



Older People's Stay Safe Project Highland

Executive Summary

The Older People's Stay Safe project was created in 2010 in response to survey responses from the over fifty age group which indicated some concerns around personal safety and well-being within their homes and communities. There was also a demand for information about support services available to this age group.

The project recruited and trained five peer speaking volunteers to deliver safety messages to older people in the Inverness area on doorstep safety and home security, scams and falls prevention. Information was also shared about available support services, for example, free fire safety checks. 'Goodie bags' containing relevant literature reflecting each theme were distributed at each talk.

Recipients of the talks have an increased knowledge of the topics covered, a number have taken up support services, for example the free fire safety checks, and 'no cold caller' door stickers from the delegate packs are being used within communities. A number of the groups have asked for a return visit from the speakers. Anecdotal information indicates delegates are sharing what they learnt with their friends and family, and some have reported greater confidence in dealing with doorstep callers.

Talks have been particularly well-received by groups because they are delivered by peers, face to face; and this approach has also reduced demand on statutory services such as trading standards, NHS and the Police to deliver the information.

A DVD is under development to share these safety messages further across The Highlands.

This project was the runner-up in the 'Prevention and Problem Solving' category for the Safer Communities Awards 2013.

Background and Aims

A survey undertaken with 350 people from the over fifty age group in The Highlands indicated that they were lacking information and education on personal safety within their homes and communities, and also on signposting to services available for older people. This led to the creation of a peer speaking programme, initially within the Inverness area, which delivered talks in various settings to this age group on doorstep safety, scams and falls prevention.

A multi-agency steering group was set up to implement the programme, and develop the scripts for the volunteers. A volunteer coordinator was enlisted to recruit, train and deploy volunteers, and target groups were identified and approached.

The initiative aimed to educate older people and increase their knowledge around personal safety, particularly in relation to door to door traders and bogus callers, scams and preventing falls. Information about fire safety and fire safety home visits and other services such as repeat prescriptions and the 'Handyperson Scheme' was also shared to contribute

to people feeling safer in their homes and communities. These messages were spread further as attendees shared their learning with family, friends and neighbours.

Activities

A multi-agency partnership was established as a steering group for the project – this consisted of representatives from the Police, Age Scotland, Highland Senior Citizen's Network and community care forums, the local authority, NHS Highland and the Fire and Rescue Service. This group developed the scripts for the volunteers, and oversaw the implementation and development of the project.

A volunteer coordinator was enlisted to recruit the peer speakers (five in total) and train them to deliver presentations. The peer speakers were recruited through word of mouth, flyers sent by the partners involved and public displays. They were trained by professionals from, for example, trading standards, police and NHS, in the use of the scripts.

Target groups were also identified at this stage and included for example, friendship groups, lunch clubs, retired professional groups, disability groups and church guilds.

Police cadets are involved in assembling the 'goody bags' that are given to each attendee.

There are three sessions each dealing with aspects of older people's personal safety that can be delivered to groups – Stay Safe on the Doorstep, Stay Safe from Scams and Stay Safe: Stay Steady (falls prevention).

Since the beginning of the project, five volunteers and a coordinator were trained in delivering the presentations. Over 1000 people have received the presentations within the last year – 37 Stay Safe on the Doorstep, seventeen Stay Safe from Scams and eight Stay Safe: Stay Steady talks - and goody bags. The volunteer coordinator also attended some of the talks to ensure the peer speakers remained 'on message'.

Fifty individuals have received home safety checks that were offered from the Fire and Rescue Service. An increase in other crime prevention methods has been seen anecdotally helpful including the use of purse bells and 'no cold calling' letterbox stickers.

A DVD is under development to ensure these messages can be shared across The Highlands with individuals who cannot, or choose not to access groups. The scripts are reviewed and updated as necessary.

Impact

95% of attendees report an increase in knowledge on the theme they received an input on. One in twenty attendees received a home safety visit from the Fire and Rescue Service. A number of groups have been re-visited to deliver another presentation.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that some attendees feel more confident in dealing with doorstep callers as a result of the project, and that people are changing their behaviour to increase their safety – for example locking the doors to their house when they would not have done so previously. Anecdotal information also indicates that messages are being shared within the wider community with attendees telling family, friends and neighbours about the key messages.

