

The Ramsey Academy, Halstead

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Headteacher:
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Dear Parents/Carers

We would like to inform you of an event organised by Halstead Town Council, to raise awareness for parents, regarding the grooming of local young people by County Lines drug gangs. This follows the recent arrest of a local young man. His mother was totally unaware of his involvement and in fact thought that he had turned a corner as he was helping around the house, keeping his room tidy etc. She didn't realise that this is part of the grooming process.

County Lines gangs reach out from the cities to rural towns and villages where they befriend and groom youngsters from across the social spectrum; it is not just children at risk of social exclusion, or those from deprived backgrounds who are at risk. Parents who believe it could not happen to their families are sadly unaware of the reach, tactics and convincing methods these gangs will use to recruit their children and it is already happening locally.

The intention of the evening is to alert parents and carers from across the social strata, to the signs, symptoms, causes and effects of this problem.

The event will be at the Queen's Hall, Halstead on Wednesday 19 June at 7.30 p.m., finishing around 9.00 p.m. and all local parents and carers are invited.

The keynote speaker is Shelly Steele, Barnardo's CARE (Children at Risk of Exploitation) Family Support Practitioner. Her role means she is closely aligned with parents whose children have been targeted and groomed by County Lines gangs.

Also Supporting the event is Marsha Humphries from the Serious Crime Directorate, where she deals with issues around modern day slavery and, hopefully, the mother mentioned above will also be there and accessible to the parents attending. It is also hoped that Jane Gardner, the Deputy Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner will be present to open the event.

We would encourage as many people to attend as possible, not only to ensure your children remain safe but to raise awareness, allowing you to recognise the signs and behaviour patterns of your friend's children, as they often are the last people to become aware of the issue.

Yours faithfully

Rob James
Headteacher