



CASE STUDY

Early Intervention Approach: A Partnership Project with Scottish Fire and Rescue Services, NHS Grampian, Police Scotland and Aberdeenshire Council



A new Community Support and Safety Officer post was introduced in Aberdeenshire in March 2017 for a period of 12 months as part of a pilot project helping communities within the Braemar and Ballater corridor in the Marr area of Aberdeenshire.



The pilot project is a partnership venture funded and supported by Aberdeenshire Council, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), NHS Scotland and Police Scotland.



The overarching aim is to contribute to the safety of the Ballater, Crathie and Braemar communities — providing support for the communities in a rural setting, connecting people, signposting, improving access to advice and information services whilst tackling loneliness and isolation — and ultimately assist the delivery of successful outcomes for and with the communities.



The new Community Support and Safety Officer (CSSO) post has bases at SFRS and council premises although is mainly mobile out in the community.



Visits are made to individuals at home and the CSSO can provide additional support when needed and refer the person on to other specialist agencies for any relevant support.

The Challenge

Aberdeenshire Council and other services did not have a permanent base in rural villages and therefore were not as accessible to the public.



Much of the area is sparsely populated and the population is aging, with 21% over 65 years old. The rural nature of the area and this increasing age profile of the population will provide unique challenges for services in the future, particularly health and social care services.

Other concerns in the area include dispersed rural deprivation and isolation where there are access issues, lack of public transport, high dependency on cars and fuel poverty.

Following the floods caused by Storm Frank in 2016 it was felt that an embedded support and safety resource would be beneficial in the area.



CASE STUDY

Intended Outcomes

Partners wanted to make Marr a safer place to live, work and visit and make life safer for vulnerable groups or people at risk in the community.

This is being achieved through partnership working, optimising budgets, co-ordinating projects and sharing knowledge and resources.

This approach was seen by partners as a solution to the [Christie Commission report](#) which made recommendations on how public services should be delivered and work more closely with individuals and communities. It recommended collaborative interventions which tackle the root causes of negative outcomes and developing a more outcome focused approach for people in rural localities.

Action/Approach Taken

The position was advertised with the potential for the post holder to become a retained firefighter.

This provided additional benefits for SFRS, which can struggle to recruit retained offices in rural areas. The first few months of the pilot involved making connections and building relationships, raising awareness of the new role and engaging with the community and through the Marr Community Planning Group, key partners and council services.

The awareness-raising sessions were a mechanism to gain a better picture of the main problems and issues for people in this community. This flagged up some emerging issues and areas of concern.

Obstacles and Issues

For the first few months of the pilot it was difficult to show the outcomes until it became clear how the project was going to evolve. It took a few months for partners to agree how they could work together and set some goals and targets. As the post was a new initiative there was no work plan to follow and that had to be developed.

The area had over 100 community groups which were all working in isolation on different things. A key task for the CSSO was to think about how they would work closely with these groups and connect them with each other to work better together.

When partners started to make requests for presentations about the project the officer says, "I had nothing to go on and had to set everything up from scratch. It was a challenge to get used to each

The awareness-raising sessions were a mechanism to gain a better picture of the main problems and issues for people in this community. This flagged up some emerging issues and areas of concern.



CASE STUDY



“I had nothing to go on and had to set everything up from scratch. It was a challenge to get used to each partner’s templates as they all worked quite differently and had different formats.”

partner’s templates as they all worked quite differently and had different formats.” The officer trialed presentations with schools to get some feedback before rolling them out wider.

Another obstacles was try to understand the barriers for people in accessing services, particularly whether they have access to the internet. The partnership had to identify what other communication channels are available to them and learn from their experiences.

Results

The results show how effective this approach has been for addressing the needs of the community, creating a more joined-up and cohesive community in a rural location.

The project has helped partners understand where the gaps are and how the connections can be made to achieve better outcomes for people.

