



No Knives, Better Lives Peer Education Project

Executive Summary

No Knives, Better Lives (NKBL) is Scottish Government initiative launched in 2009 and has been working with a range of local partners to educate young people about the dangers and consequences of carrying knives and promote positive life choices to young people.

It was initially piloted in Inverclyde and since then has been rolled out to North Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, Renfrewshire and West Dunbartonshire; followed by South Lanarkshire, North Lanarkshire, Glasgow, West Edinburgh, East Ayrshire and North Ayrshire in 2011. In 2013 West Lothian also became involved in the initiative.

A key objective of the NKBL initiative was to involve and empower young people at a local level. To support this, a peer education programme was developed by Fast Forward in conjunction with local practitioners. The programme supports young people to deliver interactive and relevant anti-violence education to their peers. It has reached over a hundred young people, raising awareness about the consequences of knife carrying and violent behaviour and equipping them with the information needed to make more informed and responsible decisions about their behaviour, particularly in relation to knife crime and offending.

The peer education training was tailored in each NKBL area depending on the young people's needs, and 98% of the young people trained as peer educators said the training was worthwhile and would recommend it to their peers. Young people felt more educated on the causes and effects of violence, and were more aware of risk and ways of keeping safe.

In addition to supporting young people to deliver NKBL messages to their peers it also supported personal development in areas identified by the young people themselves prior to the training. The young people involved felt they had more future opportunities available to them and some have been supported in gaining personal achievement awards. They also felt enthusiastic about contributing to the community, and that they were more equipped to do so.

Local youth workers and staff from each of the NKBL areas that were involved in the project also found it beneficial for their own practice.

This project was runner-up in the 'National Initiatives' category for the Safer Communities Awards 2013.

This project won the People's Choice award for the Safer Communities Award 2013.

Background and Aims

No Knives, Better Lives (NKBL) is a Scottish Government initiative that has been running since 2009. It now operates in eleven local authority areas. As part of the wider NKBL initiative, the NKBL peer education project aims to:

- Educate young people on the consequences of knife crime, violence and gang culture
- Give young people the tools to make more informed decisions in relation to risk
- To provide young people with the skills, information and opportunity to facilitate workshops and meaningful discussion amongst their peers
- Equip young people to positively contribute to their community, empowering them to address issues of violence from within their own local area
- Support the personal development and communication skills of the peer educators,, helping them to access further educational and/or employment opportunities

A key objective of the NKBL initiative was to involve young people in the delivery of NKBL at a national and local level. To support this, a peer education programme was developed by Fast Forward. The peer education programme adopted a preventative approach to knife crime and has young people at its core. It recognises that they are the experts in issues that affect them, and by giving them the tools to empower themselves, they can more effectively influence their peers with key anti-violence messages

Activities

The NKBL national delivery team commissioned Fast Forward to develop the peer education programme.

Session development and training was provided by Fast Forward in conjunction with the young people and local staff, including youth workers and Community Learning and Development (CLD) representatives, from each of the NKBL areas. Activities and discussions were also adjusted according to local needs – for example in some areas alcohol-related violence became more of a focus, and in others it was gang-related violence. Existing NKBL resources such as Sharp Solutions and On a Knife Edge toolkits were also used.

A youth work approach was adopted throughout the programme, using creative and interactive games and activities to discuss meaningful and important issues. Activities were varied and ranged from a team building murder mystery game to a balloon brainstorm to a consequences collage! Through these activities young people learned to work better as a team, developed their knowledge of risky behaviours, explored their own views and prejudices and increased a number of personal skills, which led them to lead their own peer education activities on the final day of training. The young people were encouraged to share their ideas, experiences and questions and it was this sharing of knowledge that formed the backbone of the sessions. The interactive nature of the activities encouraged maximum engagement and participation. The peer educators were encouraged to reflect throughout, and offer feedback on the ways of learning they enjoyed and didn't enjoy, to ensure the training was enjoyable and relevant for them.

