



Week of action to raise awareness of CSE

Commuters and young people across the West Midlands will be encouraged to get to know the signs of grooming and child sexual exploitation (CSE) during a week of action.

Next week, officers from Dudley, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Walsall, Sandwell, Solihull and Coventry councils, will be out and about in transport hubs raising awareness of this horrific, hidden crime and the signs people need to be aware of.

The will be at:

Dudley bus station on Wednesday 22 and Halesowen bus station on Thursday 23 both from 10am to 3pm;

Birmingham New Street station on Monday 20 & Tuesday 21, 10am to 4pm, and Thursday 23 from 10am to 1pm;

West Bromwich bus station on Tuesday 21, Wednesday 22 & Thursday 23, from 10am to 3pm;

Solihull train station on Tuesday 21, 10am to 1pm, and Thursday 23, 1pm to 4pm;

Walsall bus station on Tuesday 21, Wednesday 22 & Thursday 23 from 10am to 3pm;

Wolverhampton bus station on Tuesday 21 & Wednesday 22, from 10am to 4pm.

The week of action is the latest from the **see me, hear me** campaign, which will join forces with Warwickshire's **Something's Not Right** and Stoke and Staffordshire's **Know About CSE** campaigns to see local authorities, voluntary sector and police working together to spread the awareness message.

Fully endorsed and supported by British Transport Police, there will also be posters in bus and train stations, Metro tram stops and on buses travelling around the region.

A digital media campaign will also run from February 17 to March 3. Using a mix of animations and banners, it will target young people and parents, getting the message across to them through the digital platforms they use.

Councillor Ian Cooper, Dudley Council's cabinet member for children's services, said:

“We all have our role to play in tackling child sexual exploitation. During this week of action we are raising awareness among those using public transport so they can be our eyes and ears as they move around the borough and beyond.

“There will be information available on the signs to look out for to help people identify concerns, along with advice on how to get help.

“We want everyone to be aware of the signs of CSE. I would also urge all young people, parents and carers to visit our campaign website www.seeme-hearme.org.uk to find out more and see what they can do to help protect our children and young people.”

CSE is child abuse and involves perpetrators grooming their victims in various ways, such as in person, via mobiles or online, to gain their trust before emotionally and sexually abusing them.

It can take place in many forms, whether through a seemingly consensual relationship, or a young person being forced to have sex in return for some kind of payment, such as drugs, money, gifts or even protection and affection.

Signs can include a young person with an older person who doesn't appear to be a relative or carer, a younger person looking anxious, distressed or upset and truancy from school.

Detective Inspector Kay Wallace, West Midlands Regional CSE coordinator, said:

“We all have a responsibility to protect vulnerable children and I would encourage people to be aware of the signs and be on the lookout for young people who might need help.

“If something looks out of place then please share concerns and contact the police or alert a member of transport staff so we can help protect young people from harm and show offenders they cannot hide in our community.”

Councillor Kath Hartley, lead member for Putting Passengers First on the West Midland Combined Authority's transport delivery committee, added:

“We fully support this regional campaign. Tens of thousands of people pass through the region's train and bus stations and tram stops each day, so there's plenty of opportunity to raise awareness among commuters and travellers about this horrific crime.

“I hope passengers, young and old, will take the time to find out more about the signs to look out for and how to report concerns and play their part in helping to keep young people in the region safe.”

Anyone who is concerned about the safety of a young person should call West Midlands Police on 101, speak in confidence to Crimestoppers on 0800 555111 or in an emergency call 999.

Childline also have counsellors available online at www.childline.org.uk

People can find out more information about child sexual exploitation by visiting www.seeme-hearme.org.uk

ENDS

The See Me, Hear Me campaign was launched in June 2014 by Dudley, Wolverhampton, Sandwell, Walsall, Coventry, Birmingham and Solihull councils, along with West Midlands Police, to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation.

For further information contact:

Katherine Finney
Dudley Council
01384 815227