision
- Spend time with supportive people

If you are struggling with vaping and can see yourself quitting - don't be afraid to get in touch with your learning consultant who can help point you in the right direction to find support!