Examples of some of the work and outcomes achieved through this post include:

- Increased activity in health and other prevention initiatives.
- Increased availability of emergency medical response.
- Greater accessibility to CPR training (*pictured*).
- Support for the reduction in inequalities across geographical communities.
- Support for improving anti-social behaviour.

The CSSO said, “Partners thought I would be working mainly with older people but this turned out very differently.”

Some of the highlights and results include:



CASE STUDY

“A shared understanding of the challenges and outcomes to be achieved pushed the project to delivering successful outcomes for the communities and the people who live there.”

- A diverse training package was undertaken by a range of partners to help understand the needs of people and communities.
- The project established referral pathways and relationships between key stakeholders.
- It identified gaps in service delivery, for example, no one was delivering CPR training for parents.
- Strong links were made with community councils.
- The CSSO engaged with education services, working with staff, parents and pupils.
- The CSSO is now trained up as a community first responder; people in the community felt that they didn't always have access to the services that they needed e.g. quick and easy access to an ambulance service.
- The CSSO has been invited to join the [Financial Harm Working Group](#) and partners have linked up with trading standards on scams prevention and awareness events.
- Participation on a working group that is developing strategies for adults who end up feeling isolated and dealing with issues of rurality.
- The project is helping partners who sometimes lack capacity to take forward issues to make connections and best use of resources.
- Health and other partners have jointly developed a leaflet on rural poverty and isolation targeted at people who don't recognise themselves as carers.
- Good links have been established with public health, health and social care partners, Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action (third sector interface), housing and many other agencies. The relationships and referral pathways keep expanding.
- Vulnerable adults training to help carry out the home safety fire visits. Referrals from multiple partners to do the home safety visits (pictured).

The Marr Area Manager, says, “The CSSO is a true partnership post which, in developing,





CASE STUDY

provided challenges in how organisations work together in terms of HR policies and ICT. But a shared understanding of the challenges and outcomes to be achieved pushed the project to delivering successful outcomes for the communities and the people who live there.”

Marr Station Manager, SFRS says, “This pilot project embodies true partnership working and falls within the project scope of “consider the rural and remote rural integration opportunities for improving community safety in Scotland”, as detailed in the SFRS publication ‘Bringing the Christie Commission into Focus’.”

It is anticipated that the project will now be extended for a further 11 months with funding from, SFRS, NHS Grampian and Aberdeenshire Council (Community Safety).

The project officer will work closely with the members of the [Aberdeenshire Financial Inclusion Partnership](#) to share knowledge, practice and training, and most importantly, build on the referral pathways and contribute to the action plan.

Lessons Learned

One of the challenges during the first few months of the project was a lack of clear goals and targets, and knowledge about how to measure its success.

Partners had no expectations of this new model and way of working which meant that a lot of time was consumed in the early part of the project trying to work out how the partners could work together and establish pathways. It made it more difficult to report and measure progress in the early phase of the project. However, this has become much easier as the project has moved on.

Next Steps

- Develop the project during the expansion period
- Expand across other areas in Aberdeenshire
- Continue to engage with financial inclusion partners and the advice and information services, referring people for help early rather than at crisis point
- Share learning from the project wider, highlighting where community safety and strategy sit together
- Define clear goals and settings for the project to measure against
- To secure funding for embedding and mainstreaming this project into a permanent role within community safety
- Community safety group to consider the wider roll-out of the project



CASE STUDY

- Further evaluation
- Prepare case studies

[Additional Information](#)

Download the [interim report](#) for the project.

Download the [Marr Action Plan](#).

Download the the [Marr Community Plan](#).

[Scottish Fire and Rescue Service](#)

[Marr Community Planning Group](#)

[Aberdeenshire Community Safety Partnership](#)

[Aberdeenshire Financial Inclusion Partnership](#)

[Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Advice Network](#)



Contact

Lucy Styles

Aberdeenshire Community Planning Officer
Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership
lucy.styles@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Sandra Sankey

Project Manager, Improving Outcomes in Money
Advice Project
Improvement Service
sandra.sankey@improvementservice.org.uk