

Town Hall, 1 Town Square
Barking, IG11 7LU
Website: www.lbbd.gov.uk

Date: 26th May 2023

Community letter: Collective letter about Youth Violence and Anti-Social Behaviour.

Dear Parent/Carer,

This letter is from the Council on behalf of Headteachers and Principals of schools and academies in Barking and Dagenham where your child or children attend. It concerns ongoing reports of violence and anti-social behaviour in the community outside school hours.

Known as the Lost Hours, reports and data shows that most incidents involving young people happen between 3pm and 7pm - when they finish school and parents get home from work. There have been a number of incidents in which young people and adults have been the victims of violent assaults, or other anti-social behaviour. This is known to have occurred in a variety of community locations including parks, trains, railway stations, car parks and shopping areas.

Thankfully, the problem of youth violence and anti-social behaviour involves a relatively small number of young people. and we recognise that the vast majority of young people are kind, respectful and law-abiding citizens. It is on this basis that we recognise that action needs to be taken.

Our schools continue to do everything in their powers to keep students safe. Part of this has been working with the Police, Youth Justice, Children's Services, Early Help and the various child protection and safeguarding services.

A number of meetings have taken place and all agencies are committed to addressing the problem of youth violence and anti-social behaviour. Every child and adult deserve to live in a community where they feel safe and protected from harm.

Central to solving these problems is the need for all of us to work together, which is why we are asking you, as parents and carers, to support us in the next step of our strategy.

Below are some practical suggestions that we would ask you read and discuss with your child.

These include:

- Ensuring that you know where your child is at all times. Recent incidents have occurred in local parks and close to train stations.
- Developing strategies to avoid situations where there are individuals who may cause harm to others.
- Speaking openly with your child about risk and encourage them to share with a trusted adult any worries/concerns they may have relating to community, in school or online behaviours.
- Ensure that if you or your child witnesses any worrying or criminal events that this is reported. You can call 999 if it's an emergency, or you can report non-emergency matters by calling 101, or you can report incidents online via the Metropolitan Police website. If you are worried about reporting this, you can report concerns anonymously via Crimestoppers. The Crimestoppers number is 0800 555 111 and online reporting can be accessed by: <https://crimestoppers-uk.org>. Another way for finding out more, or reporting crime, is through Fearless <https://www.fearless.org>
- Share with the police (and schools where relevant) any videos/images of incidents of criminal behaviour that your child may receive via social media. Again, this can be done anonymously by using the above link.

Knowing where your children are when they're going to and from school and who they're hanging about with is really important, so we're asking you to please continue to check in with them and have an understanding of what they're up to before it's too late and they get involved in something that they shouldn't.

Social media also plays huge role in young people's lives and since the Coronavirus pandemic, and it has become a common grooming tool for gangs. Knowing who your children are talking on social media or while gaming or online is critical.

Here are a few things you should be looking out for or asking yourself:

1. Does your son or daughter have new clothes or trainers and you don't know where they got them?
2. Have you seen your son and daughter with different mobile phones? Ask them why.
3. Do you know who your son or daughter is talking to online? Grooming into gangs is common through social media.
4. Is your son or daughter hanging out with a new group of friends? Do you know any of them?

Having something that young people are interested in is a great way to stop them mixing in with the wrong crowd and in Barking and Dagenham there are lots of positive activities available including boxing and creating music. On our Lost Hours website www.losthours.org, we have a mapping tool where you can find out what is going on in your local area.

The Lost Hours website also has a range of support and contacts for parents. We know that by working together with you, our wider community, we will have a greater chance of making a positive impact. We remain fully committed to prioritising the safeguarding of all children and young people and are determined to see this situation change for the better.

Thank you very much for your time in reading this letter and your anticipated actions in support of helping to make our community safer for everyone.

Yours sincerely,



Elaine Allegretti
Strategic Director Children and Adults