



Monday 14th January 2019

RE: The Fight Against Knife Crime

Dear Parent or Guardian

I am writing to you on behalf of the Cambs Youth Consultation Panel. We are a charitable volunteer group that work with the police and local authorities to help address issues of concern within young communities.

Our group is made up of several volunteers – all aged between 12 and 17 years of age – from across the areas of South Cambs, East Cambs, Cambridge City and Huntingdonshire.

You may have read in the newspapers, or seen in the news, that England and Wales has experienced a significant increase in knife crime over the last 12 months. Cambridgeshire as a county is one of the lowest crime areas in country, but regardless of this has seen an increase in knife crime that is greater than 30%.

In addition to this, reports from the BBC suggest that admissions to hospitals in Cambridge, Huntingdon and Peterborough have seen a doubling in A&E admissions due to knife related injuries – many of these incidents are not reported to the police.

These are upsetting statistics – and while we know that the police are working hard (under the umbrella of Operation Bakersfield) to remedy the issue of knife and weapons related offences, we also know that resources in the public sector are as difficult as they have ever been.

Our Youth Consultation Panel is a group that is endorsed by the police and works closely with Neighbourhood Policing (Sgt Phil Priestley) on a week by week, and month by month basis. We believe in active citizenship, and we are working hard to stop young people carrying weapons.

In 1980s the issue of drink driving was of extreme concern – it had become culturally acceptable. In 1979 more than 1,600 people died on the roads of Britain due to the involvement of a drink driver. By 2012 less than 250 people died in the same circumstances (an 85% drop, despite a doubling of vehicles on the road during that time). In 2012, Drink driving was the cause of just 4% of all accidents overall. *In 1980 this would have seemed like an impossible goal – but it shows just what can be achieved.*

We must work together to prevent the carrying of knives and other weapons becoming a culturally acceptable part of life as a young person in the UK. We can have no complacency in Cambridgeshire.

To this end we are working with students from the United States in a collective and concerted effort to improve the safety of young people everywhere.

We are fundraising to bring students from the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida – more commonly referred to as ‘the Parkland School’ – into our region to speak to our students. They have a compelling story to tell us all – one that will be impossible to forget.

On 14th February of 2018 fifteen students and two staff members were killed by a lone offender who entered the school premises armed with a gun. Seventeen more people were critically injured and hospitalised during the attack.

Eight students from the school are willing to visit our region to speak about the effect that the tragedy has had – not only on the friends and loved one of those who died, but upon those who survived, the school, and the community as a whole. They will talk to us about an unthinkable incident that has fractured a polite, middle-class suburban community – and the efforts that have been made over the last twelve months to put the pieces back together.

More than anything – this is about young people having a conversation about what is and what is not acceptable within our communities – and what values we want to hold above all others. We know that this initiative will capture the hearts and minds of people our age – and we know that it will make the region safer for everyone.

We need to raise £5,000 to make this happen. I am writing to you seeking your support.

You can make a donation – and every donation will count – by visiting www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/youthpanel

If we exceed the amount required – every penny above and beyond the cost of the project – will be donated in a gesture of international goodwill to the bereaved families, and the survivors, of the 14th February tragedy in Parkland Florida, to fund bereavement counselling and PTSD treatment.

We hope that you can see the value in what we are working to achieve.

With kind regards and the best wishes of everyone on the Youth Panel,

Faithfully,



Francesca Galelli
(Soham Village College)

*If you would like to know more about the **Cambs Youth Panel** you can follow us on twitter **@CambsYouthPanel** or you can email us cambsyouthpanel@gmail.com*