



Social Impact Report

2022



Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.
St. Frances of Assisi.

Background history

The area our Centre is located in is not without its problems; According to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 2020, **Ardrossan Central is now the 3rd most deprived area in North Ayrshire** with nearby **Saltcoats Central** (part of the “Three Towns” area which includes Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston) **coming out top of the list** and **Stevenston Ardeer in 5th place**.

North Ayrshire is the 5th most deprived Council area in Scotland with 52 (28%) of North Ayrshire’s 186 data zones in the 15% most deprived in Scotland and is now also ranked in the Top 10 for the worst homeless death rate in Scotland.

Average life expectancy of both males and females in North Ayrshire is the 7th lowest in the whole of Scotland (National Records of Scotland, October 2022) while **females in North Ayrshire have the lowest ‘healthy’ life expectancy in the whole of Scotland** (National Records of Scotland, December 2022). Females living in our area can expect to live in good health for only 47.4yrs, in comparison with Orkney’s healthy life expectancy of 77.6yrs. Social deprivation with access to alcohol, tobacco and fast food have been noted as factors of these high rates.

North Ayrshire still has the second-worst child poverty in Scotland at 28% - well above the national average of 20%.

Alcohol hospital admissions in North Ayrshire are currently **32% higher than the Scottish average** and **drug related hospital admissions** have increased to **more than double the Scottish average**.

Aside from drug and alcohol misuse, 2021 figures showed **incidents of rape or attempted rape rose by a massive 44%; Sex crimes rose by 12%** despite rising by 17% in 2020; **Indecent or sexual assaults rose by 12%;** and **common assaults rose by 15%.**

North Ayrshire has the highest incidence of domestic abuse in Scotland per capita (13% above the national average).

Additionally, according to the latest Police Scotland figures, there are **393 registered sex offenders living in Ayrshire** communities (an increase of 4.25% from last year) with another **123 sex criminals in custody or hospital in the area**. This means that of the 13 policing areas in Police Scotland, Ayrshire has now the **4th highest number of registered sex offenders in the community, in the entire country.**

By locating our Centre in Ardrossan, we have obviously placed ourselves in the eye of the storm and so we are in the perfect place to help those most in need of our services.

Our Charity’s mission is to potentially save lives by;

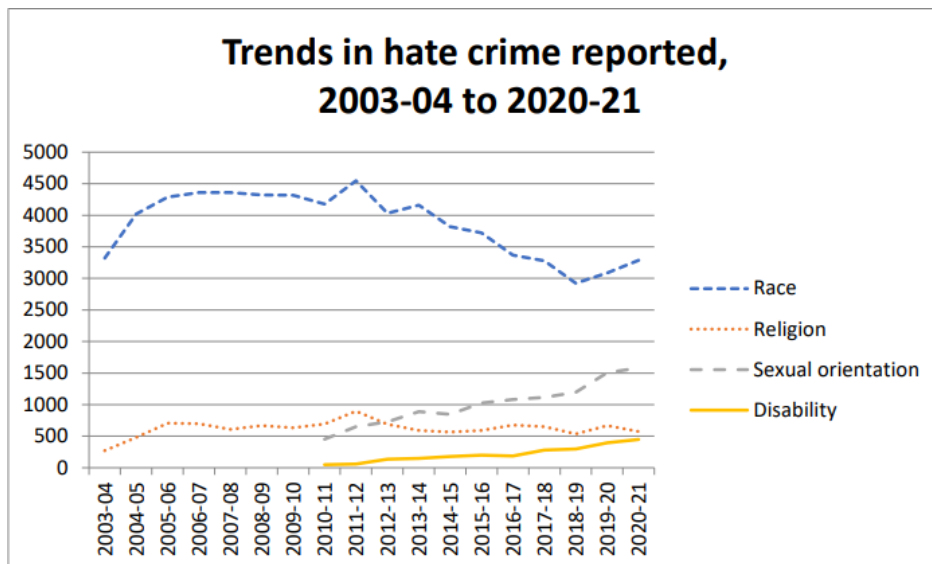
- The provision of practical training and solutions to help people avoid violence and aggression.
- The raising of awareness of the importance of personal safety in Scottish communities.
- The provision of a point of contact for those who are at risk of violence or those seeking advice in Scotland.
- The reduction of the fear of crime throughout Scotland.

Our objective is simply to empower individuals to manage safer lives and we sum up our aims and objectives in one, very powerful statement;

“We champion equality, diversity and human rights as defining values of our charity.

We promote equality of opportunity for all, empowering every individual to achieve their potential, free from prejudice and discrimination.”

Our aim has always been to help reduce Hate Crime and to do this, we offer our Personal Safety courses to frequently targeted groups and individuals. The graph below, taken from the latest **Hate Crime in Scotland 2020-21** report shows the amount of Hate Crime incidents reported over the last 18 years;



There was a 4% increase in Hate Crime charges in 2021 compared with the previous year.

