



Practice Note 16

SafeBase

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Project Background and Aims

Evidence suggests that excessive alcohol consumption can lead to an increased level of vulnerability, associated antisocial behaviour and criminal activity. In addition, the peak times for increased risk are associated with weekends, some football events and the Festive Season. The Festive Season is of particular concern given the additional number of people active in the night-time economy at this time, the increased frequency of drinking and the behaviour of individuals whose alcohol consumption patterns are normally much less.

Incident reports from Central Scotland Police and Forth Valley CCTV footage illustrate that this issue is a key concern in Stirling city centre. The Stirling Vitality and Viability Healthcheck carried out in 2008 also suggested a prevailing community perception that the city centre was unsafe at night. This corresponded with findings from the 2006 Safer Cities Bi-annual Business Questionnaire, which had highlighted some of the safety concerns of businesses in the overall operations of the Stirling city centre. In particular, safer car parks, improved CCTV, the need for closer working with Central Scotland Police, and having Shop Safe/Radio Link schemes in place.

Other local research carried out in 2008 identified transport safety issues amongst night-time economy users, with people stating they used taxis because of a lack of choice, but that they would use buses if they had a security presence.

Thus, in 2008 the Night-Time Economy Strategy Group developed SafeBase to specifically reduce antisocial behaviour and vulnerability in Stirling city centre. A partnership working group was established to develop and implement the pilot

project. SafeBase is one of several interrelated measures that the Night-Time Economy Strategy Group has developed, operating alongside new late-night bus routes, taxi marshals and new lighting and CCTV cameras.

SafeBase provides a sheltered facility for people who feel vulnerable or unsafe whilst out and about at night in Stirling. The project runs over the Festive Season, operating from 10pm until 2am. Staff provide advice on relevant specialist services, such as drug and alcohol counseling, and are trained in first aid provision. The project works towards National Outcome 9: 'We live our lives free from crime, disorder and danger'; SC17: Unintentionally homeless applicants into settled accommodation and SC52: Key crime rates. The project also carries out work pertinent to current national guidance on changing attitudes towards alcohol consumption.

Resources

Funding: Stirling Community Safety Partnership.
Partners: Stirling Community Safety Partnership, ASB Team, Forth Valley Substance, City Centre Initiative, Central Scotland Rape Crisis Centre, Stirling Council Health and Wellbeing, Stirling Council Marketing, Community Wardens, Safe Cities, Stirling Council Youth Services, Stirling Baptist Church and Central Scotland Police.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring data is collected for the project. The project is evaluated externally on an annual basis, with particular foci on capability, efficiency and the effectiveness of the partnership delivery mechanism. Evaluation reports are available on request from the Community Safety Project Manager (City Centre). The independent evaluation of the 2010 Safe Base project is underway at the time of writing and this will be available from May 2011.

Activities

SafeBase is located in premises supplied by Stirling Council Youth Services. The facility operates between 10pm and 2am on Friday and Saturday nights during the Festive Season.

The main function of the SafeBase is to prevent an escalation of individual vulnerability and antisocial behaviour for people either affected by alcohol, feeling vulnerable and unsafe, or feeling that there is a threat of violence. Within the facility staff provide first aid if required as well as tea, coffee, water and biscuits. They also offer information on about transport options such as the late-night bus and rail services, personal safety options and support services.

Staff work at SafeBase drawn from the partner agencies: Stirling Council, St Andrew's Ambulance, Stirling Family Support, The Rock Community Project and Central Scotland Police. Staff selected to work on any given night reflect key skill sets as a group: first aid, mental health first aid, working with substance misuse, conflict

resolution and occupational health & safety awareness. On the 2010 SafeBase project, two staff were based within the facility.

People are referred to SafeBase by a 'Street Team' made up of six youth workers from Stirling Council Youth Services' Streetworx, who work in teams of two. The Street Team identify individuals in the city centre who need assistance and accompany them to the SafeBase facility.

The Street Team's working hours correlate with SafeBase's opening times. Although not formally linked with the project, Street Pastors also make referrals to SafeBase. The project is also linked directly to Licensed Venues and Police via the Pubsafe radio link scheme.

Impact

In 2010 the NHS agreed to the Logistics Officers giving briefings to A&E staff at Stirling Royal Infirmary, prior to and during the running of the project. The hope is that this engagement will continue in 2011 act as a catalyst to enable a closer working relationship to develop, which will ultimately lead to these statistics being made available.

The Street Team engage with an average of 200 individuals each night that Safe Base operates, equating to over 2000 individuals for the duration of the project. These interventions are recorded on 'reflection Sheets' which give details of the type and extent of intervention offered. This could range from assisting someone to a taxi stance or providing basic first aid, to dressing serious wounds and engaging with individuals with mental health issues.

SafeBase has been viewed positively by partner agencies within the Night-time Economy Strategy group. In particular, partners have suggested that the specialist experts working on the project allow SafeBase clients with particular needs to be referred to specialist agencies, such as drugs support by agency representatives. Moreover, utilising a genuine partnership approach has enabled staff with expertise with different target audiences to work on both SafeBase and the Street Team.

Lessons Learnt and Sustainability

SafeBase has evolved slightly since the pilot was launched in 2008. Perhaps most significantly the composition of staff in both SafeBase and the Street Team has changed.

A total of eight staff were employed on the pilot project: the four facility-based staff comprised of two individuals with medical training and two Logistics Officers; and four street-based team members — the Street Team. Safety protocols at both SafeBase and the Street Team ensure that staff never work alone, always working in pairs. Additional risk assessment and health and safety sessions were integrated within staff training in 2009.

Stirling Council's Community Wardens formed part of the Street Team in 2008, but were not used in 2009 due to contractual issues. The Street Team in 2009 was made up entirely of youth workers from Streetworx. Four Streetworx youth workers worked in pairs on the 2008 and 2009 projects and in 2010 this was increased to six, again working in smaller groups of two. The increase in the Street Team was a result of findings from the evaluation and, at the same time, the internal team was decreased to two staff.

A key strength of SafeBase (and its sister projects) identified by partner agencies is a strong commitment to effective partnership working, with the project benefitting from clear communication channels, coordinated response and strong leadership.

Furthermore, the night-time economy community safety approach has been extrapolated from existing initiatives such as the Pubsafe radiolink and the taxi marshalls. Also, the Streetworx youth workers have been delivering a similar service in 2007 and this knowledge and experience has been incorporated into the larger initiative.

The Street Team's role has also changed slightly since the outset of the project. During the pilot their remit shifted from explicitly not referring "drunk people" to the SafeBase to referring anyone that needed shelter.

Extending either the service hours of SafeBase (to allow the project to take in vulnerable people who have exited nightclubs at 3am), the number of nights on which it runs or the number of times it runs per annum have all been mooted, however these options are bounded by cost implications – particularly in the current economic climate. The service will continue to run as it provides a warm and safe environment for vulnerable people during the Festive Season.

Summary

SafeBase aims to reduce vulnerability, antisocial behaviour and criminal activity in Stirling city centre over the Festive Season. It provides a facility which offers vulnerable people – for example, intoxicated people who have been stranded - in a warm and safe environment over the Festive Season. The facility is run by trained staff who can provide first aid and advice on key local services, such as late night bus services and, when required, support services. The project is integrated with the Street Team which is made of youth workers operating in the city centre.

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