

Dear Parent/Carer,

### Drug activity in Inverness and Highland Communities

Inverness and Nairn schools' Head Teachers and Police Scotland are writing to you reassure you that we are working together to ensure our young people, schools and communities remain safe.

**We have experienced notable recent increases in the volume of information shared regarding possible and actual drug activity in and around Inverness as well as in other communities around Highland.** We are sharing information to support pupil/parental awareness and knowledge of drug activity, thereby taking action to prevent potential harm.

The information comes from:

- young people themselves, concerned that friends or peers are engaged in risky behaviours .
- Crime Stoppers Helpline – a way for any member of the public to raise concerns anonymously to Police Scotland.
- parents, teachers, social workers, voluntary organisations, youth workers.
- police officers on patrol or in their liaison work with schools and youth organisations.

Although this is not a new issue, the risks do seem to be more prevalent than previously and the evidence suggests increased risk-taking behaviour among a greater proportion of young people and at earlier ages.

Pupils, parents and carers need to be aware that young people of all ages have been identified as both using and supplying harmful substances in all areas and seem to believe that such activity is 'normal' for them and others. Controlled substances previously believed to not have been a significant issue for young people in many areas in Highland are now readily available. It is possible for anyone, but especially young people, to access a wide variety of substances across Inverness e.g. controlled substances such as cannabis, MDMA, heroin, crack cocaine and a range of new psycho-active substances ('legal highs'). Access can be from contact with people and even purchase on-line in some cases.

### **What do we do in schools when information is received?**

We **always** act on information received. In schools, if concerns or suspicions are raised, actions can include:

- young people interviewed;
- parents contacted (possibly after liaison with other professionals);
- pupils asked to voluntarily empty pockets, bags, locker etc. (or searched via Police Scotland officers as necessary);
- young person can be referred on to counsellors or support workers as required;
- possible exclusion from school where there are implications for the good order and discipline of the school or risks to pupil wellbeing;
- professionals meetings regarding concerns for individuals;
- sharing of information with partner agencies including Police Scotland (they log all concerns received and may visit, search, conduct drug dog visits etc.). This can then inform enforcement actions such as interviews under caution, arrests, searches, dog visits etc.

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### What can Police Scotland offer to support schools and parents?

- Points of contact officers/Prevention and Intervention officers
- 101 – for people to log concerns re drug or any other activity – can be anonymous
- Posters/info sharing in schools and communities
- Crime Stoppers helpline and website <https://crimestoppers-uk.org> or phone 0800555111
- Community beat officers – liaising and supporting schools with assemblies, visits, class talks, parent information evening attendance



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We are aware that some pupils are understandably reluctant to 'grass' on friends. Some parents have even said they are aware of young people's actions but are not prepared to name names for various reasons. It is however, **vital that where concerns exist, information is passed on.** It is everyone's responsibility to keep our young people safe.

#### Next Steps:

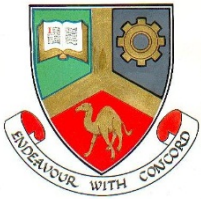
- We will continue to share information with you when available.
- We will provide parental information sessions open to parents of any school to attend . (Dates to follow)
- We will support agreed enforcement actions.
- All schools to continue raising awareness and reviewing drugs education programmes.
- Continue liaison work between schools, Police Scotland, Health, Social Work and Highland Council partners.
- Parents/Carers are urged to discuss the contents of this letter at home and to liaise with schools re any concerns.

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We will strive to ensure that our young people are as safe as possible. To help us achieve this we ask that parents/carers who have any concerns or information related to possible drug activity to contact either CrimeStoppers helpline on 0800 555 111 or Police Scotland on 101 or your school at the phone number below.



Yours faithfully,



Mr G MacLean  
Rector

