

Welwyn Hatfield School Bulletin

January 2024



Welwyn Hatfield Community Safety Partnership

Your councils, police, university, fire, health and justice services are working together for safer neighbourhoods in the borough.



County Lines Exploitation

Increase in Young People being exploited by County Lines

Young people being drawn into county lines exploitation is an ever-growing concern nationally and locally.

County lines is a term used to describe a form of criminal activity where drug dealers in major cities establish networks for the supply and sale of drugs to users in towns and more rural areas; using other people (typically those who are young or otherwise vulnerable) to carry, store and sell the drugs. The 'lines' refer to mobile phones that are used to control a young person who is delivering the drugs. Phrases young people may use to refer to county lines include 'running a line', 'going OT/out there', 'going country', 'going cunch'.

According to The Children's Society young people aged 14-17 are most likely to be targeted by criminals but there are reports of seven year olds being groomed into county lines.

Gangs will often attempt to groom and target those young people who are more vulnerable through learning disabilities, poverty, social isolation or those in care although any young person could become a victim. Everyone can do their bit to help prevent young people being exploited in this way by looking out for the signs, flagging and raising concerns when necessary.

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Young People and Vaping

(Above image from BBC)

Welwyn Hatfield Community Safety Partnership (CSP) have seen a rise in the number of young people vaping locally. This is reflected in national data from a survey conducted by ASH (Action on Smoking and Health) which showed that in 2023 20.5% of children aged 11-17 had tried a vape which is 5% higher than figures from 2022. The health risks posed by vaping are still unknown and research is being done to look at this. There are concerns around high levels of nicotine and the inclusion of various chemicals in vape products which children are being exposed to. Single use vapes are also having a massive impact on the environment. According to the Guardian (2023) five million single use vapes are disposed of each week in the UK.....

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Signs of county lines exploitation in a young person can include:

- Acquiring new clothes, money, accessories, or mobile phones without being able to account for them
- Frequently going missing from school, home, or care and unwilling to explain their whereabouts
- Withdrawing or having sudden changes in personality, behaviour or the language they use
- Receiving excessive texts or phone calls at all hours
- Associated with or being interested in gang culture
- Carrying weapons
- Having relationships with controlling or older individuals
- Unexplained injuries
- Becoming isolated from peers or social networks

If you are worried that a young person is in immediate danger you should contact Hertfordshire Police using **999** in an emergency or **101** in a non-emergency. You should also raise any welfare or safeguarding concerns for a young person to Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership by phone on **0300 1234043** or [online](#).

If you are unsure about a young person and would like more information on gangs or county lines, you can contact feelsafe@welhat.gov.uk or visit our [website](#) for information on local youth support services.

Some of the things we are doing to tackle this locally:

- In the Autumn of 2023 we delivered our Crucial Crew project to year 7 pupils which included a session on knife crime and youth violence.
- We are engaging with local schools and youth services regularly to discuss young people who are at risk of exploitation and putting interventions in place where possible.
- In early 2024 Welwyn Hatfield Community Safety Partnership will be visiting all secondary schools to deliver educational talks to pupils about youth violence, county lines and gangs. The purpose of these visits will be to educate young people on the risks and dangers of engaging with this type of behaviour.
- Offering schools bespoke sessions (delivered by Hertfordshire Police CCE Prevention & Diversion Team) with pupils who are at risk of county lines / exploitation.
- Community Awareness Sessions aimed at parents, carers and members of the community to learn more about how we can safeguard and prevent young people being exploited or involved in gangs and criminal activity. The next session will take place on Monday 25th March 2024, to book your place please visit [Community Awareness Session](#)

Young People and Vaping Continued...

In the UK it is illegal for anyone under 18 to purchase a vape. Welwyn Hatfield CSP are working closely with Trading Standards to tackle this issue by investigating stores that are reportedly selling vapes to underage young people. We are also raising awareness among young people about the risks of exposing their bodies to chemicals and high amounts of nicotine.

If you would like more information or advice on this topic or if you are aware of a local store selling vapes to underage children, then you can get in touch with Welwyn Hatfield CSP on feelsafe@welhat.gov.uk



(Images from BBC)

Nitrous Oxide (NOS) Laughing Gas banned in England and Wales

From 8th November 2023 it is illegal for anyone to possess Nitrous Oxide where a person intends to wrongfully inhale it (for example 'to get high'). As part of the Government's 'Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan' Nitrous Oxide is now a Class C substance under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. Placing it with other illegal substances known to be harmful including anabolic steroids, benzodiazepines (diazepine) and Khat. Individuals could face up to 2 years for using it and up to 14 years for selling it.

