

*Violence is preventable,
not inevitable.*

All the latest news from the
Violence Reduction Unit

Winter 2011 / 12

'Letter to Santa' highlights impact of domestic violence on kids



We're taking action
to secure a brighter
future for children
who live in fear of
abuse and violence.



A special 'Letter to Santa' was used to help highlight the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people as part of the domestic abuse phase of our Anti-Violence Campaign, which started in December.

Developed by the VRU and CHILDREN 1ST, the letter raised awareness of the effects domestic violence can have on the whole family. Inspired by CHILDREN 1ST service users who shared their experiences of Christmas growing up in homes where domestic violence was present, the letter, written by "Ben", read: "Dear Santa, all I want for Christmas is for the fighting to stop."

The "letter", which was hosted on both the VRU and CHILDREN 1ST websites, received lots of media attention, with extensive coverage in the Daily Record prompting numerous donations.

One caller told CHILDREN 1ST:

"I didn't know that Christmas could be so dreadful for so many children and Ben's story really touched my heart."

Chief Inspector Graham Goulden, who heads up the Anti-Violence Campaign on behalf of the VRU, said:

"Christmas is a peak period for domestic abuse incidents and children in homes where these incidents happen often witness the abuse and are therefore victims too. The impact of that can stay with them their whole lives and potentially affect their relationship with their own children through things like depression, low self worth and a range of other issues. That's why CHILDREN 1ST is so important in supporting children and young people who have been victims of domestic abuse."

Find out more: <http://www.actiononviolence.org.uk/content/letter-santa-highlights-impact-domestic-violence-kids>

Campaign encourages public to avoid ‘cocktail for violence’



A VRU campaign urging the public to avoid a “cocktail for violence” ran across Scotland over the festive period.

The campaign, which ran over Christmas and New Year, was supported by the Football Coordination Unit for Scotland (FoCUS).

As part of the campaign, posters were distributed to off licences and supermarkets across Scotland. Listing the ingredients

for a cocktail for violence as “1 part anger, 1 part stupidity and 1 part alcohol”, the posters advised that if an argument starts, people should stop drinking, leave the house and get some air.

The campaign message also featured on 2 million car parking tickets which were distributed via on and off street parking ticket vending machines across Glasgow.

Scotland Says No: new website marks start of domestic abuse campaign

A new domestic abuse website offering advice to victims, perpetrators and their friends and family has been launched by the VRU.

The site, www.scotlandsaysno.org.uk, will eventually act as a central hub for information on domestic abuse from all Scottish police force websites.

“Reluctant”

Detective Inspector Linda Borland, who coordinated the development of the site, said:

“We know victims can be reluctant to contact the police sometimes, so by having a stand alone site all forces can link to we can provide the information they need without them feeling any pressure.”

The launch, on December 1, coincided with the first day of the domestic abuse phase of this year’s Anti-Violence Campaign.

Almost 52,000 incidents of domestic abuse were recorded by police in Scotland during 2009 - 10. Chief Inspector Graham Goulden, who leads the Anti-Violence Campaign on behalf of the VRU said:

“If we really want to make a difference to levels of domestic abuse, we need to look at our attitudes towards relationships and what we see as acceptable. Bystanders have a very ef-



fective role to play in violence prevention.

“have a go hero”

“It’s not about tackling violence with violence or being a have a go hero. It can be as simple as supporting a friend or family member who you suspect of being a victim of domestic abuse or even speaking to a friend who you suspect may be an abuser.

“We often see domestic abuse as a private matter, but abuse is everyone’s problem. While the police and domestic abuse organisations can raise awareness, people across Scotland need to stand up and say ‘enough’”.

Visit Scotland Says No now at www.scotlandsaysno.org.uk

VRU Facebook page back up and running

To those of you who follow us on Facebook, our apologies - we've been experiencing a few technical difficulties of late. However, we are now back up and running and you can "like" us by searching for vruscotland (www.facebook.com/vruscotland).

Don't forget we're also on Twitter - look for [@vruscotland](https://twitter.com/vruscotland). You can also follow co-director John Carnochan ([@johncarnochan](https://twitter.com/johncarnochan)) and anti-violence campaign co-ordinator Graham Goulden ([@graham_vru](https://twitter.com/graham_vru)).

Pupils to be trained in violence prevention

Pupils in two Scottish schools will be trained to intervene and prevent violence under a new VRU project

Youngsters at Portobello High School, Edinburgh, and the joint campus of St Stephen's and Port Glasgow High, Inverclyde, will take part in the project which encourages people to challenge aggressive and inappropriate behaviour. The two schools were selected for their enthusiasm for the project rather than any particular problems.