- **Racial crime** remains the most commonly reported Hate Crime. In total 3,285 charges relating to race crime were reported in 2020-21, **an increase of 6%** compared to 2019-20.
- **Sexual orientation aggravated crime** is the second most commonly reported type of Hate Crime. The number of charges **increased by 5%** in 2020-21 to 1,580.
- **Religiously aggravated crime** was **14% fewer** than in 2019-20 with 573 charges made.
- **Disability aggravated crime** saw **a 14% increase** with 448 charges made. With the exception of 2016-17, there have been year-on-year increases in charges reported since the legislation introducing this aggravation came into force in 2010.

This report explains how we hope to combat these figures over the last year;

Personal Safety for Women

With COVID lockdowns came an increase in domestic abuse, as the victims were now trapped in the same house as their abuser, unable to escape. The aftermath of this has seen a massive increase in the number of women attending our services, Women's Aid Centres and domestic abuse centres.



In October and November 2022, we delivered courses to the staff at **Glasgow East Women's Aid**. Comments included;

Manager of Glasgow East Women's Aid; "Alan and his team on the day were professional and appropriate and the training gave me valuable advice on how to keep myself safe. If there was anything I didn't grasp it was explained and practised to better my skills. What I also liked about the course was how Alan had knowledge of the services he was delivering the training too. He reminded us of how our service users may have flashbacks when we share with them some of the safety tips. Also, I found it very useful being able to practice these new skills, and the team were very patient with us all, working with us until we were comfortable with the stances etc.

I am so glad there are people like Alan and his team of volunteers who help promote personal safety to charitable organisations who can then share this information with service users."

Anon; "Very useful strategies for personal safety. Thoroughly enjoyed it. I particularly enjoyed learning what everyday items could be used for personal safety. **Overall, useful skills learned that has made me feel more confident out and about in public.**"

Anon; "I got a really good understanding of Personal Safety from this course and I particularly **liked the reassurance and attitude of the trainers.** They were fantastic. **I would absolutely recommend this course to anyone.**"

Cara; "**I learned a lot about what is considered self defence in Scottish law which I honestly had no idea about.** I also enjoyed the relaxed style of teaching, I didn't feel pressured into doing anything I wasn't comfortable with which made me more likely to volunteer to practice in front of the group. I'm really pleased we had the opportunity to take part in this training so thank you."



Throughout the year, we have been receiving referrals from **Neighbourhood Networks**, an organisation which supports vulnerable adults with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and mental health issues to live an active, healthy life, safely, within their own homes and to be fully involved within their local communities.

Neighbourhood Networks worked with us last year in the development of our **Personal Safety for People with Learning Disabilities** course and were so impressed with the results that they now refer females to us who suffer from trauma which has impacted on their mental health. (Please see the testimonials below for more details.)

Internationally every year, the **#16 Days of Activism** campaign runs to highlight the call for the elimination of violence against women. Originally launched by the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) and feminists from around the world at the first Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991, the 16 Days run from 25th November (International Day Against Violence Against Women) until 10th December (International Human Rights Day).

This year, we marked the 25th November with individual Personal Safety training and informal counselling with a female survivor who has suffered violence and trauma, followed by three training sessions at Auchendarvie Academy where the focus was on the negative impacts of viewing pornography at a young age and how, particularly in young men, this can skew their perception of women and reduce respect, caring, love and intimacy in future relationships. We also highlighted why women should not be perceived merely as sex objects.

We followed this with two Personal Safety courses for Rainbow Muslim Women's Group (see our **Personal Safety for Ethnic Minority groups** section) and a course for The Women's Centre.

THE WOMEN'S CENTRE GLASGOW

We ran the Personal Safety course for **The Women's Centre** in Maryhill on 6th December 2022.

Marking the annual United Nations 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, **Camilla, The Queen Consort** condemned "**a global pandemic of violence against women**". In her speech, she said that over this period of 16 days, more than 2,000 women will be killed worldwide by a partner or family member, while in England and Wales alone, police would record the rapes of more than 3,000 women.

She added; "We are uniting today to confront what has rightly been called a global pandemic of violence against women. Faced with such challenges, it can be hard to know what practical steps we can take to even begin to make a difference."

We think WE will help make that difference. But don't take our word for it, here are a few statements from female survivors of violence who each require up to 8 months of counselling, personal safety advice and practical self defence training due to the trauma they have experienced. We believe their words speak volumes about our work, the difference we make, and our social impact (names have been changed to protect identities);



Rosie – North Ayrshire

"I came to Alan and Barbara at my lowest – I had past experiences of psychological abuse and sexual assault. I was also struggling with the more recent experience of losing my job during the pandemic and **my mental health and self-esteem were in the gutter. All I wanted to do was hide from the world.**

Whether it was learning self-defence, receiving support and counselling or even just having a laugh over a cup of tea; all of these experiences **helped me feel like a human being again**, like someone with a worthwhile place in this world. I don't have to be defined by what happened to me – I can forge ahead with newfound knowledge and strength, knowing

that I can overcome anything life throws at me.

