



## **I Am Me/Keep Safe Renfrewshire**

### **Executive Summary**

Disability Hate Crime is recognised as one of the most under reported crimes in the UK and is an abhorrent abuse of the most vulnerable members of our society.

The I Am Me project is a community led initiative that works in partnership with Police Scotland and PACE Theatre Company to raise awareness of Disability Hate Crime and encourage people to report incidents to the Police. The project has two key initiatives; I Am Me and Keep Safe.

Both initiatives help promote social cohesion and encourage communities to be tolerant, resilient and embrace diversity, whilst Keep Safe helps to keep people safe from harm when out in the community and helps to tackle social isolation by encouraging confidence in participating in community life free from the fear of harassment and abuse.

As the project is community led, the group has the flexibility to work closely with a number of partners whilst recognising and supporting their key priorities.

This project won the Wider Partnership Category at the 2015 Safer Communities Awards.

### **Background and Aims**

In Renfrewshire alone 21% of the 170,000 population are registered as having a disability or long term illness. Leading disability charities report that 9 out of 10 disabled people have been victims of disability hate crime and that around only 3% are reported to the Police.

The project was started by a community volunteer after watching a TV programme about Disability Hate Crime. After undertaking further research, she contacted Police Scotland and PACE Theatre Company to ask if they would be interested in working on a project to help raise awareness.

The I Am Me project group have worked with PACE to develop a hard hitting drama which raises awareness of disability hate crime. The performance has been delivered in schools, staff groups, disability groups, community groups, the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Police College. The project also worked with Police Scotland to develop the 'Keep Safe' initiative which works with a network of local businesses to create safe places for anyone feeling frightened, lost or vulnerable when out in the community. Currently there are 43 premises signed up and 700 Keep Safe cards have been distributed to disability/mental health groups.

In addition to the Police Scotland and PACE Theatre partnership, the project has worked in collaboration with a number of other partners, including, the Crown Office Procurator Fiscal Service, Quarriers, Capability Scotland, Renfrewshire Council, Castlehead High School and members of the community. The committee has 5 community members, 1 Police Scotland and 1 PACE Theatre Company member.

The fundamental aim of the project is to raise awareness of Disability Hate Crime and make communities aware what disability hate crime is and know how to report incidents.

The project works with communities to bring different social groups together to help build social cohesion and break down barriers by promoting joint working towards the common goal of raising awareness of disability related harassment and abuse. Activities include joint working groups to help inform and develop the resources used for the project.

## Activities

Research indicated that many of disability hate crime offenders are young people. As drama is recognised as a successful medium for changing behaviours and attitudes, it was decided to use this method for raising awareness.

I Am Me is a hard hitting drama which has been designed to encourage audiences to review their own behaviour and the behaviour of those around them. The performances have been delivered to over 14,000 people across Scotland since launching in September 2013. The performance has received many plaudits and the project has secured funding for a DVD and training pack.

A steering group consisting of young people and disabled people was formed to research and discuss real life experiences which informed the development of the I Am Me performance. During this research process, many disabled people highlighted that they were often victims of abuse or feared abuse when out in the community. Keep Safe was designed in response to this and further consultation was carried out with visually impaired and learning disabled people to design the logo, cards and business packs to ensure that the initiative was accessible.

The Keep Safe initiative works closely with the Police and a network of local businesses to create safe places for anyone feeling vulnerable when out in the community. Keep Safe premises will display the logo in the window and staff receive a briefing from Police Scotland. Elderly and disabled people are offered a Keep Safe card which details medical conditions, communication requirements and who to contact in an emergency. If anyone is feeling lost, frightened or vulnerable when out in the community they can seek assistance from any Keep Safe premises. This initiative has been recognised across Scotland and requests have been made to extend the initiative to cover LGBT and people with dementia.

The project has run since April 2013, and the key outputs to date are:

- Hard hitting drama production designed for high schools and Police training
- Softer version of the drama production designed and delivered to 8000 primary pupils in Renfrewshire
- Keep Safe initiative designed initially for Renfrewshire and Inverclyde and now being rolled out in the Scottish Borders, and across the three Ayrshire local authority areas
- Working with a large multi discipline steering group to design and produce a DVD and training pack

The project aims to be inclusive for all sectors of the community and materials have been produced in formats that are accessible whilst the production has been performed in sign language and audio enhanced to ensure accessibility and inclusion. In addition, the project have also undertaken an EQHRIA to ensure that the project meets the General Equality Duty and that there are no negative impacts.

## Impact

The short term benefits are demonstrated with the community cohesion achieved whilst developing the project with schools and disability groups. Local reports of disability hate crime have increased by 600% since the project started

The project has raised awareness with young people, disabled people, staff, carers and Police and the development of the DVD and training pack will continue to deliver this over the longer term.

'Keep Safe' has immediate benefits for anyone who is feeling lost, scared or vulnerable when out in the community. Over time, this initiative should help to increase confidence and encourage independent travel by helping people feel safe when in the community and encouraging participation in community life.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

The first stage of the project has been evaluated with 1700 young people who have seen the play. The returned surveys demonstrated that 99% of participants stated that the project had raised their awareness of disability hate crime and 97% stated that they are now aware how to report incidents to the Police.

The project has a two year strategic plan with key actions which support both national and local objectives. The plan is monitored by the committee, which consists of Police Scotland and community members.

## Lessons Learnt and Sustainability

The project has a structure and plan and is flexible in the approach within this. Small changes have been required along the way due to funding, but have been used to strengthen the approach and relationships with partners. Recognising that growth was becoming an issue, funding was secured to recruit an intern to help manage the demand.

## Resources

As there is no umbrella organisation for the group, funding has been collected from a variety of sources such as Renfrewshire Council Local Area Committee Funding, BAA Glasgow Flightpath fund, Awards for All, Foundation Scotland, ScotRail, Strathclyde Police Authority and Scottish Co-op. The total cost of the project was £70,000.

The DVD and training packs are a more sustainable form of delivery and will be available as a free download for any groups/schools across Scotland.

## Outcomes

National	We live our lives free from crime disorder and danger We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others We have tackled significant inequalities in Scottish society
Justice Strategy	Reducing crime (including violent and serious and organised crime) Reducing offending Tackling hate crime and sectarianism Preventing offending by young people Increasing public confidence and reducing fear of crime Strengthening community engagement and resilience

## Practice Note Information

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