



Institute for
**Public Safety
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PRESS RELEASE

26th October 2016

POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER AND INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC SAFETY, CRIME AND JUSTICE TO HOST ACCLAIMED WALL OF SILENCE EXHIBITION

Thought-provoking art project featuring images, stories and poems by survivors of child sexual abuse will be seen by hundreds of teenagers in a bid to raise awareness and reporting

The Office of Police and Crime Commissioner and Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice (IPSCJ) will bring Wall of Silence art exhibition to the University of Northampton next week, in order to encourage discussions around the subject of child abuse and child sexual exploitation.

The highly acclaimed exhibition aimed at children aged 14 and over – which seeks to end the stigma of suffering sexual abuse and encourage survivors to speak out - will be launched at the University's Avenue Campus, Newton building on Wednesday, November 2nd, where it will be open to the public and school groups across the month.

Appearing as part of the ongoing campaign by the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner and Northamptonshire Police to end Child abuse, Wall of Silence will be viewed by teenagers from across the county, who will complete schools-based workshops around the subject supported by teachers and staff at the university. This work will build on the Teen Relationships research completed by IPSCJ earlier this year, which found that one in 20 school children have been physically forced in to doing something they didn't want to do.

Since the creation of the RISE (Reducing Incidents of Sexual Exploitation) team at Northamptonshire Police, the county has seen an average of 50 referrals per month to investigate possible cases of abuse. It is hoped that the exhibition will encourage people to talk more openly about the topic and will lead to increased awareness of how and where to report incidents.

Police and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire, Stephen Mold, said:

“Protecting our most vulnerable people must be at the heart of everything we do, and I hope the creativeness of the Wall of Silence generates greater open discussion about these issues amongst young people across Northamptonshire.

“It is essential that victims are encouraged to seek help and support is given to anyone affected by these terrible crimes.

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“We are also determined to prevent these issues from happening in the first place, and we will do everything we can to catch the perpetrators.”

Head of Safeguarding for Northamptonshire Police, Steve Lingley added:

“This is an extremely important exhibition and one that I hope will keep child abuse high on everyone’s agenda – it is the responsibility of all of us to look out for signs that someone is vulnerable and potentially suffering from abuse, and initiatives such as this will remind people to stay vigilant to those signs.

“Our aim is to increase the number of people reporting but also to encourage reporting to be made as early as possible, in order to lessen the long term emotional impact on young people and also to prevent the perpetrator from going on to abuse others.”

Director of the University of Northampton’s Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice, Laura Knight, commented:

“Having seen from our Teens Relationships research earlier this year that a child in every classroom has been physically forced to do something they didn’t want to do, it is easy to see why it is so important that initiatives such as Wall of Silence exist – to prompt people in need of help to speak out.

“The University is delighted to be able to help deliver this pioneering work and we hope that it helps young people to end their silence.”

Wall of Silence first opened in January this year and is owned by the Southmead Project, a charity that gives support to sexual abuse survivors.

The art work will be available for public viewing between 8:30am and 4:30pm throughout November, while visiting outside these hours can be arranged by contacting Jonathon Delaney at the University of Northampton on Jonathon.delaney@northampton.ac.uk.

Any schools who wish to book to view the exhibit can email Julie Bedster on Julie.bedster@northampton.ac.uk.

Anyone who has been affected by sexual abuse can contact Northamptonshire Police on or 999, or the Northamptonshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on 0300 126 1000.

- Ends -

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Notes to editors

- For any further information, or for interview requests, please contact Steve Walsh at steve.walsh@wejumhigher.co.uk, or by calling 07944 558 654
- Additional information about the Wall of Silence exhibition can be accessed by visiting www.wallofsilence.co.uk or <http://southmeadproject.org.uk/wall-of-silence>

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