Scottish police chief and education secretary highlight need for drugs education

Tuesday 23 May, 2023

Chief Constable and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills address pioneering drug education event

Key policy makers from across a number of sectors in Scotland took part in a pioneering event to highlight the vital role education plays in protecting young people and preventing drug-related harm.

Held at Police Scotland's headquarters, and delivered by the Daniel Spargo-Mabbs Foundation, the event was addressed by Police Scotland's Chief Constable, Sir Iain Livingstone QPM and Jenny Gilruth, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills.

The Daniel Spargo-Mabbs Foundation is a drug education charity founded in 2014 by Dan's parents following his death aged 16.

During the event a wide range of keynote speeches were delivered and representatives took part in a question and answer session on the vital role of education and prevention in tackling the harm of drugs to individuals, families and communities, with a panel including:

- Fiona Spargo-Mabbs OBE
- Professor Marion Bain, Deputy Chief Medical Officer
- Detective Chief Superintendent Stuart Houston, Police Scotland's Head of Organised Crime and Counter Terrorism and
- Superintendent David Howieson. Police Scotland.

The event also saw a film performance of Mark Wheeeller's powerful play 'I Love You, Mum – I Promise I Won't Die' - it tells Dan's story and is currently touring Scottish schools.

A number of Third Sector organisations, involved in drug education and supporting young people, also attended the event.

Fiona Spargo-Mabbs OBE, Dan's mother, said:

"This is an exciting opportunity to bring together key policy makers, agencies and stakeholders across Scotland to explore the essential role drug education can and must play, if we are to equip this next generation with the knowledge and skills they need to navigate drugs and decisions safely.

"As a mother who's experienced the loss of a son to drugs, and witnessing the drug death rates in Scotland, I am passionately committed to working as hard as I can through our charity, alongside others in Scotland sharing this vision and determination, to prevent any harm to future generations from drugs."

Sir Iain Livingstone QPM added:

"I know the terrible toll of drugs deaths and Police Scotland is committed to playing our part in reducing the harm caused to individuals, families and communities.

"Of course, we have a vital role in preventing drugs from reaching our streets and bringing those engaged in serious and organised crime to justice and that will always be a key duty and priority for Police Scotland.

"At the same time, we have a positive duty to work with others to improve the lives and wellbeing of our communities. I am really grateful to the officers and staff and all the partners and agencies who are contributing to this collaboration and pay tribute to Fiona Spargo-Mabbs and her husband Tim for her vital work in driving progress in this crucial area over almost a decade since the tragic death of their son Dan."

Jenny Gilruth, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills said:

"I fully support the valuable educational events organised by the Daniel Spargo-Mabbs Foundation.

Media:





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“Education is an important strand within the broad range of measures we are taking as part of our National Mission to improve and save lives. We are working with Public Health Scotland to develop new standards, engaging with young people so they can understand what they can expect when seeking help from drugs services.

“We must ensure young people are educated about the harms of substance use - both to themselves and others. Events like this are crucial in supporting the efforts of the Scottish Government and partners on the Serious Organised Crime Taskforce in raising awareness about the significant harm caused by illegal drugs, allowing young people to make informed choices which will help them lead healthy lifestyles.”

Note to Editors

The Daniel Spargo-Mabbs Foundation - www.dsmfoundation.org.uk is a drug education charity, set up in 2014 by Fiona and Tim Spargo-Mabbs following the untimely death of their younger son Dan aged 16, from an unintentional overdose of MDMA.

As his parents, Tim and Fiona were determined to do all they could to prevent any harm happening to anyone else’s child. The charity’s aim is to ensure no young person is faced with a decision about drugs without the knowledge and the skills they need to make informed and safe choices, and that no young person comes to harm through drugs or alcohol. They work with young people, parents, teachers and professionals, in schools, colleges and communities across the UK.

Fiona Spargo-Mabbs is Director and Founder of The Daniel Spargo-Mabbs Foundation. Having started her working life as an English teacher, Fiona brings to this work a wide range and depth of experience from more than two decades’ experience working in education at operational and strategic management levels locally and nationally. As well as working directly with young people, parents and professionals herself, Fiona is also regularly asked to speak on various national platforms and in the media, and is closely involved in policy work with government, police, academics and other agencies. In 2023 she was awarded an OBE for services to young people.

She is also the award-winning author of I Wish I’d Known: Young People, Drugs and Decisions – A Guide for Parents and Carers (Sheldon Press, 2021) and Talking the Tough Stuff with Teens (Sheldon Press in December 2022). Her TEDx talk, ‘Why drugs education is vital’ can be found online.

The Serious Organised Crime (SOC) Taskforce is chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs and includes the Chief Constable, the Lord Advocate and representatives from a range of agencies including the National Crime Agency (NCA), HMRC, Border Force, Scottish Prison Service (SPS), Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), CoSLA, SOLACE, NHS and from the third and private sectors.

The SOC Taskforce oversees implementation of Scotland’s SOC Strategy with the aim of disrupting serious organised crime and reduce the harm it causes.

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