Bystander

The project, MVP (Mentors in Violence Prevention) Scotland, is modelled on a programme used in schools, universities and armed forces training facilities across the USA. It uses a "bystander" approach, encouraging people to take a stand against harassment, abuse and violence rather than just ignoring it.

30 people from each school have initially been trained – a mix of teachers, youth workers and community mem-

bers. They will then pass their knowledge on to "peer mentors" – youngsters in their fourth, fifth and sixth years of school – who are expected to be recruited before the end of February. They in turn will pass their knowledge on to other pupils.

"Challenging"

Rachel Barr, a school-based social worker at Portobello High School who undertook the initial training course, said:

"We want to look at what the pupils would do as a bystander if they are witnessing difficult situations or if they see something happening that they don't think is ok. We will practise ways of challenging that kind of behaviour in a safe way."

Police recorded 51,926 incidents of domestic abuse in Scotland during 2009 – 2010.

Dr Mairead Tagg of Glasgow East Women's Aid, who has been advising on the development of the MVP Scotland programme, said:

"We're seeing children be-

ing exposed to highly sexualised behaviour, difficult family situations and complex social dynamics while being bombarded by different messages through social media. MVP gives them a third option with safe ways to intervene – something many adults and children don't know exists."

If successful, the project, which is supported by the Scottish Government, could be rolled out nationwide following evaluation.

"Positive climate"

Chief Inspector Graham Goulden, who is leading the project on behalf of the VRU, said:

"We want to give young people the ability to discuss these issues in a safe environment, to engage when they see an incident and to create a positive climate within their school. This is not a magic solution – it won't stop abuse overnight – but we need to make it clear that abusive behaviour is not the norm."

Red letter days for Karyn

November was a busy month for co-director Karyn McCluskey as she scooped a top women's magazine award and saw herself portrayed on a London stage.

Having been nominated for the Community award in Red magazine's 2011 Hot Women Awards, Karyn fought off stiff competition to win and was presented with her award in a cer-

emony held in central London on 23 November.

Judging panel member Miriam González Durántez, leading lawyer and wife of Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, called Karyn "truly inspirational".



Two days later she was back in London to act as a panel member for a discussion group following a staging of Gillian Slovo's new play *The Riots*, which looks at the reasons for the riots which occurred in some English cities in

August 2011 and the aftermath for those involved. Karyn was one of those interviewed by Gillian to inform the piece and gain some perspective on why it might have occurred.

CIRV model shared with Turkey

The international reputation of the VRU's CIRV gangs' project was raised further when Chief Inspector Robert Stevenson, who formerly led CIRV on the Unit's behalf, was invited to speak at a conference in Turkey late last year.

Robert was invited to speak at a European Commission Workshop on tackling juvenile violence held in Sivas, central Turkey, in October. The EC organised the workshop for the benefit of the Ministry of the Interior of Turkey as part of an ongoing programme of supporting partner countries with regard to the approximation, application and enforcement of EU legislation.

Due to his experience in leading CIRV, Robert was asked to contribute to a session on Violence amongst Youth to over 100 Turkish and international delegates. Other contributors to the event included police officers, public health practitioners, scholars and international experts from such organisations as the World Health Organisation and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) for England and Wales.

The workshop formed part of the overall goal of establishing a centre to provide a scientific forum for scholars and practitioners in the field to increase understanding of the nature of violence.

Moving on...

The VRU said goodbye to two of our analytical staff in December and January. Analyst Maighread Townsend, who worked on both Operation Phoenix and our Injury Surveillance pilot in Lanarkshire, is moving to Strathclyde's Murder Investigation Team, while Researcher Corinne Russell will become an Analyst in Counter Terrorism Intelligence.

We will also be saying goodbye to Acting Chief Inspector Ian Morris in March, when he returns to Central Police.

Upcoming events

Domestic Abuse Conference

*Scottish Police College, Tulliallan, Kincardine, Fife, Monday
19 March 2012*

The VRU will be holding its annual domestic abuse conference at the Police College early next year. The 2011 - 12 domestic abuse phase of the national Anti-Violence Campaign started on 1 December and will run until 31 January. One of the main focuses of the campaign is the impact of domestic abuse upon children, which will also be one of the focal points of the conference.

More details of the conference will be available online at www.actiononviolence.org.uk/events shortly.