

## Statement concerning Edgewick Park.

I have been Headteacher of Edgewick Community Primary School for 15 Years. The School adjoins Edgewick Park and over the last 10 years especially, the level of antisocial behaviour in the park on a daily basis, often from as early as 8am, has become more frequent and more extreme. We have a clear view into the park and equally there is a clear view into our premises from the other side of the fence. These two way views are now even clearer, as our new school building looks directly towards the park from every classroom.

Since we moved into the new building 4 weeks ago, we have witnessed the following- large groups of men congregating by the metal "play shelter", where they drink and smoke cannabis (a strong smell pervades our playground on a daily basis)

they throw rubbish-cans, bags, needles, etc- by our school fence

They urinate against the fence

They use bad language, and watch, and occasionally try to engage our pupils through the fence

As the school is new and we do not currently have much of a playground, we have to go to the park area for Fire evacuation practice. On Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> October, we had a practice and found that the area we needed to use as a Fire Assembly Point was covered in broken glass. This was a greater risk for our children than deciding not to do a Fire Evacuation.

The above are recent, but over the last few years there have been many issues:

Having to close the windows in summer because of the smell of cannabis.

Using the fence as a toilet- one morning we had to dispose of soiled underpants.

Disposing of needles, broken glass and rubbish thrown into the bushes by our fence. When the children use the MUGA courts for Sport Lesson and Afterschool Clubs, often it has to be abandoned because of abuse from those hanging about in the park, or they try to climb over.

Many parents report that they do not feel safe coming through the park, or allowing their children to play there. The men that congregate at the front of the park create a threatening and menacing atmosphere.

Jayne McHale  
Headteacher

## **Community Impact Statement – Horizon Team**

This statement is intended to offer an overview of the situation relating to Edgwick Park as outlined following frequent patrols and interactions by Horizon staff (Child Sexual Exploitation team) with members of the Community and particularly young people that frequent Edgwick Park and the surrounding area.

Horizon has been working in the park for some considerable time, there has been an increase in focus on the park following on from reported incidents over summer 2015

### Summary

Listed below are the top three priority issues as identified by the Coventry Horizon team following discussions with the community:

1. Intimidating behaviour displayed by groups of men in park, sometimes drinking alcohol
2. Concerns about young girls interacting with groups of men
3. The reputational damage suffered by the park and reluctance of locals to use it.

It was agreed following regular multi-agency meetings that it would be appropriate to consult with local residents on the suitability of looking to apply for a Public Space Protection Order to allow officers more opportunity to challenge groups behaving inappropriately in the park and to offer additional protection to young people in the park. This consultation occurred in November 2015

Horizon, the child sexual exploitation team, visited the Foleshill area on 3 occasions during the consultation, between the 9<sup>th</sup> November and 20<sup>th</sup> November. The team undertook activities including:

- dropping leaflets to all of the businesses within a 150m perimeter around Edgwick park.
- posting leaflets through the doors of residents surrounding Edgwick park.
- attending Edgwick Primary to hand out leaflets to the parents of children at the School.
- handing out leaflets on the Foleshill Road to individuals visiting the area.
- attendance at local community meetings

During this activity the team were overwhelmed with the support that they received from local residents and businesses. It was very clear to the team that the local community are extremely unhappy with the way that they park is being used and that they are keen to ensure that change occurs so that they can use the park as a family recreation area.

Comments received included:

- ‘ That girls were prostituting themselves within the park’ . The team advised them that this is actually Child Sexual Exploitation.
- ‘ There are always fights and trouble within the park’.
- ‘ A lot of men frequent the park and drink heavily’
- ‘ I would not take my children to the park it is unsafe’
- ‘ I always used to come to this park as a child but the playground is always empty now’
- ‘This situation has been going on for so long. Why haven’t the Council taken action before now?’
- ‘ There are a lot of drugs within that park’
- ‘ That there are a lot of needles within the park’
- ‘ The park is dodgy and young people are approached by Romanian men’ . This comment was made by young people.
- ‘ The community used to walk through the park to visit Foleshill Road but people don’t do that anymore they walk round’
- ‘ Our businesses are suffering due to what is happening in the park as people no longer want to visit the area’ .

The team received these comments from a wide range of individuals within the area but they were particularly surprised at how many of these comments came from young males , age 18-30, a group that would not normally engage so readily with Council Officers on the street. The team also reflected that there was a strong sense of community within the area and many individuals commented on how they would like to use the park with their families if the problems within the park were removed.