Links between the peer education project and wider NKBL programme ensured a collaborative approach which enhanced both aspects; for example many of the young people involved in the peer education project were also involved in the 2013 NKBL youth summit.

Impact

Evaluation demonstrated that the peer educators felt more educated on the causes and effects of violence, as well as more aware of risk and ways of keeping themselves safe – between 99% and 100% of the young people reported this. Young people also felt more enthusiasm to contribute to the local community – from 63% before the project to 79% after the project. 92% also reported feeling more equipped to contribute to the local community as a result of the project.

Prior to the training, young people were encouraged to identify any personal skills that they would like to improve as a result of the project. Self-confidence was one particular theme which was highlighted by a number of the participants. After the project, 96% of young people reported feeling an improvement in these personal skill areas, and the majority of young people felt confident about delivering peer education within their communities.

As well as the self-identified personal skills, a 'skills wheel' was also used in the evaluation and covered self-awareness, communication skills like listening and contributing to a large group and relationship skills. 93% of young people involved felt their communication and relationship skills had improved.

95% of those involved in the project also felt that the training had opened up more future opportunities, and a number have since been supported in gaining personal achievement awards.

NKBL is an example of preventative spend. By working with young people who may be 'on the cusp' of carrying a knife and empowering them to make positive choices through projects like the peer education programme, the initiative is helping to positively shift attitudes on knife carrying amongst young people.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Verbal and written self-assessment was the main monitoring and evaluation tool used, and feedback was also gathered from the young people and local youth workers involved in the project. A specific peer education skill improvement follow up exercise was also used.

The self-assessment tool asked young people about changes in their knowledge of personal safety and risky behaviours, enthusiasm for contributing to the community and how equipped they felt to deliver peer education. Feelings about future education and other opportunities were also covered. A 'skills wheel' on communication and relationship skills was also included, and young people also had the opportunity to identify any other personal skills they wished to improve.

There was a degree of local autonomy around the topics covered which allowed the course to be tailored to local needs, and open reflection during training allowed on-going tracking to ensure the intended outcomes were being met, and that future training could be altered if required.

Lessons Learnt and Sustainability

NKBL is now looking into how to assess the impact of the programme on the wider community. The NKBL delivery team have created a Research and Evaluation Post which is now in the early stages of exploring this.

Some of the areas opted to incorporate a residential component into the training. However this was not always possible due to limited funding. The effectiveness of the different training delivery models is being considered. Fast Forward and the Scottish Peer Education Network (SPEN) are now offering support the NKBL areas to identify sources of funding for residential as this component seems to increase the effectiveness of the programme and strengthen the project outcomes.

The skills the participants have gained through involvement in NKBL peer education are also being used in other aspects of the NKBL programme such as the 2013 youth summit, but also used by the local authority to deliver inputs on other aspects of community safety such as antisocial behaviour.

The peer education session content evolved according to feedback gathered from participants during the project and future training will be amended accordingly.

Accreditation is another aspect which is being examined by the project leads.

It is hoped this peer education project will be routinely adopted as part of the NKBL programme.

Resources

Funding: The cost of this pilot was £31,433 (September 2011 to September 2012) and was provided by the Scottish Government as part of the NKBL campaign administered by YouthLink Scotland.

Partners: Scottish Government, YouthLink Scotland, NKBL steering group, Fast Forward, Scottish Peer Education Network (SPEN) and youth workers and other staff from various Local Authorities.

Outcomes

National

- 4. Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens
- 9. We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger.
- 11. We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.

Local Depends upon the individual local authority area the project is delivered in.

Practice Note Information

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Contact Information

Organisation: Fast Forward

Contact Name: Sonal Raithatha
Position Held: Peer Education Coordinator
Telephone: 0131 554 4300
Email Address: sonal@fastforward.org.uk
Address: 4 Bernard Street, Edinburgh EH6 6PP

Scottish Community Safety Network
2 Hill Street, Edinburgh, EH2 3JZ
Phone: 0131 225 8700 / 7772 - Fax: 0131 526 3208
www.safercommunitiesscotland.org - Email: info@scsn.org.uk

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