



# SCHOOLS NEWSLETTER

## Safer Schools Quarterly review

Welcome to our second schools newsletter.

Hopefully everyone received our first quarterly newsletter in March and this provided you with some useful information on the sort of work the schools officers do with young people in Aylesbury Vale schools. If anyone for any reason did not receive this, then please email us. Our email address can be found on page two and we will be happy to forward you a copy.

Just to re-cap, Thames Valley Police embrace the “Safer Schools Partnership” (SSP) approach, engaging with schools and students. Any incident that occurs at a school, during the school day involving students and is classified as a “minor” incident should be dealt with under SSP.

Parents should report incidents directly to the school who take primacy in investigating. If any incident is reported to the police we record it, notify the school, liaise with the investigating teacher, and deal with the incident under SSP guidance. This approach is restorative and our priority is to educate / safeguard, not criminalise.

The type of incidents that we have dealt with over the last three months include although this is not an exhaustive list, bullying, assault, criminal damage, sexting, theft, malicious communications offences, drugs possession and racist incidents.

In addition to these incidents both PC Sharon Cann and I (PC Jo Smith), have attended schools to do assemblies, lessons, group work and individual work with many young people on a variety of topics with a view to provide education and enhance students understanding of the law and the consequence's should they break the law.

During May, Thames Valley Police carried out a week of action to continue an ongoing commitment to tackle “County Lines” drug dealing. As part of this week of action Sharon and I attended a number of schools to talk to young people about this topic and the dangers of drugs. In addition we took a passive drugs dog into three schools in the Vale. These schools were picked at random and not because we believed there were drug issues at those schools. It was part of our educational approach which was well received by all. I am pleased to say no drugs were located in any of those schools and the vast majority of pupils enjoyed seeing how a passive drugs dog works. At break time students also got the chance to meet the dog and pet the dog if they wished.

For more information on Country Lines and Criminal Exploitation please see the information below. If you have any concerns for any young person please contact us.

## County Lines & Child Criminal Exploitation

County Lines is an exploitative crime that is currently taking place across the country. It is a phenomena that has evolved significantly and has been recognised as a national threat by the Home Office and the National Crime Agency. The County Lines model is different from the more ‘conventional’ drugs supply methods that currently control the market. Suppliers in these circumstance seek to exploit new markets in other towns and areas.

County Lines often involves the criminal exploitation of children. They often target those that are vulnerable, such as those in care, absent from education, have a drug dependency, young people with mental health issues or living in poverty. It is a very lucrative business model and increasingly we hear

how groups utilise violence as a control mechanism in order to maintain discipline with their workforce and distribution network.

### **This is how it works...**

1. A group (not necessarily a gang) establish a network between an urban hub and county location, into which drugs are supplied.
2. A branded mobile phone line is established in the market, to which orders are placed by introduced customers. The line will commonly (but not exclusively) be controlled by a third party, who is generally remote from the market.
3. The group exploits young or vulnerable persons to store, move and/or supply drugs.
4. The group, or individuals exploited by them, regularly travel between the urban hub and the county market, to replenish stock and deliver cash.
5. The group is inclined to use intimidation, violence and weapons.

### **Recruiting and grooming of children**

Older dealers/gangs set up markets and drug lines and control young people through placing them in debt for drugs. For example, young people naively accept their first few deals as 'gifts' only to be told later they now owe their supplier and need to work off their 'debt'. The debt can involve financial and sexual exploitation.

Although the most vulnerable are often believed to be the most at risk, it is also been heard of gangs targeting children with no links to services, as was highlighted in Brighton where middle class children were targeted alongside more obviously vulnerable. This is an indication that gangs are becoming more creative in their recruitment methods.

### **Early help and intervention**

Early intervention is key to prevention and requires recognition of indicators showing involvement in 'gang' or 'county lines' activity. Awareness and training for youth services, schools and families on the dynamics of exploitation, drugs and grooming is important.

### **Spotting the signs**

- Persistently missing from school or home, or being found out of area
- Significant decline in school performance  
Unexplained acquisition of money, clothes or mobile phones
- Being secretive
- Unexplained injuries or refusing medical help
- Changes in their friendship groups. Possibly engaging in relationships with controlling, older persons
- Changes in behaviour, becoming fearful, withdrawn
- Possession of drug packing material (Vaseline, baby wipes, cling film)

### **Consequences of illegal drug use/supply**

Any involvement with illegal drug use and supply is a criminal offence which can lead to arrest and a criminal record.

**However young people who have been exploited to sell drugs may be treated as exploitation victims and dealt with as such.**

### **Useful links**

[www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk) - CEOPs (Child Exploitation & Online Protection) education programme aiming to educate and protect children and young people from sexual abuse and exploitation.

[www.barnardos.org.uk/rusafebucks](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/rusafebucks) - support for vulnerable young people at risk of exploitation.

**If you have any ideas for future topics, would like further information or have any questions please contact [aylesburysaferschools@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk](mailto:aylesburysaferschools@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk) or your child's school.**