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Dear Parent/carer,

This week is county lines awareness week. As part of North East Lincolnshire's commitment to safer and stronger communities Humberside Police and Children's Services wanted to raise awareness amongst parents and carers of what exploitation is, and where you can access help if you or a family member need it.

Have you seen a change in your child's behaviour recently and are struggling to understand why? Are you worried they may be involved in selling drugs or other types of criminal/sexual activity?

Criminal Exploitation is when individuals or gangs target children and use an imbalance of power to coerce, control and manipulate them into sexual activity, to deal drugs, steal, commit violent and sexual acts and traffic them (move drugs from one area to another). Both criminal and sexual may overlap, or children may, at times, be subject to both.

These are forms of abuse and children will usually be subjected to physical violence and threats. Exploiters (usually older adults) will spend time getting to know their victims to groom them and befriend them. Abusive adults will look out for signs in selecting a child to target. Certain factors make a young person more vulnerable to exploitation due to their individual family or personal circumstances that may either 'push' or 'pull' a child into such situations. On most occasions, parents are not aware this is happening.

If you are worried, you are not alone nor are you to blame. There are many parents and carers in similar situations.

If something does not look right, there is a possibility it isn't. A young person involved in exploitative situations may exhibit some of these signs:

- Decline in school attendance/attainment.
- Travelling alone – during school hours or late at night.
- Leaving home or care without explanation.
- Found or travelling out of area.
- Unexplained injuries.
- Unexplained items, clothing, jewellery, money, and/or multiple mobile phones.
- In possession of a weapon and/or drugs.
- Under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- In company with people older than them.
- Change in behaviour – becoming aggressive and self-harming.

- STI's/pregnancy.
- Starting to adapt certain codes of behaviour; ways of talking & hand signs.

Help your child and those who can support you, by keeping a record and monitoring your child's:

- Internet use
- Friendship circle.
- Use of mobile phone and if they have more than one.
- Money
- Car registration if seen entering or exiting a vehicle unknown.
- Bus tickets / train tickets
- Clothing
- Gifts
- Places/areas they attend.
- Injuries
- Infections
- Contraception

Please contact Stanford Junior and Infant School for further advice and guidance if there is anything you are worried about.

There is also a national website you could visit PACE – Parent's Against Child Exploitation on www.paceuk.info/ for further support and advice.

Integrated front door – 01472 326292

Humberside Police – 101 for non-emergencies and to share any information you may have about criminal gangs or exploitation.

This information has been prepared for you by:
Humberside Police and Children's Social Care

Please reach out to school staff, the police or children's services if you have any concerns about any child in North East Lincolnshire.

Mrs L Hackfath
Headteacher