# Edgwick Park

As a result of an application for a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) in Edgwick Park, Foleshill in Coventry, West Midlands Police have been asked to produce an 'Impact Statement' which describes the geographical location that is Edgwick Park, the 'Intelligence' linked to Edgwick Park and detail relating to victimology, as well as the incidence of activity linked to Child Sexual Exploitation. This statement deals in the main with the geography and the activity of the local policing teams in this area.

## The Geography

Edgwick Park is a public park in the Foleshill area of Coventry. It is largely a grassland area but also contains floodlit sports pitches, a younger child's play area and older children climbing equipment. The main entrance to the park would be considered by many to be off the Foleshill Road (Entry 1 on the below map). Edgwick Play Centre (Point A on the below map) which has room for several cars to be parked at the front is situated to the right of the main entrance of the park (if you were standing on the Foleshill Rd looking at the park). The Play Centre backs onto the park and the child's play area. The park is also next to Edgwick Community primary school, (Point B on the below map and to the left of the main entrance if you were looking at the park from the Foleshill Road). \*Please note, the school highlighted on the map is no longer standing as Google maps for this area is outdated. This has since been knocked down and replaced by a new modern school bearing the same name on the same land.

Apart from the main entrance on the Foleshill Road (of which there are three footpaths into the park from this location) it also has a large alleyway/entrance from Eld Road (Entry 2 on the map). There are no other conventional walking entrances into the park however access can be gained on foot if a person was willing to jump over fences that back onto surrounding dwellings on Eld Road, Cross Rd and Culworth Court (see map below for a clearer understanding). The only vehicular entrance is for vehicles entering the car park for Edgwick Play Centre.



... there are three Entrances (Off the Foleshill Road) and an additional entry point located in Eld Road;