The project has led to a reduction in demand on community police officers, NHS staff and trading standards officers as peer speakers are now able to deliver these inputs and can deliver them in greater volume.

Peer speakers were also encouraged to note their own learning points for future inputs, particularly around how best to manage group discussions and prevent groups or individuals digressing from the main topic.

Preventative Spend

Should the project begin to collect evidence that the educational inputs are preventing older people becoming victims of scams or preventing falls in the home, cost-benefit analysis could be undertaken to demonstrate the preventative spend aspect of the project.

For example, a home accident which resulted in a fatality costs the public sector £1.6M, a home accident serious injury £45,600, a hospital treated home accident slight injury £8,300 and a GP treated home accident slight injury £200. These figures could be used to demonstrate that a £16,500 per annum investment in the Older people's stay safe project has provided a high cost-benefit ratio if it prevents even one home accident fatality, or a number of injury-only home accidents.

The same process could be applied to scams or doorstep crime thefts – depending on the scale of the fraud or theft. A theft of this nature is estimated to cost the public sector £731, for example, and in time more figures may become available for doorstep crime incidents or scams which could be used to demonstrate the cost-benefit ratio of the project.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The impact of the project was gathered using a survey at the end of each talk which asked about changes in knowledge and the key message they took away from the presentation. The Fire and Rescue Service kept records of how many home safety fire visits were delivered. Other evidence has been reported anecdotally to the project about examples where individuals have used their knowledge, or have accessed a new service, or have felt vindicated about their attitude to an issue that has been highlighted in a talk.

Regular meetings of the multi-agency steering group monitored the implementation and development of the project.

Peer speakers were also asked to record their reflective learning points.

Lessons Learnt and Sustainability

A questionnaire has been developed for use within groups where all three talks have been delivered. Having confirmed that they heard each talk, individuals are being asked to note any subsequent change in their behaviour and the uptake of any of the support services.

The multi agency steering group still meets – with volunteers and the co-ordinator– on a bi-monthly basis. The purpose of this is to continue developing the project, for example around geographical expansion. Prior to those meetings the co-ordinator and volunteers have time to raise more specific issues amongst themselves about upcoming bookings and any other general issues.

Presentation content is kept updated by monthly emails from Trading Standards and information from volunteers about scams they have heard or read about. Updates from other partners such as Police Scotland or NHS pharmacy services are also incorporated, for example the new 101 non-emergency number or medication wastage.

Some of the talks are now being delivered as a combined presentation rather than just one topic at a time. The scripts will be reviewed and updated as new information becomes available or new messages need to be shared with the groups.

Work is underway to enable the project to be delivered throughout The Highlands. By branding our project as Stay Safe, and standardising our scripts, paperwork and record systems we hope shortly to have a product which other areas will be able to use with minor local adaptations to the information regarding phone numbers and available support services.

With longer-term monitoring and improved evaluation the project hopes to be able to evidence a contribution to a reduction in older people becoming victims of crime through scams or doorstep crime, evidence increased feeling of safety within their homes and communities, fewer falls and improved life expectancy. On-going contact with group leaders should allow the programme to re-engage with groups specifically to ask and document individual responses in a more structured way than currently happens.

Resources

Funding: The total project cost per annum is £16,500. Age Scotland provided start-up funding, and a three year grant from Comic Relief was provided.

In-kind support is provided by members of the steering group and volunteer peer speakers.

Partners: Police Scotland (was Northern Constabulary), Highland Senior Citizen's Network, Inverness Community Care Forum, Highland Community Care Forum, The Highland Council, NHS Highland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (was Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Service), Inverness crime prevention panel.

Outcomes

National 6. We live longer, healthier lives.
9. We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger.
15. Our people are able to maintain their independence as they get older and are able to access appropriate support when they need it

Local Highland becomes even safer

Practice Note Information

Practice Note Title:

Older People's Stay Safe Project

Practice Note No:	PN48
SCSN Topic	Personal Safety
Areas:	
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