

Personal safety training sessions to protect individuals from crime

A self-defence training session offered to victims of violence against women and girls (VAWG) and the wider public to protect them from crime.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Violence against women and girls Violence (other) Community engagement
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Region	North West
Partners	Police Community safety partnership Education Local authority Private sector Voluntary/not for profit organisation

Key details

Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	March 2025
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Adults Communities Families Victims Women

Aim

The aim of the personal safety training is to provide victims of violence against women and girls (VAWG) and the general public with the skills on how to protect themselves from crime.

Intended outcome

The intended outcome of the personal safety training is to increase the sense of wellbeing and safety of VAWG victims, and the wider public.

Description

One of Cheshire Constabulary's force priorities is to protect vulnerable people. The crime prevention officer did a review of the force's existing prevention initiatives and safety advice. The review found a gap in using initiative to empower individuals to reduce their fear of vulnerability. To bridge the gap, the crime prevention officer approached the charities Cheshire Without Abuse (CWA) and Her-Place about providing personal safety sessions to identified vulnerable women. Both charities agreed to support the initiative.

Planning process

The crime prevention officer reached out to a self-defence trainer who had previously worked with both charities and the force's Safer Streets initiative. During a meeting with the charities, it was decided that there should be:

- closed sessions for vulnerable women who had been referred
- open sessions which would be available to the wider public who may have been a victim of crime or may have a fear of crime

The crime prevention officer applied for funding via the Safer Cheshire East Partnership (SCEP). In April 2024, the force received £1500 and delivered ten open and closed sessions. The only cost incurred is the self-defence instructor, at a rate of £150 per session; they provide all the equipment. In April 2025, the force received £4500 which was used to provide ten open and closed sessions as well as 20 further sessions for girls in colleges and sixth forms.

Once the funding was confirmed, it was decided by the force and charities to hold sessions across all three Eastern Local Policing Units (LPUs). The CWA have an office based in Crewe, and two closed and two open sessions were held at their premises. The crime prevention officer contacted Everybody Health and Leisure to request the use of their studios for the remaining six sessions, who were able to provide the space free of charge. The six sessions are held at Congleton Leisure Centre and Macclesfield Leisure Centre. The force and charities decided that two of the open sessions at each leisure centre would be available to men and women. Each session can accommodate up to 25 participants.

The crime prevention officer created an advert for the open sessions which has a link to the Eventbrite booking pages. The Eventbrite account acts as the main booking facility and a waiting list (a further ten spaces per session for any cancelled tickets). The sessions are shared on the local police Facebook pages and sent out to eastern residents via Cheshire Alert. There was an intention for further advertising to be done by the charities and Everybody Health and Leisure, however the sessions are fully booked within six hours. Two days prior to a session taking place, a reminder email is sent out via Eventbrite requesting any individuals unable to attend to cancel their tickets providing details of what to bring to the event.

The closed sessions are managed by CWA and Her-Place. They are by referral only, with places offered to individuals who were known to the charities involved or known to the police domestic violence advocates (DVAs).

Personal safety sessions

The one-hour sessions provide self-defence training, access to personal safety information, Cheshire Constabulary's personal safety checklist leaflet and Hollie Guard App leaflet, and a personal attack alarm.

Each attendee is required to complete a medical/disclaimer form (for the instructors use) at the beginning of the session.

All attendees are requested to fill out a survey following the open sessions to provide details of whether they found the session beneficial and why they attended. The feedback is then used in the next SCEP funding application.

Overall impact

- To date, approximately 400 women and girls have attended a session. The feedback from the sessions has been positive, with individuals commenting on how impactful the session has been on them, and how they wish they had been able to attend a session before. Mothers have attended with their daughters and working professionals such as social care workers have also attended the sessions.
- Due to the demand and positive feedback, further funding has been secured to provide a second round of sessions (two closed and eight open sessions), which are being held by CWA and Everybody Health and Leisure venues in Alsager, Crewe, and Knutsford.
- Further funding has also been provided to deliver sessions to colleges and sixth forms across the Eastern area.

Learning

- Prior to applying for funding, it is beneficial to ensure that all known aspects of costs are covered. This includes:
 - cost of the self-defence per session
 - charities and organisations that will be involved in the initiative
 - suitable venues to hold the sessions

- A table is included in each venue space to enable the attendees to complete a medical and disclaimer form, display the feedback forms, safety literature and alarms.
- Once the funding application has been approved it is important to have continued communication with involved partners. This is to keep all parties up to date on progress and actions taken.
- It has been easier to manage the attendance numbers for the closed sessions and sixth form/colleges, as they are managed by the charities or schools/colleges.
- The open sessions are managed by the crime prevention officer. This ensures that all important information is provided, such as the minimum age for participation (16 years), attire to wear, and the requirement to arrive 15 minutes prior to the event to complete the health/disclaimer form.
- It was important to include a 'waiting list' option for each of the sessions. The force found that there would be a small number of cancellations following the reminder email. This allowed for people on the waiting list to be offered the available space to optimise the attendance levels at the session.
- All partners provided logos to be used in the advertisement and approved the usage of these before the release.
- Due to the demand being unknown on the first application for funding (pilot initiative), it was beneficial to apply for a smaller number of sessions on the first application. It was important to ensure that feedback was gathered to evidence the positive responses from those that attended the session to secure funding for additional sessions.

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