**1. Middle Entry Point on Foleshill Road, next to Toilet block**



**2. Front Left on Foleshill Road**





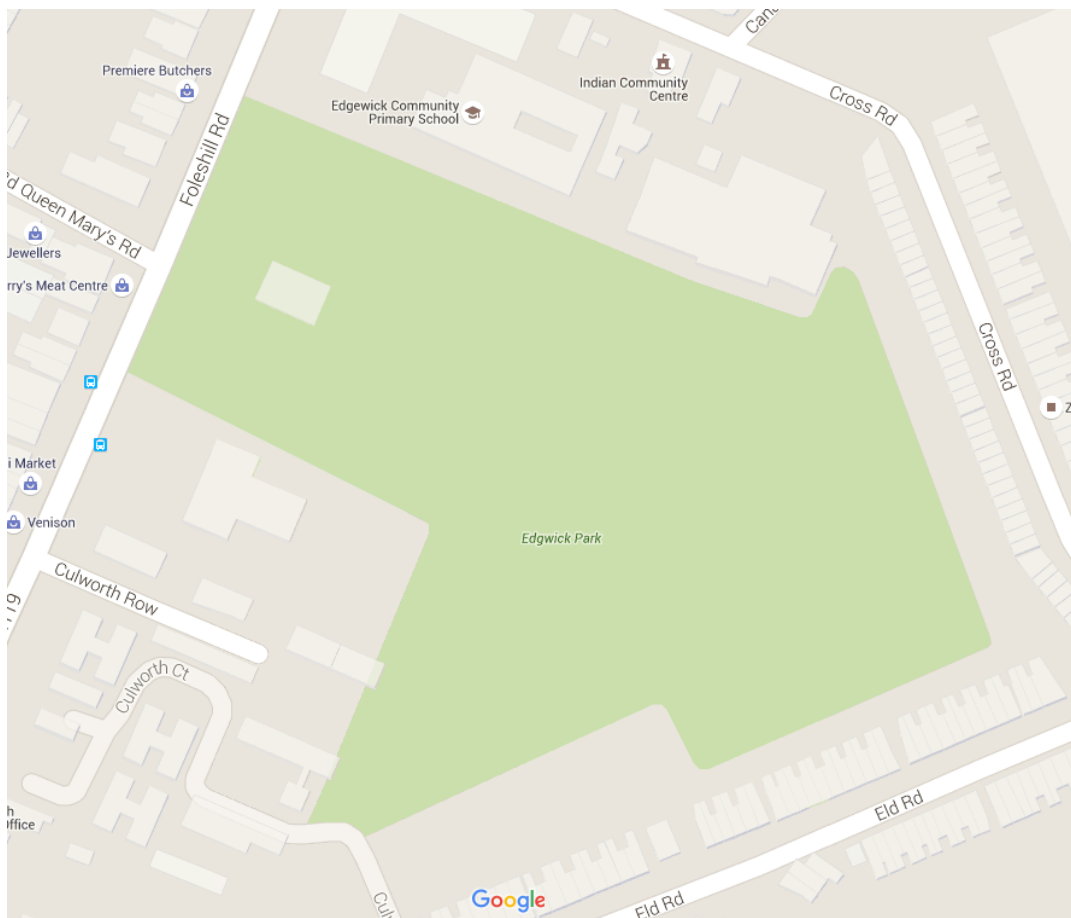
### 3. Front Right on Foleshill Road



### 4. Entrance from Eld Road



## Street Map View Edgwick Park.



### Community Use

The park is used by a multitude of people including families, couples, children and young adults, dog walkers, runners and larger groups etc.... The football pitches prove popular with young lads that play football and cricket within these caged areas. One of the pitches is floodlit until late into the evening. Families tend to use the children's play areas and the grassed areas in the summer where they will come and sit for hours whilst their children play. The park is a regular meeting site for larger groups of males from different nationalities. Recently officers have noted this is popular with Eastern Europeans including Polish, Romanian and Roma nationals. The park also appears popular with local alcoholics who do cause issues for other park goers on occasion.

During the evening the park can attract several groups of young adults (both male and female). Their behaviour can range from being civilised and respectful to unruly and anti-social. The main issues we face in the park are highlighted in more detail below;

#### 1. Public Place Drinking

Adult drunks and youths drinking have been and continue to be a priority issue for the local neighbourhood team in and around the park. A Designated Public Place Order covers the

park which assists officers in tackling person drinking. The DPPO allows officers to confiscate any alcohol being consumed in the park when told by an officer to surrender it as no drinking of alcohol is allowed in the park.

Drinkers are more likely to litter, cause ASB and urinate in the park, to the annoyance of other park users. This behaviour also has a detrimental impact upon the reputation of the park, and a recent survey of local people identified that the park is very much under-utilised by local residents, given the perceptions which have manifested over time.

Underage drinking has been identified as a key concern during the spring/summer months. There has been evidence of officers confiscating alcohol from young persons who are demonstrating the effects of intoxication and behaving in an anti-social manner.

## 2. Controlled Substances

Drug dealing and persons smoking or injecting drugs within the confines of the park have been reported to officers. Drug paraphernalia has been and continues to be found in the park, in the toilets and next to the canopy area.

## 3. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Edgwick Park has been identified as a location within the city wherein activity linked to CSE is taking place. Intelligence indicates that young people (in the main young females) are coming to the park to access alcohol and controlled substances, provided to them by older males. The men are then engaging in/ attempting to engage in sexual activity with these young people whilst in the park or taking them to other locations within Coventry. In June 2015, two young girls reported being raped at an address in North Coventry, after having met males in this park. This incident became the trigger of a significant amount of multi-agency work, aimed at the early identification and diversion of vulnerable young people using the park, as well as to create a hostile environment within which offenders / potential offenders can operate.

## 4. Litter

Litter is an issue in the park and impacts on how the Community view open spaces in Coventry. Some of the litter is attributable to groups of drinkers, some to those who misuse controlled substances and a significant proportion is attributable to those who use the park for recreational purposes, but who demonstrate an irresponsible attitude towards their local environment by discarding rubbish other than in the refuse bins provided.



## 5. Anti-social Behaviour

Shouting, swearing, fighting, throwing things around, smashing bottles etc... are the more common issues reported to police. Officers note large groups of males (both adults and young lads) stood around, frequently near the front of the park (adjacent to Foleshill Rd) sitting on the wall. Many of these groups use the park as a meeting point and are not engaging in any criminal or anti-social activity. However there are also other groups who appear unaware or dis-interested in the fact that they are behaving in an anti-social manner, much to the annoyance of others in the park or those passing by on the main Foleshill Road. The mere presence of such groups appears to create an intimidating environment in the wider community, and reducing the usage of the park by those who might wish to.

