

The Lifewise Centre – partnership approach to community engagement

A scenario-based activity to provide children, young people and vulnerable adults with the skills and knowledge to make informed decisions in everyday situations.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Public Protection, Safeguarding & Vulnerability Community engagement
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Region	North East

Key details

Partners	Police Business and commerce Criminal justice (includes prisons, probation services) Education Health services Local authority Voluntary/not for profit organisation
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	September 2011
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Adults Children and young people Communities Families Offenders Victims

Aim

The Lifewise Centre aims to provide a safe environment for children, young people and adults to receive scenario-based sessions with a view to:

- helping to prevent them from becoming a victim of crime
- knowing where to seek help and support if they find themselves in risky situations

The centre is also used to deliver scenario-based training for student officers, specials, apprentice police community support officers (PCSOs), firearms officers, national firearms commanders, regional crime scene investigator (CSI) officers, cadets and members of the public.

Intended outcome

Through the delivery of key messages children and young people attending the centre will:

- be better informed about things that affect them
- be able to make informed decisions in everyday situations
- better understand the consequence of their actions on themselves, their family and friends and wider community
- know where to seek help and support if they find themselves in risky situations

Intended outcomes are difficult to measure and it is accepted that success is measured by the feedback form provided to the schools. The repeated annual visits highlight that pupils benefit from the experience.

Adults attending the centre will be:

- better informed about things that affect them
- able to better protect themselves against crime

Description

South Yorkshire Police (SYP) community department are based in the Lifewise building. As part of their role, they have responsibility for organising activities and managing the day-to-day activity in the centre as well as engagement activity in schools across the county.

Some of the regular activity at the centre includes:

- Crucial Crew is a programme for children in their last year at primary school. All South Yorkshire schools are invited to visit the centre where pupils from mainstream schools participate in eight scenarios including child criminal exploitation, knife and hate crime, arson, home safety, court room, water safety, road safety and safer travel. All special educational needs and disability (SEND) schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) are invited to attend Crucial Crew for a half day and schools can choose the scenarios that will be most beneficial to their pupils. Crucial Crew is a partnership approach with staffing from SYP, road safety officers, First Bus (a UK bus operator), magistrates and South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue. Volunteers are also an integral part of running Crucial Crew.

- WiseUP events are developed to be delivered to vulnerable adults and cover a wide range of subjects such as doorstep crime, fraud and scams, Herbert Protocol (a tool to be used when an adult with care and support needs goes missing), driving for older people and home safety. Events are often attended by local authority staff and other organisations who work with vulnerable groups, with the aim of being able to disseminate the information to some of the most vulnerable members of our communities. WiseUp is delivered by SYP PCSOs, staff and volunteers as well as South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue (SYFR) staff. The events are free to attend.
- Adapting to life in the UK events are developed in conjunction with local charities and organisations who are working to integrate communities by providing advice and guidance to ensure that they can settle in South Yorkshire and access all the services required to make this happen. Adapting to life in the UK is delivered by a number of partners including charities, housing, SYP staff and volunteers, and SYFR staff.
- BikerDown! training is delivered by SYP staff during the summer months providing riders with the skills to be able to assist injured riders if they are first on scene.

The centre is used in the evening and at weekends to enhance the training provided to apprentice officers and PCSOs, specials, firearms officers and CSI officers. No community staff are required for the training.

Currently the Lifewise Centre costs for utilities, rent and rates are funded by SYP and SYFR with some grant funding from the Safer Roads Partnership. In general, activities that are for communities in South Yorkshire are developed and delivered free of charge, however if organisations have received funding to organise activities and engage with communities then there is an expectation that they fund the hire of the centre. Schools and organisations from outside of South Yorkshire are charged for the hire of the centre. The current cost is £1000 per day for full use of the set and classrooms. Staffing for events varies depending on the inputs and activity.

Overall impact

The overall impact of the delivery of the scenario-based activity is unknown and difficult to quantify. However, we do know from informal verbal feedback that children, young people and adults participating in activities at the Lifewise Centre remember the messages delivered. This is particularly apparent in the case of people who attended Crucial Crew aged 10 and 11, then returned to the centre as cadets, student officers, paramedics or teachers. They can always

remember the scenarios and messages that were delivered.

Learning

The most important aspect of having a safety centre is having staff on site to develop, deliver and manage the activity taking place. Before 2011, the Lifewise Centre was a much smaller set-up in a different building. There was limited staff on site (one manger and one admin post), so the capability to deliver daily activity was limited.

Not surprisingly, the biggest challenge of moving to a larger centre was the budget constraints imposed on the department at the time. As well as 'selling' the vision to the senior leadership teams of both police and fire, there was a lot of creativity in encouraging local businesses to see the benefits of the centre for local communities and support the venture by providing supplies and services at reduced or no cost. In building the centre there was approximately £250,000 worth of donations of labour and materials. Police and Fire together contributed a similar amount and staff members gave up lots of their free time to paint and add the finishing touches prior to the opening in September 2011.

The current centre would not be able to deliver the level of engagement activity without the commitment from partners providing staff to deliver scenarios and the volunteers who assist with role play and other duties on a daily basis.

Best available evidence

Currently, the Crime Reduction Toolkit does not include best-available evidence on all of the programmes offered by the Lifewise Centre. However, some of the programmes are based on social skills training. See the [Crime Reduction Toolkit](#) for the best-available evidence on [social skills training for children](#).

Other interventions on the Crime Reduction Toolkit which may be relevant include:

- [After-school programmes](#)
- [Educational interventions to prevent relationship violence](#)
- [Drink-driving school-based programmes](#)
- [Mentoring](#)

See also [HMICFRS identified practice](#).

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Tags

Community engagement