

COMIC RELIEF POST- SCHOOLS AND NEIGHBOURHOOD LIAISON WORKER

Our work in schools in Stoke began in earnest in 2009 as a result of a successful funding bid to Comic Relief. We raise awareness about how young people are groomed into sexual exploitation. Our Schools and Neighbourhood Liaison worker, Deb Lawes, is a member of the BASE 58 team. The team works with young men and women, aged 11-17, who are involved in or at risk of sexual exploitation. Over the last few months we have had to decline referrals for girls as young as 8 years old, as our Base 58 contract limits us to those aged 11+. We are seeking to reduce the minimum age as suggested by a recent Barnardos Report. After speaking to staff at a local Primary School, we are very keen to engage in some preventative work with the older year groups in the school subject to approval from the Children's and Young people's Services.

Since 2009 the sexual exploitation of boys and young men has been of growing concern. Our programme has been tailored to respond to this by providing more targeted and intensive young men's workshops which are delivered by the health funded Boys and Men's worker at Base 58.

Information and training is offered to professionals and the current demand for training for both professionals and young people around the risks of sexual exploitation is high and still growing. Internet Safety in particular has become a greater concern to schools as the number of pupils using smart phones increases.

In May 2011 we asked almost 500 16-19 year olds about their internet use and safety.

38% said yes, when asked "do you talk online to people that you don't know?"

25% said yes, when asked, " have you ever met up with someone that you only know through the internet?"

79% said yes, when asked, if one of their top 3 reasons for going online was social networking. 31% said it was to access pornography.

Between April 2010 to March 2011, 1622 young people and 195 professionals attended our workshops. Since April 2011, 1109 young people and 37 professionals have attended our sessions.

Deb Lawes works with young people in one of four ways:

1. In schools in PHSE sessions

Out of 24 schools and alternative education providers in Stoke on Trent we have delivered training in 21. Between April 2010 to July 2011 2,731 young people have attended one of the workshops in schools.

We have drawn on materials developed by other sexual exploitation groups across the country and have used them to provide a robust and appropriate set of resources. These resources are a vital part of our programme and effectively aid the learning of the young people using our service. All lesson plans and programs have recently been updated and remain highly relevant and up-to-date.

We deliver PSHE lessons on three specific topics, sexual exploitation, good and bad relationships and internet safety. The development of the topics came in response to issues and concerns raised by schools. The relationship we have with our stakeholders supports the development of the programme and continues to ensure our sessions are effective and connect with young people. It helps us cover topics in greater depth, helping to protect and safeguard young people.

Feedback from our stakeholders is positive

"I feel that your support was greatly successful in enhancing our students understanding of the dangers of sexual exploitation. Our students reacted very positively to advice/information given throughout both PSHE days..."

Adam Peake, PSHE Coordinator, Sandon Business and Enterprise College, Stoke on Trent.,

"I would like to take this opportunity of thanking you for your help and excellent contribution to our ECM day. This proved to be a great day and the students enjoyed the topic covered (internet safety)."

Julie Brown, Student Support Worker, St. Margaret Ward Catholic College, Stoke on Trent.

Feedback from young people attending a session:

"I have learnt never to talk to people or meet people I don't know."

"I enjoyed talking about good relationships and bad ones so it has made me feel more independent about relationships."

"My favourite session was internet grooming. I didn't really know what it was."

2. Six week course for young people at greater risk

We run a programme of workshops for young people identified as being at higher risk.

The six week course is delivered to a targeted group of either young men or women, made up of those identified by their school as having a higher risk of being exploited. The sessions cover an introduction to sexual exploitation, the grooming process, local hot spots, internet

safety, the risks around mobile technology, good and bad relationships, boundaries, trafficking and self-esteem.

The young men's group also includes sessions on inappropriate sexual behaviour. Something that is reported to be of serious and growing concern amongst teachers of young men with learning difficulties in Special Schools as well as our mainstream high schools in Stoke. It is hoped that through these sessions young people's self esteem will grow and that they will be equipped with the tools to keep themselves safe, with a heightened awareness of high risk situations.

Feedback from young people attending the 6 week course:

"My favourite session was self esteem; I loved the explanation."

"All the sessions were good because I loved it and now I feel much safer."

"The first session was my favourite because we watched a DVD about a young girl in trouble and we thought of ways to help her."

"I now know not to believe everything I hear,"

"Thanks Deb."

3. Drop-in in schools

Base 58 offers a Mac's Place (Multi Agency Centre) during lunch times; in 10 schools in Stoke-on-Trent e.g. 244 young people accessed our Mac's Place during the period Jan 2010 to March 2010, 71 of these young people having a learning difficulty in a Special School. The Mac's Place provides an opportunity for young people to discuss any concerns that they may have around grooming, use of the internet, sexual exploitation, relationships etc. in a more relaxed, less formal environment. Advice and information is offered, safeguarding arrangements put in place and help to access the relevant support services. The use of interactive resources on a 1 to 1 basis and with small groups is effective in the Mac's Place.

Feedback from young people attending the Mac's Place:

"It's good to have someone to talk to about relationships."

"People don't always seem to be the person they appear to be."

"I enjoyed the Friendship Quiz and learning about what makes a good relationship."

"The Heat Magazine worksheet- it is more important what a person is like on the inside- I am special the way I am."

4. Awareness training for professionals

Between April 2010 to July 2011, 232 professionals have attended our workshops. These have been delivered to teachers within schools, to staff at small group children's homes, to voluntary agencies and other groups of professionals who come into contact with young people at risk. Information is provided on the support offered by Base 58 and the referral process into the service. Levels of risk and risk indicators, the differences between the grooming process of young men and women and an overview of sexual exploitation is given and typical scenarios are discussed.

Feedback from professionals attending the training:

"I now know more about Base 58 and the great work that they do with young people and how to refer into them."

"I have a better understanding of sexual exploitation and know where to go to if I am concerned about a young person."

"Great day! The training has been really useful. Understanding the risk indicators will help me to be more aware of how to protect young people."

"I found the DVD upsetting but I have a better understanding of the grooming process and how it can happen to both boys and girls."