

# **“Challenges facing young people in towns today”**

Summary of talk given by Garda Joe Evans to the parents attending the SGS AGM 17<sup>th</sup> October 2018

This was an excellent talk with clear take-home messages made all the more poignant by the tragic life stories Garda Evans told on the night. At the next Parents Association meeting it was proposed and agreed that it would be very worthwhile to make summary of this talk available to parents who could not attend the night in question. The summary below is drawn from the notes taken from a few parents attending the night. Details pertaining to real life stories of tragic events given on the night are not included.

**1. Garda Síochána** is here to help our young people, not to scare them. If feel unsafe or in difficulty go to your nearest Gardaí station and they will assist you.

**2. Social media:** now facilitating bullying online. There are no laws to protect against this. Bully no longer left at the school gate.

What can you do if your child is being harassed online? Bring it to the attention of a teacher or the guards. The guards can arrange a visit to discuss the issues with both parties, give a caution and make recommendations.

As parents we are encouraged keep an eye out as to whom your children befriend on Facebook. Advise young people to :

- Only befriend those who you know.
- Do not be afraid to block ‘unwanted ‘ friends.
- Do not take videos of bullying, fighting or harassment of others. Be cognisant of the fact that if you record an event you can be charged as if you committed the offense ‘common law applies’.

**3. Assaults** on young people are on the increase. Damage done to individuals as a result of an assault is on the increase.

- ‘One punch assaults’ are on the increase; this can lead to death or a serious brain injury that will have life long impacts. Have no control over how someone falls. **“Use your brain not your fist”**
- Drugs /alcohol induced aggression can leave a person very unpredictable. When a person is in an intoxicated state, there is no use in trying to reason with them. Don’t get involved. Stay away from altercations.
- Train kids to be streetwise
- Plan for a good night out.
- Go to guards if you feel unsafe

**4. Drugs:** access is becoming increasingly easy and cheap. These street drugs are not regulated and are made in backstreet labs. **“One pill can destroy a life forever”.**

Signs of drug/alcohol abuse: confusion, depression, anxiety and sleep problems, paranoia

- **MDMA** - party drug, cheap, synthetic made in back street labs. Signs of use, jaw movement and thirsty

- *Cannabis* 'weed on speed' - Teenage use now directly linked to Schizophrenia and may result psychotic episodes in their 20's.
- *Alcohol*- 97% of public order offences related to alcohol intake. Need to remember "**public order offences are a conviction for life**". Will affect future prospects in jobs and visa applications. Need to remember to have manners on a night out.

**5. Predators and sex offenders.** Living in every town, Sligo no different. Will target young females outside nightclubs, especially if alone.

- Do not walk home alone late at night.
- Do not accept lifts from stranger.
- Be streetwise.
- Look after each other when out and about.
- Parents should drop off and pick their young people from parties and discos.