# SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

WORKING TOGETHER TO KEEP OUR YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE

Secondary | September 2025

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**Back to school – building positive routines for a strong start**

As the new school year gets underway, many families find it helpful to re-establish routines around sleep, screen time, curfews and home life. While the summer holidays are a chance to relax, the return to structure can be a welcome reset – not just for learning, but for your child's overall wellbeing and safety.

**Why routines matter for well-being**

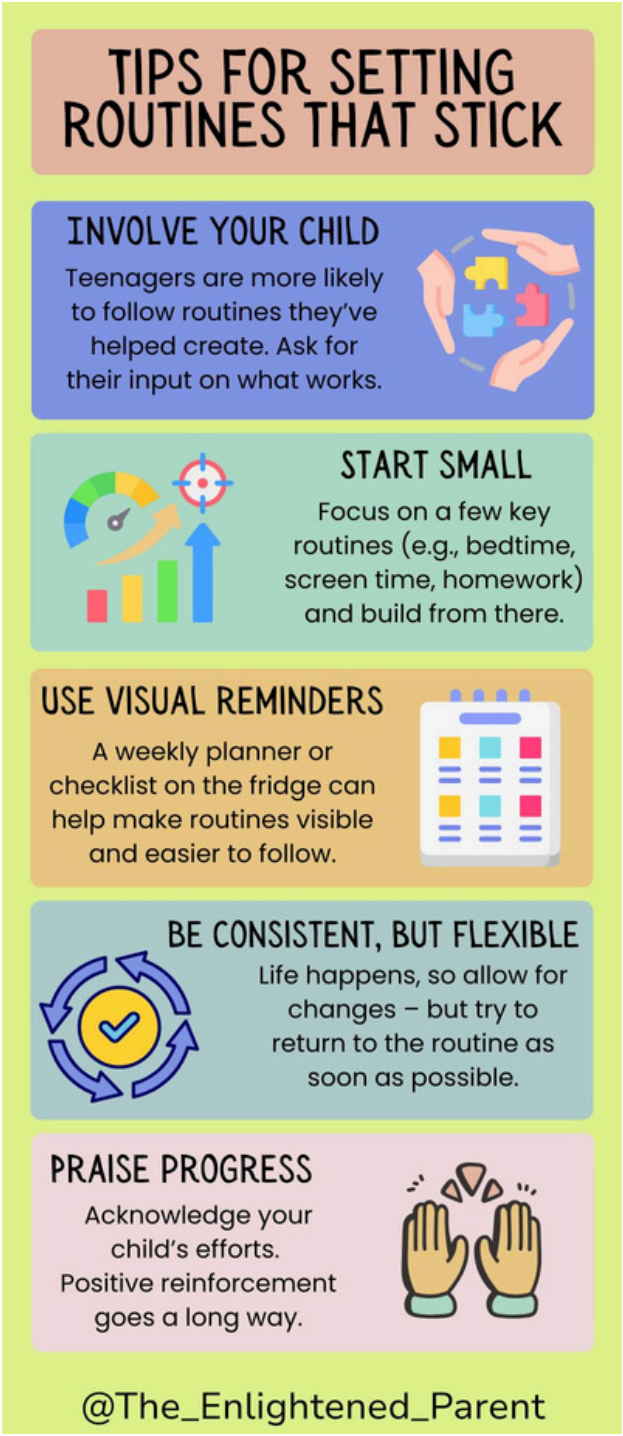
Routines offer young people a sense of stability, predictability and control, all of which are important for good mental health, particularly during the teenage years. Adolescence is a time of rapid change, emotionally and physically. Having regular daily habits can help reduce anxiety, improve focus and create a stronger sense of security.

When children know what to expect – such as when they'll eat, sleep, study and unwind – it can help reduce stress and overwhelm. Consistent routines also support better sleep, which is closely linked to emotional regulation, mood and the ability to cope with challenges.

In uncertain or emotionally demanding times, even small routines – like packing a bag the night before, eating breakfast together or turning devices off at the same time each night – can act as 'anchors' that promote calm and emotional resilience.

**Sleep, screens and curfews**

Teenagers need 8–10 hours of sleep to focus and manage emotions. If bedtimes have slipped over the summer, gradually return to earlier routines. Encourage screen-free time before bed and keep devices out of bedrooms to avoid disrupted sleep. Re-establishing curfews and clear expectations can also support safety and balance as school starts.




Routines aren't about strict rules – they create a supportive structure that helps young people thrive. Clear boundaries and healthy habits help children feel prepared, confident and emotionally supported.

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**Understanding deepfakes – what parents and carers need to know**

As technology continues to evolve, new online risks are emerging; and one of the most concerning is the rise of deepfakes. While the term may sound technical, it's something all parents and carers need to be aware of. Deepfakes can be used to deceive, manipulate and harm, and young people are increasingly being exposed to them, whether they realise it or not.

**What are deepfakes?**
Deepfakes are videos, images or audio recordings that have been digitally altered – often using artificial intelligence (AI) – to make it look like someone has said or done something they never actually did. This can include realistic-looking videos where a person's face is swapped onto someone else's body or voice recordings that sound identical to a real person.
While some deepfakes are created for fun or entertainment (e.g, putting a celebrity's face in a movie scene), others are made with harmful intent – to spread misinformation, harass individuals or cause reputational damage.

**How can deepfakes affect young people?**
**Online bullying and harassment:** there have been cases where deepfakes are used to humiliate or threaten young people – for example, by placing their face onto inappropriate or explicit content and sharing it without their consent.
**Manipulation and misinformation:** deepfakes can be convincing and may be used to spread false stories, fake messages from public figures or even impersonate friends or family members online.
**Emotional and mental health impact:** Being targeted by or exposed to deepfakes can cause embarrassment, anxiety and long-lasting emotional harm. Even witnessing a deepfake involving others can be distressing and erode trust online.

## How can parents and carers support their child?

At North Durham Academy, the safety of our students is our top priority. If you require any assistance or support, please reach out to the Designated Safeguarding Lead at d.menear@ndacademy.co.uk or call/text 07818505360.

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