



10<sup>th</sup> November 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope this letter finds you well. As the Headteacher at Sheldon School, I am writing to bring your attention to a concerning issue that has been affecting our community lately - the rise of county lines gangs and their impact on our students. In the last few weeks, we have been made aware by the police that this is an issue within Chippenham and in the last few days these issues have come into our school.

County lines gangs are criminal networks that exploit vulnerable individuals, primarily young people, to transport and distribute drugs across different regions. Unfortunately, these gangs have been infiltrating our community and are targeting children and exposing them to grave dangers that can have long-lasting consequences on their lives and futures. It usually starts with the selling of legal items like vapes and then quickly escalates into drugs and other items.

It is essential for us, as parents and educators, to be aware of the signs that may indicate a child's involvement or susceptibility to county lines gangs. Some of these warning signs include:

1. **Sudden changes in behaviour, such as increased secrecy or aggression.**
2. **Unexplained possession of large amounts of cash, expensive items, or unexplained absences.**
3. **Frequent contact with unknown individuals or a sudden change in friendship groups.**
4. **Decline in academic performance or attendance.**
5. **Unwillingness to discuss school activities or reluctance to engage with school staff.**
6. **Wearing of additional clothing under trousers to hide items e.g. jogging bottoms/shorts under trousers.**

We need to work together to protect our children and ensure their safety. Here are some steps we are taking as a school.

1. **Open Communication:** Maintaining an open line of communication with parents, so that you can pass on any concerns to us as a school. It is also vital to have open dialogue with your child and encourage them to talk to you about their friends, activities, and any concerns they may have. As a reminder, we also have an online reporting tool via Epraise. This allows students to report incidents without having to speak to a member of staff. The Report an Incident link is on their Home tab on Epraise.

2. **Provide education:** We will ensure that our Personal, Social, Health, and Religious Education lessons and curriculum reflect these issues within our community. We will ensure that we use all opportunities in school to educate students about these dangers and give them advice on what to do if they are worried or concerned.

3. **Strong stance:** We will continue to take a strong stance with students who bring in prohibited items or try to sell prohibited items to other students.

4. **Continue to work closely with other agencies:** We have established excellent working relationships with outside agencies, such as the police, social care, The Rise Trust and the local authority. We will continue to work closely with these to assist them in reducing the risk to the students in our care. This will involve them running workshops and seminars for staff, pupils and parents.

I understand that this may be a difficult and sensitive topic to discuss, but it is of utmost importance that we address it head-on, as it is happening in our community here at Sheldon. By working together as a community, we can create a safe and supportive environment for our children to thrive and succeed.

Please feel free to reach out to me or any member of the school staff if you have any concerns, questions, or need further information. We are here to support you and your child in every possible way.

All safeguarding concerns should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSLs:

John Rumble - Designated Safeguarding Lead [jrumble@sheldonschool.co.uk](mailto:jrumble@sheldonschool.co.uk)

Sian Mundy - Deputy Safeguarding Lead KS3 [smundy@sheldonschool.co.uk](mailto:smundy@sheldonschool.co.uk)

Alison Simpson - Deputy Safeguarding Lead [asimpson@sheldonschool.co.uk](mailto:asimpson@sheldonschool.co.uk)

Jon Scourfield - Deputy Safeguarding Lead KS4 [jscourfield@sheldonschool.co.uk](mailto:jscourfield@sheldonschool.co.uk)

Eugene Spiers - Deputy Safeguarding Lead KS5 [espiers@sheldonschool.co.uk](mailto:espiers@sheldonschool.co.uk)

Megan Owen - Deputy Safeguarding Lead [mowen@sheldonschool.co.uk](mailto:mowen@sheldonschool.co.uk)

Please find attached with this letter some useful information from Wiltshire Police. Thank you for your support and understanding in this matter.

Yours faithfully,



Pete Lynch  
Headteacher