

February Update Eighteen And Under

This month we mailed every school in Scotland, to share news and information about the V.I.P. and the many other projects we have on offer. Volunteers are each choosing areas across England and Ireland and mailing links to our web sites. Other volunteers are involved in translations of the resources and supporting young people who have been abused.

At the beginning of the month we delivered another V.I.P. (Violence Is Preventable) 3-day training course to a group of workers, volunteers and social work students. Our training programmes, which draw heavily on current evidence-based research, provides participants with a range of skills and information on how to effectively deliver (and measure) abuse prevention work in schools.

In Essex, England, a lot of hard work is currently being undertaken by a worker from an independent agency to replicate V.I.P. in the schools there. This worker had researched prevention methods and resources looking for those with proven value, found the V.I.P., raised funds, visited Scotland and successfully completed the training programme. The next steps are in progress and, over the next few months, this exciting development should lead to V.I.P. being established, delivered and rolled out into schools across Essex. Eighteen And Under will continue to provide information, consultancy and training to fully support this worker and the developments.

Agencies and workers from other towns, counties and even countries are continuing to line up to form working partnerships with us in order to secure V.I.P. resources and processes for their own use and we remain open to being involved with a wide range of different partners. We are keen to encourage translations of language and culture and the piloting of V.I.P. in research-based ways, so as to continue to gather solid evidence of what actually works in preventing violence and abuse.

In February, we held the Edinburgh launch of our Arabic and Kurdish language DVDs and the Honour & Love DVD (and teacher's notes) in partnership with Shaki Women's Aid. The Honour and Love DVD is aimed at using with ages 14 to adult, and focuses on issues such as forced marriage, honour killings, female genital mutilation (FGM), gender equality, power and control, amongst other things. This DVD and the accompanying trainers manual was developed in partnership with the Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation (KMEWO) and was funded by the Nationwide Foundation. It is now available in English, Arabic and Kurdish and is set to become an important tool for helping young people and adults to learn about a wide range of cultural issues and abuse, which currently affects millions of people globally.

The London Launch of the Honour and Love DVD is planned to be a very grand affair. It is to be held on 26th March, between 3pm and 6pm at Amnesty International UK, London. It is essential to book if you wish to attend this event. Speakers and panel members will include workers from Eighteen And Under, KMEWO, Metropolitan

Police, Amnesty international, MEP's, women's aid, FGM and forced marriage specialists, doctors and other interested parties.

We directly delivered V.I.P. sessions to 2 different primary schools, working with a total of 380 children and 47 teachers over the month. We also worked in 3 high schools with over 900 young people, providing them with workshops, information about all our projects and in particular the continuing message of Violence Is Preventable. All young people we meet are provided with pencils, pens, wristbands and other freebies all of which have our contact details on them so that they can contact us independently if they want or need to.

V.I.P. Presentations were made to 4 new schools and to several other agencies that were interested in the resources, delivery to children and the accreditation training for V.I.P. We are still working through the development stages of accreditation, but the first phase of a 3-day training programme is now on offer.

Senior V.I.P. programmes were delivered weekly in 4 different community settings across Scotland, to 43 elderly people. The programme, as with the children programmes, use song, games, DVD's, quizzes and activities to engage and encourage lively discussions. The programmes have been very well received by the older people and have led to disclosures of crimes, violence and abuse from some of the older people.

We are working hard to make sure that there is support and information services available for older people who have been abused and are empowered to disclose this through our V.I.P. programmes. The recently created organisation 18 Plus (based in Victoria Road, Dundee), will soon be fully up and running and able to fill this gap in services.

In 2006 V.I.P. was classified as a promising practice when we entered the Dubai International Award for Best Practice. These awards are to recognise and enhance awareness of outstanding and sustainable achievements in improving the living environment as per the basic criteria established by the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the Dubai Declaration. This year, we were invited to resubmit an application to this and have done so.

We have also entered the Ashoka Changemakers Preventing Violence Against Women competition. Follow this link to see this and make comment. There is still time to enter your own project in this.

