



Practice Note 22

North Ayrshire Home Security Project

Contact Name: Patrick Kelly

Position Held: ASBIT Manager

Telephone: 01294 314681

Email: pkelly@north-ayrshire.gsx.gov.uk

Address: ASB/Community Safety Services, Unit 83, Third Avenue, Heatherhouse Industrial Estate, Irvine KA12 8HN

Topic Areas: Home Safety, Personal Safety, Partnership Working, Community Engagement

Project Background and Aims

The Home Security Project (HSP) was established in 2005 with the aim of making victims of domestic abuse or persistent antisocial behaviour feel safer in their home. The service is available to anyone living in North Ayrshire, irrespective of housing tenure. The project fits within the North Ayrshire Violence against Women Strategy and Action Plan by providing direct support to women and children experiencing violence. The HSP is delivered in two ways; adding extra security measures to make the home more secure and arranging support from specialist agencies.

The initiative was developed in partnership with North Ayrshire Women's Aid and Strathclyde Police with the Home Security Coordinator providing the link between agencies. The Home Security Coordinator works on North Ayrshire Council's Antisocial Behaviour Investigation Team (ASBIT) and thus the service is integrated with other key local services.

Demand for the service has grown over since its inception and this reflects an increase in reported domestic abuse in North Ayrshire during this period. In 2009/10 there were 1764, reported domestic abuse incidents in North Ayrshire compared to a 5 year average (2004/05 – 2008/09) of 1402 incidents. The rate of reported domestic abuse incidents in North Ayrshire has risen year on year for the last 6 years (with the exception of a slight drop in 07/08).

There have been high levels of domestic abuse incidents reported to police in North Ayrshire for some years. A comparison of the rates of reports of domestic abuse per 100,000 population in 2008/09 shows that only four other local authorities in the

Strathclyde Police area reported a higher rate than North Ayrshire (West Dunbartonshire, Glasgow, North Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire).

Outcomes

National 9: We live our lives free from crime, disorder and danger.
Local 9a: Fear of crime and antisocial behaviour has reduced, and
9b: Levels of crime and antisocial behaviour have reduced and crimes being detected have increased.

Resources

Funding: Mainstreamed funding for one staff member and equipment costs.
Partners: North Ayrshire Council Antisocial Behaviour Investigation Team (ASBIT), North Ayrshire Women's Aid and Strathclyde Police.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Project information is collected and recorded on a database, which allows checks to be carried out on service standards. This relates to performance measurement, such as response times and actions taken. Surveys of service users are regularly carried out to gain feedback on the project. Further Information is available upon request from the ASBIT Manger.

Activities

The HSP provides practical support through improved security measures such as security lights, additional locks and bolts, pre-programmed mobile phones, panic alarms with equipment purchased on an ad hoc basis. Referrals to other relevant local agencies, such as Victim Support and Women's Aid, are also made where appropriate.

If someone fits the criteria of the project a referral is received from one of the agencies. This could be for example Strathclyde Police, Women's Aid, Housing Services, Social Services, Victim Support or Barnardos. After the referral is received an appointment is made with the victim within one working day to carry out an assessment by the Home Security Coordinator.

A range of security measures are considered, such as security bars, slip bolts, window locks, Yale locks and security lights. Joinery and electrical work are added to the property within six working days of the assessment being carried out. For the more serious cases a monitored panic alarm can be installed within two working days. The alarm can be activated from a base unit or a pendant, which works within 50 metres of the base unit. The alarm is monitored by a Monitoring Station who calls the police through the 999 system on behalf of the client, allowing for a rapid response to any incident. The Home Security Coordinator carries out regular alarm tests, which keeps control of where the alarm is and provides ongoing support to the victim.

Impact

The demand for the service has grown year on year since it was set up in 2005, with total referrals from domestic abuse and persistent ASB increasing from 204 in 2005/06 to 503 in 2009/10. This demonstrates a demand for the service (reflected in the increasing recorded incidents of domestic abuse) as well as buy-in from partner agencies. Chart 1 below contains figures referrals to the service and the number of alarms fitted over the period 2007/08 to 2009/10.

Table 1: Referrals to HSP and Alarms Fitted (2007/08 to 2009/10)

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Referrals to Home Security for Domestic Abuse	121	182	236
Referrals to Home Security for ASB	182	214	267
Number of alarms installed	57	67	86

The project has been well received by both service users and partner agencies, respectively indicated in feedback surveys and steering group meetings. Feedback from service users highlights that the HSP has reduced the unease of families who have opted to remain within their home after incidents domestic abuse or persistent ASB. One service user commented, *'the children feel more relaxed and at ease because of the locks on the door and the panic alarm'*.

The service has therefore allowed families to remain within communities where they may have strong links and avoid the disruption of being re-housed, having to seek new employment and/or place children in new schools.

Lessons Learnt and Sustainability

Initially, practical concerns were raised around keeping track of deployed equipment, ensuring deployed equipment was still in use and checking the equipment was still working. These concerns were easily addressed through the Home Security Coordinator developing relationships with service users and maintaining regular contact.

ASBIT encouraged partner agencies to come on board the project in order to facilitate referrals. The implementation process was relatively smooth, partly because of its strategic location within ASBIT – this allowed for the service to be integrated with other key local services and agencies – and partly because ASBIT consulted pre-launch with other local authorities delivering similar services. Consequently, the project has delivered a well-received service with just one devoted staff member.

A sister project of the HSP was launched in March 2009 to prevent and detect the racial abuse of ethnic minority shopkeepers. The Racial Abuse Prevention Service is

run in partnership with the Ayrshire Minority Ethnic Communities Association and Strathclyde Police. The service is also overseen by the Home Security Coordinator.

The service was set up because it was identified that most racial abuse in North Ayrshire occurred in businesses such as takeaways and restaurants. The service provides and installs camera systems and alarms in the premises of affected businesses to record images of the offender and the abusive language used and alert the police when incidents occur.

Summary

The Home Security Project provides practical support through improved security measures such as security lights, additional locks and bolts, panic alarms and mobile phones. Referrals are also made where appropriate to support agencies. The project was set up in 2005 in response to the rising levels of domestic abuse within North Ayrshire. In 2009 the Racial Abuse Prevention Service was added to the project with the aim of preventing and detecting the racial abuse of shopkeepers from minority ethnic communities.

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Address: Office 6/7 Inglewood House, Inglewood, Alloa, FK10 2HU
Tel No: 01259 212079
Fax No: 01257 220333
E-mail: info@scsn.org.uk
Website: <http://www.communitysafetyscotland.org/>