

Practice Exemplar – Fife Cares

Name and Timescales

Fife Cares was launched in 2002 and is an ongoing initiative in Fife.

Summary

Fife Cares operates within Fife Safer Communities Team, working with a range of public and third sector partners, including NHS, local authority housing, social work and local voluntary groups who submit referrals to the service. While the service is open to anyone living in Fife, its delivery acknowledges that areas with higher rates of deprivation experience high levels of unintentional harm and injuries.

Home Safety Advisors (HSA) visit vulnerable adults and families with children under 5 years in their homes to provide them with home safety and security advice tailored to their specific needs. Where appropriate advice is supported with the supply of safety equipment, such as walking stick holders and stairgates.

Need for Initiative

Fife Cares was originally developed with a focus on older people. Key factors contributed towards identifying a need for the initiative:

- Scottish Household survey results at the time indicated that that older people living in Fife reporting feeling unsafe at home at night.
- Anecdotal feedback received from older people. While they were aware that community safety/welfare services existed, they often felt overwhelmed and unsure how to access, reporting a need for a 'one stop shop' type service.

The Fife Cares service originated a smaller pilot called Homecheck, which involved home visits and injury prevention advice. Following the end of the pilot period, community safety partners considered how best to identify and support vulnerable older people in Fife. The initiative was brought within the remit of the Fife Community Safety Partnership and developed into what is now Fife Cares.

Aims and Objectives

Fife Cares aims to:

- Reduce the risk of unintentional harm and injuries for vulnerable adults and families.
- Raise awareness of and inform service users about key home safety and security issues.
- Increase awareness of and access to a range of welfare support services.

The aims of the initiative have evolved as the remit of Fife Cares has widened to include families with young children and all vulnerable adults, as well as older people, over the years.

Delivery

Referrals are received from partners, as well as self-referrals from people living in Fife. The service is delivered in a mobile and flexible way. HSAs are equipped with individual tablets. These allow HSAs to accept referrals, record visits and make onward referrals and has greatly reduced administration associated with the service. As a result more time can be spent on visits, which widens the reach and increases the impact of the service. When it is deemed suitable to supply home safety and/or security equipment, this is installed by MATRIX Fife, a supported employment centre.

The service also accesses wider support from the Safer Communities Team. Much of this support is around the ongoing development of the service, providing the link between operational delivery and strategy. This includes close working with Scottish Fire and Rescue partners to ensure collective working towards the strategic aim to 'keep people safe from fire and unintentional harm'.

Successes and Challenges

Successes:

- Progression from a Fife Council service to a strong partnership initiative. HSAs work closely with partners, particularly Police and SFRS colleagues. This includes mutual training with SFRS, meaning that HSAs can offer fire safety advice and SFRS can cover child safety during home fire safety visits – ensuring all aspects of home safety are covered.
- Continuing to operate in a constrained financial climate, during a time of changing priorities, is considered a success for the service. Fife Cares is one of the few remaining home safety services of its kind that remain in Scotland.

Challenges:

- Financial pressures are a challenge for the service, with a sense of attempting 'to do more with less'
- Effective data sharing arrangements are a challenge with the service. An agreement with NHS Fife exists, however more work is required to determine what how frequently and the type of information is useful for partners for the agreement to work better.

The Fife Safer Communities team works closely with community safety partners to mitigate these challenges.

Impact/Change

Evaluation of the Fife Cares is difficult, however the number of visits undertaken and equipment provided are regularly reported, 6 monthly to local Area Committees and annually as part of wider directorate performance reporting. Much of the evaluation that exists is based on feedback from community safety practitioners and individuals. Where appropriate case studies are used to report on the service.

Reflections

As the service has developed, it has become apparent that while important, the free installation should not be the main focus. In some cases, it can detract from safety messages. It is more important to focus on how to support and encourage people to keep themselves safe.

It also important to continually consider and reflect on what is needed to keep people safe and secure, ensuring that advice and support is relevant and up to date. For example, when discussing child safety it is no longer as relevant to talk about socket covers but rather highlight dangers of liquid tabs poisonings and blind cords.

Additional Information

The most recent development of the service has been a lottery funded project, led by Fife's Violence Against Women Partnership, HSAs visit women who have experienced domestic abuse and provide advice on the effective use of existing security and recommendations on enhanced measures.

<https://www.fifedirect.org.uk/topics/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.display&p2sid=0BCFB895-CE90-689C-4A889C542587408D&themeid=98A56687-9A34-4494-A43C-68E07CCA64E>

Author and Contact Details

Tricia Spacey
Tricia.Spacey@scsn.org.uk