



## Practice Note 5

### Doo the Right Thing

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**Topic Areas:** Public Space Safety, Safety of Vulnerable Groups, Community Engagement.

### Project Background and Aims

'Doo the Right Thing' was set up to provide a diversionary and educational activity for young people in the Maybole area who were on the periphery of antisocial behaviour, or at risk of being involved in antisocial behaviour, as a result of underage or binge drinking. The project focuses on getting young people in the area involved in the care and development of a team of racing pigeons gifted to them by members of Maybole Pigeon Club. The project is based on similar US-based interventions.

The project has four specific objectives:

- To reduce underage and binge drinking in the Maybole area.
- To reduce complaints to the South Ayrshire ASB team and the police of youth disorder relating to underage or binge drinking in target areas.
- To increase the confidence of young people involved to maintain the pigeon loft and achieve success in raising and racing their birds through developing a common interest with older members of the community.
- To increase the skills and knowledge of young people involved in the wide range of issues covered by the programme.

It was anticipated this initiative, which is not related specifically to sport and could be enjoyed by a mixed group of girls and boys, would help give young people confidence and enable them to develop meaningful links with older members of the community and share a common goal. It would also allow the Community Safety Team to engage with targeted young people in a different format.

### Resources

Funding: ADAT, Cashback for Communities Fund.  
Partners: South Ayrshire Community Safety Partnership, Maybole Pigeon Club.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

The project was evaluated in November 2009 by the project team. This is available from South Ayrshire Community Safety Partnership upon request.

### Activities

The pilot project commenced in March 2009, with four male participants aged between 12 and 15 years of age. The boys had been referred through various sources – schools, youth clubs and social work.

Helped by Pigeon Club members, the boys involved in the project became responsible for feeding, cleaning, assisting in training and eventually racing 32 young pigeons. All the young people are especially encouraged to take ownership of the care and maintenance of the pigeon loft.

Regular sessions with the young people were arranged on Friday evenings which had been identified as a key 'drinking time'. Those who did not take part in the Friday night sessions were then excluded from competing in subsequent races.

To ensure long term interest, the young people are given free membership of the Club and are supported to participate in racing with the Ayrshire North Road Federation for the duration of the young bird season. The young people were presented with a Diploma at the end of the year and three participants have completed badges towards the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, in outdoor activities, volunteering and expedition.

A class-based spin-off project was run with 23 pupils at Cairn Primary in Maybole in 2009. A presentation on the life cycle of racing pigeons was given and a couple of pigeons taken along to show the children and any questions answered. Each child was then allocated a pigeon and they received regular updates on its performance throughout the racing season. The pigeons competed in seven races and prizes were awarded to the owners of the first three pigeons each week. Two of the older boys from the pilot programme also visited the school on a few occasions to talk about their experiences and share their knowledge with the class.

At the end of the project, certificates were presented to all of the pupils who took part in the project. A prize was also given to the owner of the winning pigeon in each of the races.

The class-based project is currently running for a second year, with two classes at Cairn and Dalmilling primary schools. This time 62 young people aged between 9 and 10 years old are involved. The project runs until September 2010.

### Impact

The level of support provided by the project made a significant difference to each of the young people involved, particularly in their confidence and social skills. An Additional Support Needs Development Worker commented on the turnaround in the behaviour of one boy, stating, *"I'm sure the pigeon project had a major positive impact on his self esteem and confidence"*.

The four young people attended the pigeon loft on a daily basis and two of them took membership in the club in partnership with an older member in 2009/10. The project provided a good level of evidence for the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, by enabling the young people to learn through being actively involved in all aspects of pigeon-keeping.

The project also provided an intergenerational bridge for members of the community. Older members of the Pigeon Club said that they previously stereotyped young people and uniformly agreed that they enjoyed working with the young people. As a result of the project, the Pigeon Club applied to Awards for All for fund the development of a new clubhouse that will include activities for young people.

The project may have been a contributing factor in the reduction of antisocial behaviour in the Mayble area. Between 2008 and 2009 there was a 5% reduction in youth related incidents reported to the police for the May-September periods. In addition, there was a 58% reduction in youth related incidents reported to the Antisocial Behaviour Team from 2008 to 2009.

In September 2010 the project received one the inaugural Safer Communities Awards within the Prevention and Intervention category. The awards are allocated by Scottish Government, recognising and rewarding excellent and innovative practice across the community safety sector in Scotland.

### Lessons Learnt and Sustainability

It was initially intended to launch the pilot programme with ten young people. However, due to the intensive support each young person required, it went ahead with four boys.

The project benefitted from the enthusiasm of Pigeon Club members and the boys involved. Media interest in the project helped keep the young people motivated, and

a reward at the end of the scheme helped to keep the young people focussed. Thus, the project provided a very effective way of engaging with young people who were not involved in other positive activities. Doo the Right Thing provided a successful framework for engaging with boys aged between 12 and 15 years old and it is intended to target other groups of young people, including girls, in any future incarnation of the project.

In future the project will utilise a more structured rota system to ensure an equitable allocation of tasks for the young people involved with the Pigeon Club. Also, parents will be involved in the project where appropriate.

Doo the Right Thing may run again, but this is dependent on the availability of funding.

## Summary

'Doo the Right Thing' is a small, successful, pigeon-focused intervention based in the Maybole area of South Ayrshire. The project aims to encourage young people to develop their confidence, self esteem and sense of responsibility by working with older members of the local pigeon club to feed, clean and race pigeons. Thus, the project also aims to challenge perceptions of young people held by older people in the community. The project is also delivered through class-based activities in local primary schools. Over the course of the project there has been a reduction in youth-related antisocial behaviour in the Maybole area. The project received a Safer Communities Award in 2010 in the Prevention and Intervention category.

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