

Case Study

9. STOP (Sacro Tackling Offending Prejudices)

Kate Ritchie (SACRO)

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Background

STOP (Sacro Tackling Offending Prejudices) effectively tackles all low to moderate levels of Sectarian and Hate Crime offending by addressing the root cause of discrimination whilst challenging the attitudes and behaviours that may contribute to the offending.

The service provides bespoke CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) educational programmes focused on behavioural and attitudinal change, for first time/low to moderate level offenders who are assessed as appropriate for either the six or four module programme; these can be completed within a small group environment or on a one-to-one basis. Each programme delivery is tailored to meet the needs of the service user/and can also assist with those at risk of radicalisation. STOP can also be utilised as a preventative service where there are genuine Hate Crime behavioural concerns.

The bespoke programme that the STOP service utilises was written by Tim Chapman (LIB Hons) to tackle Sectarianism in Scotland and has been adapted to cover all Hate Crime protected characteristics using the same structure and Cognitive Behavioural Intervention techniques. The programmes support the individual to understand why they behave in a specific way and to take ownership of their attitude and behaviours to ensure positive changes so as not to commit any further Hate Crimes.

The STOP team are based in Motherwell and are currently funded by the Scottish Government to work Pan Lanarkshire (North and South), Glasgow, and East Dunbartonshire.

Referrals can be processed as a Preventative Measure, Diversion from Prosecution (DfP), as part of a Structured Deferred Sentence (SDS) and also as a Post Prosecution measure. The programme takes approximately six to eight weeks for completion.

STOP can accept referrals from Procurator Fiscals (PF's), Community Payback Services (CPS), Social Work, Sheriffs, EEI/Whole System teams, Children's Hearing/Reporters, Police Scotland, British Transport Police, Scottish Prison

Service Staff, Education Services, Solicitors, Third Sector Organisations, Housing Providers, Football Clubs and Self Referrals.

STOP can accept referrals for service users from the age of 12 years.

STOP can also respond to the needs of victims (Person Harmed - PH) to increase confidence and access to the Criminal Justice System by (where suitable) establishing the participation and representation of PHs through Restorative Justice (RJ) interventions. RJ allows Persons Harmed by the offence to be involved in dialogue around impact of the offenders' attitudes and behaviours.

STOP will update the referrer accordingly regarding the engagement levels of the service user and a completion report is compiled by the allocated Criminal Justice Worker for the referrer.

Example of Good Practice

Jordan (18 years old) was referred for sectarian behaviour on two counts; social media posts and prohibited flag flying at football. He had been charged under the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act 2012, Section 1(1). The social media and football related behaviours were linked with the same item being posted as well as flown.

Jordan had no previous charges and was referred as a DfP service for youths; evidence for the case had been collated by FoCUS and Police Scotland. He lived in an area of Glasgow that is well known for sectarian views amongst the residents. Jordan genuinely thought his behaviour was normal and not illegal. He was really worried the impact that the charge would have on prospects for education and work.

Jordan was very willing to work with STOP and half way through the programme successfully gained employment over the Christmas period and is still in that employment today. Jordan demonstrated a real lack of awareness of the full wide reaching impact of his behaviours and was very shocked and humbled by the potential direct and indirect consequences of his behaviours. He successfully demonstrated real changes to behaviour and attitudes, as well as expressing genuine feelings of never getting involved in the Criminal Justice System ever again. Throughout the programme, Jordan had not been banned from attending football matches but explored all the aspects of non-offensive behaviour at football games including competitiveness as opposed to hatred, and researching to understand the history and meanings of flags and symbols, banter, and song lyrics. This linked in well with appropriate social media posting and involvement/association. Jordan successfully completed the programme.

Benefits and Impact

STOP are continually increasing the number of rehabilitative options open to the Procurator Fiscal, Scottish Courts, Youth Justice and Criminal Justice services in Scotland to address Sectarian and Hate Crime offences.

STOP has worked with individuals charged with Sectarianism and Hate Crime offences in order to positively challenge and change prejudicial attitudes and behaviours, reducing the re/occurrence of Hate Crime offences. These messages of inclusion and cohesion are filtered through service user's families, friends and communities, increasing the safety and participation of victimised groups. The utilisation of all STOP programmes will increase awareness and understanding of the definition and recognition of prejudice, Sectarianism and all other Hate Crimes in the hope of preventing further Sectarian and Hate Crimes being committed, increasing understanding of the effects of discrimination, while promoting a united response to challenging the philosophy of "It's none of my business." This places responsibility on individuals and communities to safe guard each other and report/challenge any prejudicial behaviour.

