

Police cadets delivering awareness of violence against women and girls (VAWG) to year 11 students

Wealden volunteer police cadets created and delivered a presentation on violence against women and girls (VAWG) to year 11 school assemblies, where female students were provided with an information pack of leaflets, VAWG support materials, and a personal safety alarm

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Violence against women and girls Community engagement
Organisation	Sussex Police
HMICFRS report	PEEL 2023–25 Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy: An inspection of Sussex Police
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Region	South East

Key details

Partners	Police Community safety partnership Education
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	March 2024
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Children and young people

Aim

The aim of the initiative is to:

- raise awareness of violence against women and girls (VAWG) amongst young people in their final secondary school year
- provide female students with information packs containing leaflets on sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, drink spiking, sextortion, along with drinking glass covers and bottle tops to prevent drink spiking and a personal attack alarm
- highlight the important position males have in prevention or intervention

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes are to:

- increase awareness of VAWG amongst year 11 students
- enhance male students' understanding that they have a vital role in prevention, support and intervention

Description

Project 16 was entered into National Crimebeat, the High Sheriff's Association crime prevention competition for young people aged 5 to 25 years.

The volunteer police cadets selected the subject of this project and the direction they would like to go in, to inform their peers about VAWG. This was achieved by creating a presentation intended for year 11 students and taking it into the schools themselves. The head cadet was the project lead, who was also the High Sheriff's police cadet. A cadet leader oversaw the project as it was developed as project manager.

The cadets conducted their own research on various elements that fall under the VAWG banner over a few weeks, gathering statistics on the subject before creating the presentation with technical assistance from their leaders. The result was a six and half minute presentation voiced by the cadets.

They then sourced appropriate leaflets to go into the information packs, along with bottle top stoppers to prevent drink spiking and personal attack alarms. The information packs were compiled during cadet sessions ready to be taken out to the schools.

A successful application was made to the Safer Wealden Partnership (the local joint action group) for a grant of £800 towards the cost of the personal attack alarms. This paid for most of the alarms, with the remaining supplies paid for by the cadet unit funds (approximately £150).

Six secondary schools in the district were contacted to see if they would like their year 11 students to receive the presentation, and three schools had capacity to participate.

The presentation was shown to the students and their tutors at school assemblies. The students listened carefully to what they were being shown and at the end, the information packs were given to the teaching staff to distribute at the end of the school day.

The cadet leaders obtained support for the project from the force VAWG lead officer.

A QR code was distributed to male and female students, linking them to a short survey which was created to assess their level of awareness of VAWG before receiving the presentation. The survey was also distributed after the presentation, to assess students' awareness of VAWG following the input.

Overall impact

Survey

Out of 38 respondents who completed the survey pre- and post- presentation:

- 55% of students (15 to 18 years) had never heard of VAWG before our presentation (15 to 18 year olds)
- 61% of female students (15 to 18 years) had never heard of VAWG before our presentation
- those who had heard of VAWG had seen it mentioned on social media and the news
- every individual student correctly identified both examples of VAWG included in the presentation and the various services that can be contacted for support in the post-presentation survey

The project presentation was well received by the three schools that we visited, shown to 760 students (male and female) and 382 information packs were distributed to female students.

There are steps being taken to bring this project to all year 11 students across Sussex, in collaboration with the force lead for VAWG. This is in its early stages and discussions are ongoing regarding the distribution of leaflets and supplies. A web link to the information on the leaflets could be added to the force website with a link via a QR code created. The QR code could then be printed onto an item, such as a keyring torch, and distributed to the female students. Work is continuing to move this forward.

The intervention has achieved its intended outcomes:

- raising awareness of VAWG amongst young people
- empowering them with the knowledge of what to do should they require support
- encouraging them to be upstanders

Recognition

The project has received the following national recognition:

- runner-up in the engaging with young people category in the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) VAWG and Op Soteria recognition awards 2024
- winner of the volunteer police cadet team award in the Lord Ferrers Awards 2024 which recognises the work of volunteers in policing
- highly commended in the National Crimebeat Awards 2024

- third place in the National Crimebeat Awards 2025

The cadets have also received chief constable commendations at the Sussex Police volunteer police cadet annual parade.

Learning

The engagement of the cadets was very good, digging out facts and statistics themselves during their research, combined with the technical help of their leaders. The cadets meet for two hours a week, so several sessions were used to research and create the presentation. Using the voices of the cadets in the presentation made it more relatable and engaging when delivering the project to their peers.

The leaders' involvement in the project was on a voluntary basis, so it did take some time to get the resources and logistics prepared, ready to approach the schools.

Whilst the intention was to attend all six secondary schools in the policing district, only three had the capacity to get involved. The goal was to deliver the presentation to the students as close to the end of their teaching time before GCSE exams, but this was difficult to achieve consistently across the schools. Future events may need to be offered earlier in the school year.

Seeking funding support was essential, as the cost of the personal attack alarms was the largest expense of the project. The force East Sussex partnership manager recommended applying for a grant from the Safer Wealden Partnership, the local joint action group. The force delivered a presentation to the partnership and the application was subsequently approved.

It was challenging to gather cadets to deliver the presentation as they were being held during the school day when the cadets themselves would be at school. To combat this, cadets who were attending college were asked to deliver the sessions, which worked around their more flexible college timetables.

Future implementation will involve the neighbourhood youth officers across the force who go into schools alongside cadets and their leaders. The presentation is in a format where it auto-plays once started. Requirements for delivery are therefore the ability to connect to the school network.

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