



Together we can prevent **child sexual abuse**

Community Disclosure - Keeping Children Safe

The Keeping Children Safe project commenced on 14 September 2009 in Tayside and after 9 months, the pilot scheme was reviewed by IPSOS MORI where it received favourable assessment. This led to a staged roll out of the scheme across the other 7 Scottish forces.

End of project reports were completed and the project board closed on 24th August 2011 at which point oversight of the scheme was passed to the acpos offender management working group which has multi agency membership. It was agreed at that board meeting that national coordination of the scheme could be achieved through the creation of a part time post, and this responsibility was passed to Stop It Now Scotland.

There were 12 recommendations made in the evaluation report which were all individually addressed in the end of project report in August of last year. These have been summarised into 4 areas

- Call handler guidance
- Information to RSOs
- Disclosure officer guidance
- Marketing of scheme

It was recommended that call handlers receiving out of hours enquiries about KCS should record details and have the disclosure officer call the enquirer back as opposed to putting the onus on the enquirer to call back the next day. In response to this, all force standard operating procedures were reviewed to ensure that there was clear direction on this and call

handling staff in all forces were briefed on the scheme and how to react to enquiries.

Another area from the evaluation concerned the wording of the letter to RSOs and the fact that some found out about the scheme through the media. The number of RSOs to be visited within the timescales was challenging and it was likely that some would be aware before the visit. The letter given to each offender as part of a face to face visit is now considered to be quite clear and in any case is explained by the officers.

The evaluation recommended that Disclosure officers should have more guidance about sensitivity to the subject area, explaining the Social Work role and what to tell the applicant or 'close concerned others' when the outcome of an enquiry is 'no disclosure'. There were also concerns about the welfare needs of the applicants and families being met appropriately.

In response to this, disclosure officers were briefed appropriately to ensure that the applicants or 'close concerned others' were provided with an empowerment pack. This provides contact details of police and key partners who are able to provide advice, guidance and support around the disclosure.

The evaluation pointed out that the terminology used in the naming and the marketing of the scheme needs to encourage the public to get in contact to provide information, as well as to obtain it and that confidentiality should be highlighted. In response to this it was highlighted that there was national and local marketing of the scheme which included radio and television adverts. All media included the confidentiality assurance. We have also produced and distributed 74,500 leaflets and 18,000 posters

Our aims for the next two years are to maintain and extend the public profile of the Scheme and to promote the use of the Scheme as a key contributor to the protection of children in Scotland

Close contact is also kept with the Home Office Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme in England and Wales, which has allowed us to identify cross border issues and achieve agreement on UK policy.

The statistics for 2011 are available but it is important to point out that not all force areas were operating the scheme at the beginning of the year.

The total number of applications to the scheme in 2011 was 272 which averages around 22 per month. This average will rise when statistics for all forces over a full year are included. The total number of applications which concerned individuals who were registered sex offenders was 59.

The total number of applications which concerned individuals who were not registered sex offenders but had convictions for sexual offences was 58.

The number of child concern reports raised was 42 and 112 criminal intelligence reports were submitted.

A total of 25 disclosures were made.

The evaluation report commented that the applicants were generally very satisfied with the way their enquiries were handled and, in particular, were very positive about their contact with the Disclosure Officer and the speed with which enquiries were dealt with. However, the evaluation highlights the need for more aftercare for applicants and for signposting to sources of advice and support.

In the past there have been a number of campaigns which were aimed at preventing child sexual abuse however they were aimed at children.

Whilst this is very important, until recently there has been very little for adults and the truth is that **it is the responsibility of adults to ensure the safety of children.**

The Keeping Children Safe scheme is an important tool which empowers parents and carers to contact the police if they think that someone who has access to their child may be a sex offender.

But it is only one tool, and parents and carers should be provided with more information and advice about child sex abuse to allow them to make decisions about keeping their children safe. The Upstream project is intended to supplement and complement KCS.

What should adults do if they are concerned about child sexual abuse? The KCS scheme is an option but not the only one. What are the signs of abuse, what sort of behaviours should they look out for in children and in adults. If they have that 'gut feeling' who should they speak to about it?

We know that the vast majority of child sexual abuse is not committed by strangers, it is much more likely to be someone who the child knows. We know that the vast majority of children don't report the abuse which suggests that most abuse is committed by individuals who are not known to the police.

We have been funded by the Scottish Government to develop and deliver a strategy and practical approach to the *prevention* of child sexual abuse in Scotland.

To do so we have developed a Prevention Toolkit (Upstream) which includes a range of practical information and resources which adults can use to identify potential risk as early as possible and take steps to prevent sexual abuse from occurring.

We have piloted a programme to train 'community facing' agencies in the use of the toolkit in their interface with groups or individual adults in the community. Essentially, what we want to do is to *embed* the toolkit in the work of agencies working (in whatever field) at neighbourhood level.

We piloted the programme with Community Police Officers in every force in Scotland who will use the toolkit in public presentations, in less formal group discussions and when speaking to individuals in the course of their community work.

We have recently been granted further funding by the Scottish Government to extend the programme and are in the process of identifying relevant 'community facing' organisations such as community education staff, youth workers, faith groups, health visitors, nursery staff etc. who might benefit from training in the toolkit.

The Upstream Toolkit brings together a range of resources under one cover including 'Parents Protect' which is an information and advice resource for adults developed and provided by Stop it Now! UK which has been adapted for Scotland.

A total of 228 police officers were trained on the Toolkit by the end of December 2011, and delivery will continue throughout 2012 to absorb any other local officers who may be likely to engage with communities in respect of this issue as part of their core duties.

In addition there have been clear indications from some forces that they wish to embed the toolkit training within community police training at force level.

In partnership with Tayside Police, Stop it Now! Scotland is conducting a baseline survey of the public within the Tayside area. We commenced the survey in November 2011

The baseline research project in Tayside will provide important evidential information about public attitudes and responses which can and will be used to enhance community engagement activity across Scotland by community-based agencies, in particular the Police Service.

The inclusion of KCS within the Upstream Project will ensure that the Keeping Children Safe Scheme will be reinforced to as many agencies as possible and subsequently to the members of the public who they engage with.

If the staff involved with KCS have received the upstream training, this will help to ensure that the applicants to the scheme will receive a higher level of service, feel more reassured that appropriate action is being taken and will empower them to take action themselves to ensure the safety of their children.

Every area in Scotland has now rolled out the scheme but we further work is required to fully embed it to ensure that all relevant professionals and members of the public know what it's about.

The gathering of information, both statistical and qualitative is very important and we are working hard to improve this. Working with the coordinators in each area to improve the quality of information coming in could also provide us with a real opportunity for further research into the effectiveness of the scheme as a child protection tool.

As far as registered sex offenders are concerned, we have received information in every area which has allowed us to take action to more effectively manage risk and to protect children.

There is no evidence to suggest that the scheme has had a negative impact on the behaviour of RSO's in any part of Scotland.

There has been no discernable effect on the movement of RSO's transferring in or out of any area and no indication from Offender Managers that compliance has been affected.

There have been no reports of vigilante attacks or other negative outcomes as a result of disclosures made under the scheme.

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