

City Learning Trust

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Dear Parents/Carers

Joint Response to Knife Crime, Gangs and Youth Violence

You may be aware of the issues reported in the national press regarding street gangs, violence and knife crime amongst young people. Whilst most prevalent in London and larger cities, Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent are also affected.

Receiving this letter does not mean your school has a specific problem with knives but it is important you are aware of the risks and what you can do to help and educate youngsters of the risks. This letter is to raise awareness. It is part of work by multiple agencies which is ongoing in schools across our county.

Educating children about the dangers of carrying knives and helping adults to identify the signs means we can work together to better educate our young people and keep them safe.

Like many places nationally, parts of our area have seen an increase in gang-related violence and illegal drug activity (also known as County Lines). This includes the involvement of young people in the supply and transportation of drugs. Often, a knife is carried by those involved.

Most young people will not be affected by these issues, but for some, lives will be devastated either as a victim or by making a catastrophic decision that will change their future irreversibly.

Together, a range of partners from across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire are working to tackle these issues head on. Over the last 18 months, police recorded data in Stoke-on-Trent shows reductions in the use of knives. One of the reasons for this is the education that has taken place locally which is based on national learning from areas where the problem is far greater than here. There is, however, more to do.

We aim to support the National Knife Crime awareness week in mid-November 2020 (focussing on the national #Knifefree campaign and Staffordshire Police #DITCHTHEBLADE campaign) and wanted to draw your attention to and support for planned activity during this week and the school year ahead.

Secondary Academies across the city have pledged to work together in a joint effort to support all young people. A range of activities are scheduled as part of the Personal, Social, Health and Economic Curriculum for delivery in Stoke-on-Trent education settings between 9th and 15th November 2020. This will include specific lesson plans, awareness raising resources and a lived experience input from the brother of a knife crime victim. Discussing this with your son or daughter if they mention it is difficult, but invaluable. Education is critical to help young people to make the right life choices.



Staffordshire Commissioner's Office is working with the police, local authorities, health, the voluntary sector, communities and other organisations across our area. Collectively, our aim is to make a real and lasting difference for our young people.

If you are concerned that your child, or a young person you know, is affected by any of these issues, please contact any of the following for support and advice:

- ☐ Contact your child's school and ask to speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead
- ☐ Telephone the police non-emergency number – 101
- ☐ Telephone Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111

This is important and concerns us all. We write to you jointly to highlight these difficult issues and to ensure that we all work together. It is critical that the message to #DITCHTHEBLADE is spread far and wide, from within the home, to schools and to all agencies who work with young people.

Together, and with your support, we can all make a lasting difference. Thank you.



Office of the Police and
Crime Commissioner
STAFFORDSHIRE

Matthew Ellis
Police & Crime Commissioner

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STRONGER TOGETHER

Andy Stanier
Chair – SASCAL



**STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE**

Thom Chisholm
Police Superintendent
Head of Neighbourhood Policing