If you are concerned about a young person who may be using Nitrous Oxide or have any information on Nitrous Oxide use/supply in our area then please do get in touch with us by e-mailing

feelsafe@welhat.gov.uk.

Crimes should always be reported to Hertfordshire Police on **101** in a non-emergency and **999** in an emergency.

Advice and help with drug addiction can also be found at [Change Grow Live](#) | [Charity](#) | [We can help you change your life](#)



Support Projects for Young People in Welwyn Hatfield

If you are concerned about a young person you can gain support for them by accessing the below support projects

Positive Pathways Project

(LEVEL OF NEED – LOW)

PURPOSE: Youth work, information, advice, guidance, support and work-related learning for young people

REFERRAL CRITERIA:

Young people who are:

- Aged 11-19 and living or going to school in Welwyn Hatfield
- Involved in or at risk of becoming involved in ASB
- Associating with people who are involved with ASB
- Presenting challenging behaviour in the community
- Struggling with personal or circumstantial issues associated with ASB including substance misuse or carrying a weapon

A referral may not be accepted if the young person is already on an order and/or working with with another agency.

HOW TO REFER A CHILD/YOUNG PERSON:

Referrals can be from **anyone**, including professionals, family, friends and self-referrals.

More information and a referral form is available on the WHBC website:

www.welhat.gov.uk/positivepathways

and the service can be contacted at **positivepathways@welhat.gov.uk**

Turnaround Programme

(LEVEL OF NEED – LOW)

PURPOSE: Early intervention for young people likely to enter the justice system

REFERRAL CRITERIA:

Young people who are:

- Aged 10-17 and not currently a looked after child, care leaver or subject to a Child Protection Plan
- Subject to a No Further Action (NFA) decision
- Interviewed under caution or subject of a criminal investigation attending a voluntary interview
- Recipients of a first time Youth Caution (not a Conditional Caution)
- Subject to a Community Resolution
- Released under investigation (RUI) or subject to Pre-charge Bail (PCB)
- Discharged or acquitted by Court
- Fined by Court
- Involved in Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) who have received a CPW/CPN, ABC/ABA

HOW TO REFER A CHILD/YOUNG PERSON:

Referrals can be from **anyone**, including self-referrals, family, friends and professionals, including police, schools and local authorities. A referral form is available online at

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/childrens-social-care/professionals/turnaround-programme.aspx

and should be e-mailed to **turnaround@hertfordshire.gov.uk**

Herts Police CCE Prevention & Diversion Team (LEVEL OF NEED – MEDIUM)

PURPOSE: Intervention, prevention and diversion for young people who are at risk of or have been exploited or involved in serious violence.

REFERRAL CRITERIA:

Young people who are:

- Aged up to 18 years old
- Involved in or at risk of gang affiliation
- Involved in or at risk of knife crime
- Involved in or at risk of criminal exploitation including county lines

HOW TO REFER A CHILD/YOUNG PERSON:

Referrals can only be made directly by police officers OR professionals (including schools) via a MASH/Child Safeguarding referral. **Referrals may also be picked up by the CCE Prevention and Diversion Team if a child is raised at a multi-agency meeting.**

The No More Service

(LEVEL OF NEED – HIGH)

PURPOSE: Intervention project for young people who lead chaotic lifestyles and are involved in criminality, serious youth violence, county lines or gangs.

REFERRAL CRITERIA:

Young people who are:

- Aged 11 – 21 (25 if there are additional needs)
- Taking illegal substances
- Involved in crime
- Due to appear in court
- Vulnerable due to their choices
- At risk of or unemployed
- Engaging in behaviour which is having an impact on relationships including with family or at risk of being excluded from school
- Living a chaotic lifestyle
- At risk of eviction (self or parents/guardians)

Age of child and three of the above criteria must be met for a referral to be accepted by the No More Service.

HOW TO REFER A CHILD/YOUNG PERSON:

Referrals can be from anyone including professionals, family, friends and self-referrers. Please contact nomore@stevenage.gov.uk or **01438 242666** for a referral form.

If there are any areas related to Community Safety which you feel like you would benefit with further information on then please do get in touch on feelsafe@welhat.gov.uk and we will look to include this in future bulletins.