

Date: 6th May 2019

Dear Parent/Carer,

**Anti-social Behaviour, Alcohol and Drug Activity in Mid Highland and Highland Communities:
Parent Information Evening Monday 10th June 2019 – 7pm - Dingwall Academy**

Mid-Highland schools' Head Teachers and Police Scotland are writing to you to inform and reassure you that we are working together to ensure our young people, schools and communities remain safe.

We have noted increases in the volume of information shared regarding drug and alcohol activity, and in anti-social behaviour in the Mid-Highland Area and around our communities.

Together, we are sharing information to support pupil/parental awareness and knowledge of these behaviours and concerns, thereby taking action to prevent potential harm in our communities.

The information comes from:

- young people themselves, concerned that friends or peers are engaged in risky behaviours.
- Crime Stoppers Helpline – a way for any member of the public to raise concerns anonymously to Police Scotland.
- parents, teachers, social workers, voluntary organisations, youth workers.
- police in their liaison work with schools and youth organisations.
- Community Council communications.

Although these are not new issues, the risks do seem to be more prevalent than previously known with increased risk-taking behaviour among a greater proportion of young people and at earlier ages.

Pupils, parents and carers need to be aware that young people are using and supplying harmful substances across our communities and seem to believe that such activity is 'normal' for them and others. Controlled substances previously believed to not have been a significant issue for young people in many areas in Highland are now readily available. It is possible for young people, to access a wide variety of substances and these can include (but not exclusively) cannabis, psycho-active substances ('legal highs') and prescription drugs. These can be obtained from local contacts, wider contacts through social media and can be purchased on-line in some cases.

The incidence of reports regarding anti-social behaviour is also increasing. Reports are of open air drunkenness and associated verbal abuse, mess and danger to the public from broken glass and other waste being left behind in parks, on beaches and in other public amenity spaces; of verbal abuse and intimidation of members of the public; often vulnerable young people and adults being the victims of such abuse; of purchase, selling and use of a range of substances which can then impact on further anti-social behaviours and also irresponsible behaviour on and near roads.

All partners involved to date support the view that to address these concerns, schools, parents, pupils and partners such as Police Scotland, Social Work Service and Youth Action Team, Community Councils etc need to work together to identify and address such risk taking and anti-social behaviour and reduce the impact they are having on our communities and on our young people. Almost all of these behaviours occur in the evenings and at week-ends/holidays.

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What do we do in schools when information is received?

We **always** act on information received. In schools, if concerns or suspicions are raised, actions can include:

- young people interviewed;
- parents contacted (possibly after liaison with other professionals);
- pupils asked to voluntarily empty pockets, bags, lockers etc. (or searched via Police Scotland officers as necessary);
- young person(s) can be referred to counsellors or support workers as required;
- possible exclusion from school where there are implications for the good order and discipline of the school or risks to pupil wellbeing;
- professionals meetings regarding concerns for individuals;
- sharing of information with partner agencies including Police Scotland (they log all concerns received and may visit, search, conduct drug dog visits etc.). This can then inform enforcement actions such as interviews under caution, arrests, searches, dog visits etc.

What can Police Scotland offer to support schools and parents?

Points of contact officers/Prevention & Intervention officers

- 101- for people to log concerns re: drug or any other activity- can be anonymous
- Posters/Information sharing in schools and communities
- Crimestoppers helpline - 0800 555111 and Website: www.crimestoppers-uk.org
- Police Officers – liaising and supporting schools with assemblies, visits, class talks, parent information evening attendance

The following websites links can be helpful and offer support and guidance for example:

<https://www.scotland.police.uk/youth-hub/>

<https://young.scot/choices-for-life/>

<http://knowthescore.info/>

<http://www.highland-adp.org.uk/>

We appreciate that some pupils are understandably reluctant to come forward and speak up about friends. Some parents have even said they are aware of young people's actions but are not prepared to name names for various reasons. **It is however, vital that where concerns exist, information is passed on.** It is **everyone's responsibility** to keep our young people safe.

Next Steps:

- We will continue to share information with you when available.
- We will provide information sessions open to parents of any school to attend.
- We will support agreed enforcement actions.
- All schools to continue raising awareness and reviewing drugs education programmes.
- Continue liaison work between schools, Police Scotland, Health, Social Work and Highland Council partners.
- Parents/Carers are urged to discuss the contents of this letter at home and to liaise with schools re any concerns.
- **Parents from each school are invited to an Information evening to be held in Dingwall Academy on Monday 10th June 2019 – 7-8pm. Booking information to follow.**

We all want to ensure that our young people are as safe as possible. To help us achieve this we ask that parents/carers who have any concerns or information related to possible risk taking behaviours to contact either CrimeStoppers helpline on 0800 555 111 or Police Scotland on 101 or your school at the phone number below.

Yours faithfully,

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