

## **Eighteen And Under Update: March 2010**

This month we had a meeting with the local council who have kindly offered to assist in further developing some of our policies in order to make them more robust. The importance of having sound policies and good practice, particularly in relation to protecting children and keeping them safe cannot be emphasised enough. We are always delighted to revisit these important issues, particularly with the assistance of expert advice from outside the organisation. Due to recent changes in legislation our Directors are also revisiting policies such as Health & Safety and Sickness. Once the organisation's policies are further developed and adopted we will organise and implement a training programme to ensure they are understood by all workers, volunteers and stakeholders and embedded into our practice.

Throughout March we provided V.I.P. sessions weekly in 3 small rural schools. It was a delight to see such wonderful teachers embrace what we are doing! We worked with a total of 210 children aged between 4 years and 12 years of age, all of who received the full 6-week programme. We also worked intensively with 14 teachers and received excellent constructive and positive feedback from them, all of which will inform our future development.

We have reviewed our V.I.P. practice, recording and delivery methods in order to tighten up and ensure the most effective, evidence-based practice. We are implementing new methods of gathering data to further measure and evaluate such things as disclosures of harm, change in attitudes and opinions and long-term change. We intend to carry out a longitudinal study to measure any change over time with children who are privileged enough to have the V.I.P. lessons repeated yearly. As we are now regularly revisiting schools and being booked years in advance, we are in a very good position to attempt this study. Already schools are lining up to become involved, which is heartening and very exciting. **Anyone** wanting to be involved in any part of this study or to input anything at all into this new development please contact us now.

We provided input to several high schools across Scotland over the month reaching a total of 1,716 young people and 16 teachers directly. Information about all our support services and the Violence Is Preventable project was provided and already there has been a good take up rate.

Senior V.I.P. programme sessions were provided weekly to 4 sheltered establishments and involved working with a total of 42 residents and 7 wardens. The sessions were well received. The only difficulty we have encountered is in trying to get the police in to talk to the participants. This is not their fault of course, they are just so busy, but hopefully we will be able to get them in when they have time. There have been several disclosures of crime and abuse during these sessions and wardens were able to pick up on these issues.

We moved further afield and took up a new challenge of working in a secure unit and a prison setting with the aim of trying out the V.I.P. resources with a group of young people and young adults with very challenging and violent behaviour. This, for us, is another new venture and we would welcome partnerships with any agencies that might be interested in working with us on developing a new V.I.P. programme aimed at tackling these behaviours directly. Please contact us if you want to work with us on this.

An independent consultant has been carrying out an evaluation on some of our work over the past few weeks. We were visited for several days as were schools at different stages of engagement with us, and many people were interviewed. The consultant has been very thorough and sensitive. We await the report with interest. We have already had some sense of some areas that we could improve, including not blowing our own trumpet enough and carrying out more research, but we look forward to finding out where our areas of strength and weakness are, so that we can address and build upon these.

There have been a huge number of presentations, outreach work, networking and promotional events attended over March. Two new schools had presentations and have come on board for V.I.P. delivery. We provided a presentation in Stirling to 22 agencies, attended 12 multi-agency events locally and nationally, including a seminar at the University about child protection which 8 of us attended.

We continue to work closely with our existing partners and continue to try and form new partnerships. We remain keen to learn from the good practice of other organisations while being committed to sharing what we have, that has proven value, with others i.e. the Violence Is Preventable project. One of our existing partners in

Switzerland introduced us to 2 new potential partners. We approached both organisations and both, after finding out more about us, have agreed to join us in new partnerships. One is based in Georgia, Russia and the other is in Lithuania. Funding some of these developing partnerships may become an issue but we are fully committed to working together with as many agencies as we can across all boundaries in order to find ways to protect children everywhere.

At a more local level, teams of our volunteers have been carrying out street work to raise awareness of all our services. We are also currently consulting with hundreds of young people and service users to get their ideas and opinions about our services. D.A.S.I. and Taywise Projects have been busier than ever and DV8 (for LGBT young people) has now become a separate registered charity. They will continue to share our premises until better established.

The numbers of young people dropping in for information and support and attending workshops and other planned events increased to 63 over the month. Adult abuse survivors have been using the drop in service to get instant information and support, which is something we will need to monitor. A total of 6 parents with concerns about their children came into the Centre for support and information. With holidays approaching, we are likely to be busier.

