



## **Friend Request South Ayrshire Council**

### **Executive Summary**

The Criminal Justice and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2010 Introduced a new statutory offence of 'stalking' linking it to other behaviours such as domestic abuse, sexual crimes, community/racially motivated crimes, bullying & honour based violence.

The 'Friend Request' project was instigated to give a multi-faceted approach to raising awareness and tackling stalking and associated behaviour amongst secondary pupils in South Ayrshire. The project aimed initially to produce an education pack to raise awareness, identify behaviours, increase confidence in reporting and encourage peer support. A core group of young people were identified and with support have produced a DVD and education packs which were distributed to eight secondary schools in South Ayrshire in June 2014. The film was used at an online safety event for parents and carers and has led to one disclosure during a classroom test session during development.

This project won the Early Intervention and Education Category at the 2015 Safer Communities Awards.

### **Background and Aims**

Stalking became an offence with the enactment of the Criminal Justice and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2010. Stalking is often viewed as an adult problem that rarely, if ever, affects young people. Yet it is a crime that prevails within our schools and increasingly through social media. Juvenile stalking can also be a reaction to a perceived injustice- including sexual rejection and also a form of bullying and one that could escalate to violence. This project recognises that early intervention and prevention work in schools and local communities need to be part of the solution, with young people at the heart of implementing change.

Following an awareness raising session held at Marr College, a Secondary School in Troon and organised by the Subgroup of South Ayrshire Multi-agency Partnership to Tackle Violence Against Women and Children, a core group of young people were identified to develop an educational resource for use in schools to enable a wider group of young people to benefit from this awareness raising resource approach.

The main aim of the project was to enable senior pupils to assist in the development of a resource which would raise awareness of the dangers of stalking, stalking behaviours and the actions that young people can take to keep themselves safe from stalking and cyber-stalking. The age group was extended to all secondary age pupils following test sessions with different age groups.

The intended outcomes of the project were:

- To raise awareness of issues surrounding stalking and cyber-stalking among young people
- To help identify stalking behaviours and the importance of early reporting
- To increase confidence among young people to report any concerns
- To encourage peer education and peer support. Recognising young people have the power to help change social attitudes to behaviours that were once ignored or over looked and now recognised as unacceptable thus establishing new social norms
- To provide an educational resource pack to each secondary school in South Ayrshire
- To develop a skill set and the understanding of young people involved in the project

The hope was that by embedding an understanding within young people in South Ayrshire it will have an impact on the prevention of future cases of stalking therefore reducing future potential cost of police investigation/criminal procedures and support for victims.

## Activities

The project was about empowering young people to help solve problems, utilising peer education and support. Ensuring that a consistent message was delivered in all schools was an important consideration, therefore the approach agreed was a film format together with learning resource pack. This has ensured that the final film reflects the experiences of young people in South Ayrshire and provides a very accessible resource.

Phase 1 of the project concentrated on the development of the 'Friend Request' DVD and resource packs. Following a class testing session it was agreed by pupils and Campus Police that the resource was suitable for all secondary school year age groups.

Thirteen young people took part in eight weekly sessions to support the development of the DVD covering topics such as:

- Engaging with the subject material to create a viable idea
- Basic film techniques and technology
- Storyboarding
- Script development
- The development of the DVD and associated learning resource pack for schools
- Development of an information leaflet specifically targeting young people

The DVD and resource packs were initially piloted in one secondary school, feedback informed the final version.

Phase 2 of the project focused on achieving on the other main outcomes of raising awareness and increasing confidence and reporting; and keeping children and

young people safe from harm and abuse. This was primarily achieved with the rollout of the DVD and resources to all eight secondary schools in South Ayrshire in 2014 and the distribution of specially designed information leaflets at the end of each lesson.

A conference was held for parents and carers on keeping children and young people safe online resulted in increased awareness of stalking by parents and carers.

Whilst the project is principally around stalking it raises the issue of bullying and this was reflected during the 'class test' where a confidential disclosure was made to a Campus Police Officer following the 'Friend Request' input. Child protection guidance for teachers was also included in the event of further disclosures.

## **Impact**

This project seeks to raise awareness of the impact of stalking on young people and seeks to signpost the most appropriate services thereby developing a more coordinated approach for support.

At the time of writing this is a new project but it is anticipated that impacts for beneficiaries and the wider community will become evident as the project develops. Short-term outcomes show that pupils were willing to actively engage with police and school officials to help raise awareness of this crime and as a result of this teachers, pupils, parents and carers understanding of the issues has increased. The resource pack has been delivered to 200 pupils and 65 parents and carers attended the conference.

In the medium to long term the project would hope to contribute an increase in reporting of incidents and the reduction in stalking recidivism.

Building on the work done to date the project is looking to raise awareness further through schools and the wider community and there is potential for the resource to be developed for used by a range of partner agencies including Ayrshire College, Police Scotland and Voluntary Groups.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

As this project is a relatively new resource and stalking is a newly classified crime, there was no available data in South Ayrshire to provide a baseline. An initial evaluation was based on experiences of young people who developed the resource and as a result was mainly qualitative data.

All thirteen rated the project as 'very good/good' and all of them said it had made them think differently about stalking and indicated that they felt that they had an increased awareness of the issues surrounding stalking and on-line safety.

The delivery of the project was monitored by Community Safety staff who attended the weekly film schools sessions. Ongoing monitoring of the project will take place through the South Ayrshire Multi-Agency Partnership to tackle Violence Against Women and Children (MAP) Subgroup.

## Resources

The total cost of the project so far has been £1450 with the primary funder South Ayrshire Community Safety Partnership providing £1100 and South Ayrshire Child Protection Committee providing the £350 balance.

## Outcomes

<b>National</b>	We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others
Justice Strategy	Reducing Offending Tackling hate crime and sectarianism Supporting victims and witnesses Preventing offending by young people Increasing public confidence and reducing the fear of crime Strengthening community engagement and resilience

## Practice Note Information

**Practice Note Title:** Friend Request  
**Practice Note No:** PN60  
**SCSN Topic Areas:**

**Date Produced:** January 2015

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