

Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse Subgroup

PRIORITIES

- DOMESTIC ABUSE
- MENTAL HEALTH
- DRUGS AND ALCOHOL
- SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND ADULTS
- DISTRICT CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING - YOUNG PEOPLE INCLUDING MISSING CHILDREN

ACTIVITIES

Over the course of a week a variety of activities are carried out to raise awareness of adult safeguarding.



With the help of a local theatre company we will be performing the delayed 'Toxic Trio' conference, to raise awareness of these issues and the impact on families.



ACTIVITIES



Raising awareness of safety on line for young people and parents



Raising awareness of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.



Working with the vision and role of Nicole Jacobs the first Domestic Abuse Commissioner, who was appointed as designate commissioner in 2019.

ACTIVITIES



Youth conference highlights modern day dangers

by Andrew South

Keeping the attention of more than 900 Year 9 pupils for six hours was no mean feat for the speakers at last week's Young Prisoners' Community Safety Conference at Folkestone's Lees Cliff Hall, which provided a salutary assessment of how life has changed since the advent of social media.

The event, organised by the Folkestone & Hythe District Community Safety Partnership, visited schools from across the district including Brockhill Brook Performing Arts College and the Marine Academy.

It was designed to raise awareness of the dangers of social crime, drugs, gangs and grooming to the 13-14 year old cohort, and pulled no punches. Hosted by the ex-military Dan Simpson, the first presentation was the extraordinary story told by Louis Lusher of the Brock Foundation who established the charity in memory of her son. Brock had been a normal teenage boy in a loving family who enjoyed computer games, until an older boy named Lewis entered his online world and set about a highly organised grooming process. He spun a story about being a millionaire working for the government and having an apartment in New York.

"I liked it to pulling a banana," explained Louis. "The predator picks away the different influences in the victim's life. First the parents get alienated, then the friends are pulled away. Other authority figures such as teachers are also isolated until the predator has complete control of their victim."

The victim becomes so used to their master's exclusion of everything and everyone else Brock had eventually moved the relationship, but the lies continued. Gifts arrived such as a £6000 smartphone so that the gang could continue contact. Eventually Brock was lured to Lewis's flat in Essex where he was brutally murdered.

The other friends in Brock's group had already identified Lewis as a liar, but such is the seductive nature of predators, lies like that they radiate extraordinary influence over their victims. But nobody thought to call Childline or other authorities. Brock's shocking story can be seen in a short film at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2V7SC8eZY.

Other presentations during the day focused on the importance of emotional health and positive relationships, and how they can help to avoid the potential pitfalls which teenagers may be prone to. These have changed in just a generation - at the age of 13 or 14 secondary school boys used to be in the playground at break time. The advent of social media has fuelled a societal change of huge and concerning magnitude.

Addiction expert Dr Ewan James warned of the dangers of drug and alcohol use and it was alarming to note how many of the young teenage audience were able to identify the product names of drinks brand logos when displayed on the screen. The charity provides advice and support on all drug, alcohol and mental health issues (www.addictionline.org.uk).

Amelia Walker, Domestic Abuse Project Officer from HomeStart Shepway revealed that 25 per cent of teenage girls have been physically hurt by their boyfriends, while 58 per cent of boys reported being hurt by their girlfriends - probably not a good basis for long term relationships. A curious metaphorical film compared sexual coercion with deciding whether to have a cup of tea or not, ie 'no' should mean 'no'. It was difficult to tell whether this got the message home, as if it just made these children think more seriously about taking milk and sugar in their cups (www.homestartshepway.org.uk).

The head message revealed the stark reality of the dangers of violent online games. Many of the Year 9 audience were familiar with, or had played 18 certificate games such as 'Fortnite' and 'Grand Theft Auto' which puts the player in control of how they will proceed on screen. A recent survey of 9 11 year olds in Folkestone & Hythe found that 50 per cent of them had someone who had been a casualty. Most with 'off' music, drugs are becoming a reality and destructive use of social media can be conducted in a virtual community. The rest of the background is just as stark and grim as the dark scenarios depicted on screen and in current social media.

The conference was chaired by Adrian Hagan, Chief Executive of the office of Kent Police and Crime Commissioner, who reminded young people of the importance of looking out for each other.

All the time of writing, one message has remained that 52 per cent of children in the Folkestone & Hythe district are below the poverty line - "never has there been a greater need for the strength of 'Heard & Helped' to pull together to raise standards of behaviour and sense of belonging."

The event was well attended and given however, the ever rising message was that there is a strong network of support, advice and information available on many areas of these negative elements of using the 'bad' side of technology. The strength of knowledge and community cannot be overestimated by a young group who showed maturity and confidence in their performance to a young group of professional teachers and health care staff. "There were some incredibly powerful presentations and we saw that young people have a strong sense of the young people who were there," said Judith Lusher, Folkestone Community Services Manager.

This is the second time we have held a conference for our young people and we are keen to encourage them to think about their decisions and choices.

It was an opportunity to talk about risk taking behaviour and how to take safe and to look out for each other, and to tell someone if they were worried about a friend or a classmate."

Further advice on emotional wellbeing and relationships can also be available from South's 400 staff and extensive online counselling and support service www.kent.gov.uk.

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One Stop Shop
Supporting those experiencing domestic abuse in Folkestone & Hythe

SAFEGUARDING YOUTH CONFERENCE

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- Avoid an 'incident-led' response: The best long-term outcome for any child is that the abusive parent changes their behaviour.
- Develop a range of services to help respond to the emotional needs of children.
- Practice in a trauma informed way recognising children sometimes feel as though they are to blame for the separation of their parents.
- As practitioners we will understand the signs of the emotional impact of the abuse on the child and the wider implications of living with domestic abuse.
- Strive to consider the impact of domestic abuse on the well-being of the care giver, and subsequently, their ability to care properly for their child.
- Use our professional curiosity and understanding of family dynamics to connect isolated incidents, understand the history of the abuse and the trajectory of it's severity and build a picture that would lead to a different conclusion about the level of risk.
- Work with partner agencies, particularly probation providers, to ensure they focus on containment of the perpetrator and their behaviour.
- Support partners to respond better to new risks, such as when the perpetrator has entered a new relationship.