### Key Locations of Concern

#### Canopy

Up until last month a permanent metal canopy was in situ in the park next to the sports pitches. This canopy allowed persons to gather and stay dry during wet and cold weather. It also appeared to be a location used for the supply and use of controlled drugs (reported), and drinkers would use it to sit under whilst drinking. The canopy was removed in November 2015. Officers have already noted a decrease in litter in this area.

#### Toilet Block



The Toilet block is still currently open to the public and appears to facilitate the supply and use of controlled substances. Used needles, litter and disorder has been noted in and around the block. It is my belief that that this toilet block should be closed and demolished. There is very little evidence of it being used legitimately, and any social need for the provision of such facilities in Edgwick Park appears to be outweighed by the risks the structure poses to young people. The removal of the block

is also likely to have a positive impact upon the reputation and appearance of this open space, which in turn should lead to increased legitimate use by the local community.

### Lighting

Lighting in the park is poor and needs improving. Poor lighting allows groups within the already dark corners of the park to avoid detection. As previously stated the sports pitches do have floodlighting but once this lighting is switched off, the park becomes a very dark and intimidating environment for a member of the public to walk through. The poor lighting also reduces the natural surveillance levels from the roadside, and has a detrimental impact upon the effectiveness of CCTV cameras (see below).

### CCTV

There appears to be no local authority CCTV in the park.

West Midlands Police have a NOMAD camera which is placed on a lamppost on Foleshill Road looking into the park. It shows the front of the park through different camera views and its maximum effective range is the sports pitches located within the park.

Once daylight is lost, the existing lighting is too poor in the park for the cameras to be able to see anything going on. This can be evidenced in the below series of images which demonstrate the near total loss of visibility which occurs during the hours of darkness;





Images during daylight and darkness hours from our NOMAD Camera on the Foleshill Road

### The Police Response

Edgwick Park remains a **'priority patrol area'** within the Foleshill Ward. It is patrolled daily by all teams who provide Neighbourhood Policing to the North East Constituency of Coventry. Support is also provided by other Local Policing Unit Departments from across the city, given the concerns regarding the need to identify and protect vulnerable young people from the harmful behaviour of others. A clearly documented plan which is continuously reviewed and updated at a senior management level exists and this drives all policing activity. The plan employs a variety of activity which seeks to identify young vulnerable people at the earliest opportunity, to disrupt and prevent criminal and anti-social behaviour within the park, and to work in partnership with other agencies and the local community to create a safe a pleasant environment within which all people can make use of the facilities available. Tactics used include;

#### *Uniformed & Plain Clothes Patrols*

Static patrols are in place and are completed several times during every tour of 'Early' or 'Late' shift. This can see up to 5 pairs of officers/PCSO's patrolling the park at different times during each shift. These patrols ensure that the park is subjected to a police presence at different times of the day and do take place up to 1am. Since June 2015, this tactic has seen the investment of hundreds of hours of policing resources, and has resulted in a demonstrable reduction in the presence of vulnerable young people at risk of harmful behaviour. Co-ordinated partnership activity has seen an increase in the level of engagement with young people who may be at risk, allowing us to better understand what might be making them vulnerable and how we might reduce that vulnerability.

At a very local level, I have dedicated much of the working day of two of my PCSO's to identifying and supporting vulnerable young females who may be using the park. They have been able to develop relationships and rapport with a number of the local girls and boys who they now know by face and name. Most if not all of them are happy to talk and engage with the PCSO's, thereby allowing us to regularly cultivate intelligence and updates regarding who may be vulnerable and who may be offending. I also on occasion ask my staff

to patrol in plain clothes in a bid to get closer to some groups in the park. I accept that often the very identifiable 'POLICE' uniform can act as a barrier to effective engagement, particularly within groups who do not feel comfortable being identified as freely engaging with statutory organisations.

### *Prevention versus Detection*

All staff are given very clear direction regarding what our priorities linked to CSE are. Identification and early intervention remain at the forefront of policing activity, and the work which we have undertaken over the last 7 months has allowed us to have a far more informed understanding of who our vulnerable young people are, where they live, with whom they live, where they frequent, with whom they frequent and what makes them vulnerable. I am very keen for all my staff to engage with these young people at the earliest opportunity in a bid to obtain as much information as they are willing to give. My officers have highlighted a number of concerns about young females in and around the park in the past and in particular what their reasons for being in the park are? These young people were getting access to alcohol, cigarettes and controlled substances, increasing the concerns regarding their continued safety, particularly as we were unclear as to who they were associating with. By engaging with these young people, building relationships and increasing trust and confidence in our motivation for being in the park, I do believe we have reduced the levels of vulnerability associated with a number of these young people. We have also been able to refer young people into more specialist services, as well as to raise their profile within other statutory service providers, thereby increasing intervention levels.