<http://www.changemakers.com/en-us/node/68075>

We held training sessions on FGM (Female Genital Mutilation), forced marriage, Sexual Exploitation, people trafficking, LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans) issues, equality and self-esteem for all workers and volunteers. We had some great input from our friends from Syria and Iran for which we are extremely grateful. They did also take the time to provide a much needed geography lesson.

Our Tea in the Centre evening is growing in popularity with around 35 people now attending regularly. We cook a meal, share it and then have facilitated lively chats about a variety of important issues such as child protection, exploitation, domestic violence and whatever other subjects the young people and volunteers consider it important to know more about.

We currently have 4 full-time staff and 2 part-time staff but this is set to increase shortly due to an increase in funding. We had 4 new jobs advertised over January and February and this attracted many hundreds of applications from all over the country. To say that we were somewhat overwhelmed by the response is a bit of an understatement. We almost needed a new worker to deal with the sheer number of applications. We have now appointed an office assistant and in March will be interviewing the short-listed applicants for the other 3 jobs. 18 Plus is also to recruit a paid worker to develop the services.

The drop in facility has been very busy during the day and late night openings are proving very popular with the young people and the volunteers. Over the month there has been a huge increase in the numbers of young people dropping in to the Centre, emailing and texting for support. Over February we provided direct support and information to 57 children and young people, and to 7 families.

Our Kirkton Beat children's samba group still meets for practice every Monday evening and numbers attending have increased to 18 since we got some recent local publicity. The group is aimed at age 12 and under, but we don't ever turn any child away. The group is currently being signed up for several gigs over the summer months, which they will use as a platform to raise funding towards one of our partnerships.

We had 3 new social work students on placement with us, which was a great challenge for them and for us. The placement was quite a short one compared to others with the students only working with us for 18 full days but that did translate to 54 days of full time work for us. Another student, from a different social work course, joined us at the end of the month and will be with us for 3 months.

Because we are widely recognised as a unique and innovative organisation offering services with a proven value, increasing numbers of students and trainees are approaching us from across Europe with requests to come on placement in order to learn from us. We cannot take everyone. We have, after careful consideration of all applicants, accepted a Psychologist from France who is specialised in forensic and clinical psychology and extremely interested in V.I.P. She will join us on placement for 6 months.

Our web site has been revamped and is now looking bright and attractive. Young people and all interested parties are invited to offer any suggestions for improvement. The message board on this site is open to the public and increasingly

well used. There is some brilliant poetry on the message board. Check it all out at www.18u.org.uk

We have had a variety of grants and donations this month, but the one we are most keen to share is the donation from Monifieth Lady Golfers. The ladies of this golf club made us their charity of the year and raised £642 for us through raffles, tombola and games night. They all turned out to present the cheque to us and were all very interested in our work.

Publicity has been fantastic this month with many articles about us in newspapers and several slots on radio. All of our press releases were published and the press were proactive in seeking our opinions about current news stories. I guess they have noticed that we will comment on anything!

February has been a month of sickness amongst our workers. We have been a full-time worker short all month and several others have had to have days off sick over the month. Luckily volunteers have been stepping into the breach to help us out as much as possible. It has meant though that the phone has not always been answered.

Since mid January, we have also had to cover the work of Izzy's Promise due to the worker Joseph becoming very ill. Izzy's Promise was set up by Eighteen And Under in collaboration with adult survivors of ritual and organized abuse in 2001, and has grown both in size and status. It provides support and information to adult survivors of organised and ritual abuse and asylum seekers, and is now widely acknowledged as the lead agency on ritual abuse in the UK. With Joseph, as the only full-time worker, in hospital with kidney failure, we have all had to pull together to keep this vital service going. Needless to say annual reports, evaluation and financial reports were all due and, because of increased publicity, many more survivors were getting in touch for support. We have all been stretched and are coping, but we hope for Joseph's speedy recovery. The web site addresses are www.izzyspromise.org.uk and www.rans.org.uk

Through our work this month, we were given a lot of information about networks of criminals who are allegedly involved in trafficking children, pornography, organised brothels and some other very serious crimes. Thankfully we were able to pass this information on to our trusted partners in London so that they can investigate the allegations further.