A few new funding opportunities have presented and we are pursuing these while volunteers continue to write to businesses, grant makers and rich people. Some of our young people are also involved in raising funds for us through sponsored events and letter writing. We continue with the need to raise funding to develop new partnerships, develop and produce new resources and fund the core services. We have been looking at premises with better access than we currently have but, to date, there has been nothing suitable. Funds to cover the cost of moving to better premises will also need to be secured.

Volunteers continue to flood into the organisation and we are lucky enough to be recruiting volunteers from many other countries and cultures. We now have volunteers from France, Iran, Iraq, India, Mongolia, Poland, England, Kenya, Nigeria, Ireland and England. This will greatly assist us in understanding other cultures and the wider context of violence and abuse. It also means we have greater capacity

for offering direct support to the wider community. We are now more able to offer translation services to the harder to reach young people with no English, street workers and asylum seekers. We are also increasingly able to get our V.I.P. resources translated into other languages for our growing partnerships.

London launch of Honour and Love DVD was a huge success. Eighteen And Under produced this DVD in partnership with the Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation. There is an English, a Kurdish and an Arabic version of the scenes on this DVD, which cover issues such as FGM, forced marriage and honour killing; as part of this partnership the Wee V.I.P. DVD (for primary age children) and Teen DVD were also translated into Arabic and Kurdish.



The expert panellists at the London Launch of Honour and Love DVD

The launch was held in the headquarters of Amnesty International on 26<sup>th</sup> March and Gona Saed, the chairperson of KMEWO, chaired the event. Speakers were Jean Lambert – Green Party MEP, Sawsan Salim – Director of KMEWO, Irene Clark of Eighteen And Under, Feride Beycan – Women's Rights Activist and Training Consultant.

The four scenes of the DVD were shown and each scene had an expert panellist for questions from the audience as follows:

Heather Harvey – End violence against women campaign manager for Amnesty International.

Roxanna Whittaker – Case-worker for the Forced Marriage Unit

Gerry Campbell – Detective Chief Inspector for the Metropolitan Police Violent Crime Directorate

Dr Comfort Monoh – FGM Specialist at Guy's and St. Thomas' Hospital

Anyone who hasn't yet seen the DVD should have a look at it. It is extremely powerful, especially on the big screen and the audience was stunned into silence by the end of the last scene. The event was extremely successful with over 150 people attending, including some senior pupils from nearby schools. The DVD is a very welcome addition to the V.I.P. programme and already there is huge interest from across the UK.

We do have some copies of this DVD available free of charge (but without the manual or the glossy box), which we can send out to anyone interested in seeing the product before buying, or for anyone who is just interested. Phone us on 01382 206222 to get a copy. The full DVDs with trainers' notes cost £50 each. Accredited training programmes on V.I.P. delivery are also available upon request.

Job interviews were held in the Centre for the four jobs we had available. As a result of this, the position of Office Assistant was filled. Other positions were short-listed and further interviews are continuing with input from young people, students and local business managers. We had hoped to have some input from statutory agencies so as to ensure balance and a fair and transparent process, but we were unsuccessful.

It has been discovered that our resident Chinchilla has a serious and potentially fatal problem with her teeth. This was discovered when we took her to the Vet to find out why she was drooling. The teeth of the poor creature were found to be growing sideways into her gum. While the problem has now been fixed, apparently she will require her teeth filed once or twice yearly. We have opened a Chinchilla fund to assist us to pay for her regular treatment by the Vet. Donations would be welcomed.

A new law came into force in Scotland on 24<sup>th</sup> March. The new law is called the Offences (Aggravation by Prejudice) (Scotland) Act. It means that homo/biphobic, transphobic and disability-prejudice crime is properly recognised as hate crime. We are proud that Scotland is leading the way in Europe with this new law. Let us hope that true equality will not be too far behind this much welcome change in legislation.

Finally, Swahili classes have begun down at the Centre at the request of some young people who wish to learn a new language. The classes are free and open to people of all ages. The classes are at 5pm every Tuesday evening and anyone interested can just come along to 1 Victoria Road, Dundee or phone 01382 206222 to find out more.