Equally we have been able to negate CSE concerns around certain individuals when it has been suggested that they are a concern by association or given the area within which they frequent. This has only been possible due to the relationships my staff have been able to build and maintain. I feel it is extremely important that we do not 'label' young people as being linked to CSE if there is no evidence they are not. Young people respond adversely to being labelled, particularly when they do not agree with what is being suggested. This can weaken relationships, which remain the most effective way in which we are able to identify and safeguard. This is the message I am reinforcing to all policing teams and one which I am encouraging partner agencies to embrace.

Engagement with the young persons is also extended to visits to their home address and liaison with parents or guardians. We have a positive relationship with many of the parents of our young persons who frequent the park. On 20<sup>th</sup> December 2015 I chaired a meeting at Foleshill Police Station wherein West Midlands Police had invited the parents / guardians of some of those young vulnerable females we had identified over the previous months. Twelve invitations were sent out, of which four parents were able to attend. The meeting provided me with the opportunity to highlight my continuing concerns regarding their children's behaviour. As a consequence of that discussion, I obtained unanimous support for

facilitating the safe return of their children to the home addresses on those occasions where they were found to be in Edgwick Park or in the proximity thereof, in circumstances which gave cause for concern as to their continued safety and wellbeing. All parents were very keen for officers to return their children to their home or to ring parents should the young person refuse. I asked the mother's/guardians to ensure that in future they know where their daughters are and they satisfy themselves as to the accuracy of the locations they were being told their children would be at. This reflected the fact that we had identified a number of occasions whereupon parents have been told children were at an address with friends, only for us to locate them out on the streets at inappropriate times. My belief is that the meeting was a success and we hope to hold another one just before Easter 2016 with the aim of casting the net wider and including many more parents.

The Foleshill Neighbourhood Team has also begun to use 'Harbouring Notices' in order to deter and prevent the concealment of young people by adults. To this end, my team has received training and has now begun to identify individuals who may be supporting young people going missing or allowing them to conceal their location in circumstances which may give rise to the increased risk of exploitation. A very recent success has seen the identification of one female who was allowing young people to come and go freely from her address. Serving a 'Harbouring Notice' on her appears to have stopped activity at this address altogether and we are currently looking at other harbouring notices at other addresses identified across Foleshill.

#### *Partnership Working*

Partner Agencies including as Children's Services, the recently formed 'Horizon Team', Coventry Council's Greenspaces and Community Safety Team's are some of the many partners now collaborating in an effort to eliminate the exploitation of vulnerable young people. Information sharing has increased significantly and regular meetings have ensured that we are not duplicating work, but rather we are working towards a common goal. I remain committed to ensuring that partnership working, maximising the effectiveness of existing resources and pooling information with the ultimate aim of safeguarding young people at the centre of all activity.

#### *Public Place Drinking*

We have a zero tolerance on alcohol consumption in the park. If we observe drinking alcohol in the park the person identified is politely reminded of the DPPO and asked to discard it. The alcohol is confiscated if they refuse and we do issue tickets. Most - if not all - hand over/discard their alcohol immediately without incident. Early action is key to reducing the chances of alcohol finding its way into the hands of young people, increasing their vulnerability and exposure to the harmful behaviour of others.

## **Summary**

Edgwick Park and the various issues we have at this location remain one of many policing priorities within the North East of Coventry. As a Neighbourhood Manager, I remain committed to using all of the resources and capabilities of staff around me in reducing the vulnerability the park creates for young people. A Public Space Protection Order will provide another tool to help remove people suspected or believed to be engaging in harmful behaviour towards young people from the park and its surrounding area. This will allow for the creation of a safer environment more conducive towards wider community use. The only individuals who would not benefit from the introduction of a PSPO would be those people motivated towards exploiting the vulnerabilities of young people. The use of the powers would be discretionary, and will be combined with the application of a balanced, common sense approach. This will ensure that groups will not be disproportionately targeted or disadvantaged, with the additional safeguard of appeals being dealt with by Coventry Council and not West Midlands Police.

Sgt Asa Morris

Foleshill Neighbourhood Team Supervisor

West Midlands Police