The benefits of the service and programme are immense, as it provides a real educational option for young people and first time offenders who would otherwise be criminalised, to analyse and address their attitudes and behaviours, in turn making communities (particularly those that are marginalized) safer, and creating more responsible citizens.

During the delivery of the STOP programme staff have been able to increase informed understanding of approaches to dealing with offending behaviour arising from discriminatory attitudes via efficient and effective communication with key stakeholders and gatekeepers.

The utilisation of all STOP programmes will increase awareness and understanding of the definition and recognition of prejudice, Sectarianism and all other Hate Crimes, thus embracing the need for a united and active response to the reporting of Hate Crime offences, which will increase the visibility of these offences and the impact on the necessary reporting of such.

STOP has continued to evolve our one day awareness raising group work sessions to HMP and HMYOI establishments in the hope of preventing further Sectarian and Hate Crimes being committed, increasing understanding of the effects of discrimination, while promoting a united response to challenging the philosophy of "It's none of my business." placing the responsibilities on individuals and communities to safe guard each other and report/challenge any prejudicial behaviour. The programme also incorporated a discussion in relation to the Hate Crime consultation process that was taking place in Scotland and the possible implication that the current five protected characteristics could realistically be seven soon.

STOP acknowledges that the delivery of Sectarian and Hate Crime programmes as part of Other Activities within CPS and within HMP/HMYOI has the potential to be a very valuable tool to assist with increasing awareness and reducing the

potential of Hate Crime offending for a population already involved with the criminal justice system.

Our service aims to enhance community living and promote a society where any form of prejudice, discrimination and offending because of affiliation or membership with religion, race, colour, creed, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, gender presentation or disability is eliminated. Only once these skills and competencies are established within the minority group of Sectarian and Hate Crime offenders within our communities can we begin to eradicate Sectarianism and Hate Crime behaviours in Scotland.

All programmes encompass a cognitive behavioural coaching model combining Motivational Interviewing Techniques with Change Talk to encourage and support the individual to identify their attitudes and behaviours as unacceptable, dangerous and illegal.

The programmes empower the service user to understand why they behave in a specific way and why they need to take ownership of their attitudes and behaviours to increase the likelihood of positive changes. These messages are embraced by those participating in the programme and filtered through their own social contacts and networks, allowing for the programme messages to have a wider reach. STOP has continued to provide, develop, advertise and monitor our Social Media Sectarian and Hate Crime Facebook page for hard to reach communities. This is a national safe and secure place where anyone can access information, guidance or support on Sectarian and Hate Crime issues/rights.

What makes this work?

Scottish Government funding and investment in the service, good partnership working and knowledge of the service with all potential referrers. Committed, passionate and dedicated STOP staff utilising a bespoke CBT programme that is flexible enough to be tailored to the needs of the service user. Preservation of the validity of the programme and expansion of the programme to meet the needs of service users in a variety of communities.

Challenges and Barriers

STOP has been unable to take action in directly responding to the needs of persons harmed this year (Restorative Justice). This may well have a damaging effect to the confidence and presence of those with protected characteristics who wanted to have a voice in relation to being offended against. The need to feel valued and to co-operate within the current criminal justice system for these persons harmed has not been possible this year largely due to new GDPR laws.

The fact that the STOP service is not available nationally is another potential barrier for the allocation of PF's referrals as our financial income confines us in relation to areas that we can cover. The areas that we do currently operate in encompasses over 37% of all Scotland's Hate Crime (2018-2019).

Although STOP was funded with the same amount of money as last year, once again this meant that we could no longer sustain the staffing structure at a comparable level.

How could this be improved further?

The vision is that Sacro STOP becomes a National Service embedded in the Criminal/Community Justice System and that the Restorative Justice process is available for all persons harmed by Hate Crime.

What has been learnt?

The STOP service Hate Crime programmes were developed from the bespoke programme to tackle Sectarianism as some service users presented with more than one Hate Crime issue and it was important that the service addressed all of the presenting Hate Crime issues to prevent any further Hate Crime offending by the service user.

Communications with PF's is vital to ensure that the hub markers are aware of the STOP service and the areas in which we operate.

Although the existence of STOP is communicated and discussed at a senior level with all potential referral services it is important that discussions also take place with staff on the ground level as these are the case holders/front line workers and our potential referrers.

The majority of service users who are referred to the service willingly engage with and successfully complete the programme.

In order for STOP to exist it is imperative that DfP and educational rehabilitative services like STOP are funded appropriately and consistently to effectively and efficiently assist with both Criminal/Community Justice Reforms in Scotland.

STOP requires to be independently evaluated.

Further Information

<https://www.sacro.org.uk/services/criminal-justice/stop-anti-sectarianism-hate-crime-services>