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THE IMPACT AND EFFECTIVENESS OF CAMPUS OFFICERS IN SCOTTISH SCHOOLS

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of campus officers in Scottish schools. This is the first independent national evaluation of campus officers in Scotland and will provide evidence to help plan future developments among existing and new campus officers.

The role of the school in tackling issues of antisocial behaviour and crime has been highlighted by the Scottish Government in the document 'Preventing Offending by Young People: A Framework for Action'. However, schools are not working in isolation. The introduction of 'Getting It Right for Every Child', the Government's principle delivery mechanism⁶, has emphasised the importance of other agencies, like the police and health services, working in collaboration with schools to help young people make the right decisions in life [1].

Campus officers provide one vehicle for demonstrating how these agencies are working together to help young people engage in positive behaviour and steer vulnerable young people away from antisocial behaviour and crime.

Most campus officers worked with feeder primary schools and saw this work as extremely important. However, time constraints have minimised this work and some officers have had to concentrate on working only with P6 and P7 pupils.

Educational staff and campus officers felt that campus officers should not be involved in discipline and this was generally the case unless an incident included potentially criminal behaviour.

Campus officers' work with primary school pupils was typically seen as an extremely important part of their role. Participants cited the benefits of developing a positive relationship between young people and the police at an early stage as being vital.

The transition period between primary and secondary was an important time for the campus officer to work with primary pupils as campus officers could help primary pupils understand what to expect and reassure pupils about any concerns they may have about what life is like in secondary school.

Participants also felt that allowing the children to meet the campus officer before they attended the secondary school reduced the shock of seeing an officer in school and helped make it clear the officer was there to help them.

In practice, however, officers did not always spend the amount of time they would have liked in primary schools due to time constraints and the dispersed locations of the schools. One solution favoured by some schools was to work specifically with pupils from P6 and P7 rather than spread resources across the whole primary school. This allowed them to focus on the transition to secondary school and work with primary pupils on a more regular basis. In most cases, the existing education liaison officers continued to provide class inputs for the younger years.

In the main, participants from both the police and the education sector felt that the campus officer performed a new and separate role from existing teaching roles and the roles of other educational staff. They generally subscribed to the view that the campus officer was there to provide support and advice for others to be better able to perform their own role. Campus officers were

generally felt to be approachable, knowledgeable and flexible, fitting in well with school policies and procedures.

In the mapping exercise, the majority of head teachers and campus officers said that the officer spent 80-90% of their time at the school. On occasion, undertaking other policing roles took them away from their school duties. The main reasons for absence from schools were police specialisms (for example police diving), operational policing (such as giving evidence in court) and training requirements [2].

Educational staff typically found the removal of campus officers from schools frustrating as the officer was not always there when they needed them.

Commonly, they understood this was inevitable as they recognised the campus officer was still a police officer. However, the impact of the campus officer being pulled away to other police duties was considerably reduced where it was possible to advise educational staff of this in advance and provide a replacement if resources allowed.

Educational staff and pupils had largely positive feelings towards their campus officer. However, for some pupils, this positive attitude did not extend to the police as a whole.

Educational staff and campus officers also felt that this role had successfully: provided positive role models to pupils; improved information sharing between police and educational staff; reduced serious indiscipline, physical violence and gang activity in case study schools; increased the feeling of safety at school for pupils and staff; improved the way complaints made by the local community about pupils are handled.

In several cases, the campus officer was shared between more than one school. As a result, these officers had increased pressures on their time and did not achieve the same impact as officers dedicated to a single school.

In some schools the campus officer accompanied the Education Welfare Officer on home visits to speak to parents of truanting pupils. There was no evidence to suggest that this had a positive effect on attendance rates.

A set of success criteria was devised to evaluate the *potential* impact and effectiveness of campus officers using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. During the mapping stage, head

teachers, campus officers and other educational staff were asked about the aims and objectives of placing a campus officer in the school as well as what they considered worked well about placing an officer in the school. The following success criteria were developed using these findings. So, a campus officer can be regarded as successful if she:

1. Improved the pupils' relationship with the police.
2. Acted as a positive role model to pupils.
3. Improved information sharing between the police and education staff.
4. Reduced the following types of behaviour in school and/or in the local community: bullying, serious indiscipline, physical violence, gang activity.
5. Increased the feeling of safety at school for pupils and/or staff.
6. Improved the way complaints (made by the local community) are handled by the school [3].

Generally, it can be assumed that the better a campus officer's performance on each of these criteria, the more successful the role of the campus officer in relation to the school, the wider community and/or improving the lives of challenging children and/or children at risk.

Reference list

1. Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) (2011). 'Early intervention: the next steps. The Hallett and Graham Allen review', Connect, February, 4. [online]. Available: www.acpo.police.uk/documents/children/2011/20110408%20CYP%20New%20Feb%202011.pdf [9 September, 2011].
2. Black, C., Homes, A., Diffley, M., Sewel, K. and Chamberlain, V. (2010). Evaluation of Campus Police Officers in Scottish Schools. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.
3. Tilley, N., Smith, J., Finer, S., Erol, R., Charles, C. and Dobby, J. (2004). Problem Solving Street Crime: Practical Lessons from the Street Crime Initiative [online]. Available: <http://rds.home> [19 September, 2011].