The support, patience, encouragement (and sometimes reality checks!) I received from Alan and Barbara was invaluable and **I have come out the other side of this with more confidence than I have ever felt in my life.** I had given up on so many things in the past, but **with every session I recognised that I was growing in a way I thought I never could.**

So many of my friends and relatives have remarked on the change they can see within me, and I owe it all to ScotCPS, and especially Alan and Barbara"



Catherine – North Ayrshire

"I spent 5 years being abused. Physically, mentally, emotionally and sexually. I was beaten, raped, belittled and bullied. I lost friends, lost touch with family and was completely alone with my 4 kids, who witnessed assault after assault.

We upped and fled and I went to the Police.

I was sent to Alan and the team at The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety and I have never looked back.

It was more than just learning to defend myself; **my confidence grew** and I was no longer looking over my shoulder constantly. There was coffee and chats that were needed to take the weight off my shoulders, as well as learning how to stop myself becoming the

victim ever again.

It's **helped me grow in so many ways** and I know that I will never again be bullied and used as a punching bag. With the additional Krav Maga classes, **my children have also learned how to defend themselves** and **I have watched their confidence grow too.**

I'll never be able to thank Alan and the team enough for all they have done for me and my children."



Amy – North Ayrshire

"Alan and Barbara at The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety have been nothing but amazing in the time I've been working with them.

Not only are they **extremely supportive and empathetic**, the skills they have taught me have made such a **huge improvement to my overall confidence and personal empowerment.**

Without them, I wouldn't be where I am today and am thankful every day for their help, support and teachings."



Georgina – East Ayrshire

"I was sexually abused as a child and spent **over 40 years suffering** from flashbacks, nightmares and feelings of inadequacy. During counselling and training with The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety, I revealed that I was contemplating suicide. Alan and his team got me immediate help with the local Mental Health Team and their Personal training has since **increased my confidence**. For the first time, I actually beat my attacker in my nightmare and since then I have been free from nightmares and flashbacks. Thank you to everyone at The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety from myself and my children – **you have, quite literally, saved and changed our lives.**"



Danni – East Ayrshire

Danni has bravely waved her right to anonymity in order that her story be heard and hopefully helps other female survivors of domestic violence.

Danni revealed; "My partner and I started to bicker about four months into our relationship but he was always able to justify himself and make me feel like it was my fault. **He manipulated me.**"

The pair split up just two weeks before the attack, leaving Danni to raise their then six-week old son.

After a night of ignoring several calls from her partner, Danni eventually answered a call from him asking to see her. He was parked out in the street and reluctant to bring him into

the house, Danni went outside in her pyjamas to see what he wanted. He told her to get in the car so they could talk but then **began to repeatedly smash Danni in the face, punching her as he drove one handed, until she passed out.**

When the car broke down, Danni thought there may be some reprieve from her partner's vicious onslaught but he told her, **"tonight's the night you die; I'm murdering you"** before brutally dragged her out of the car by her throat.

Danni said; **"I don't remember what happened next but I woke up on the ground with him kicking and punching me. He was stamping on my leg repeatedly – I honestly think he was trying to kneecap me. Then he walked away and was on the phone. He left me for dead at that point."**

Around 5am, her partner came back and realised she was still alive. Danni explained; **"I honestly thought he was going to finish the job"** but instead, he dragged her to the first house he saw with its lights on, making up a lie and demanding Danni told homeowners she had been in a fight with a girl and that he had come to her rescue.



When he was out of earshot, she begged the home owners to help her, telling them it was him that had savagely beaten her but she needed to escape so she snuck out the back door of the house and clambered over the garden fence.

Running to the first door of a house with lights on, she came across a family she knew. They called the police and an ambulance.

Danni had suffered severe bruising and swelling all over her body, had had hair ripped out, teeth chipped and a suspected fractured cheek bone.

At the time Danni came to us, she was beginning to recover physically, but she has been left mentally scarred for life, battling **anxiety and depression**. She has now fully recovered after receiving our counselling and personal safety services.

Danni commented; **"Since starting training with The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety, I feel so much more confident. They have helped me a lot with managing my anxiety. What they do is for a great cause and hopefully they will help so many more people like me in the future."**

We have also worked with clients of the following Women's Aid Centres;

Charity no: SC044042

Company no: CS001160





And later this year,

Personal Safety for Autistic Young People with PDA

There are approximately 700,000 autistic children and adults in the UK.

Autism affects the way people relate to and interact with the world and people around them.

Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) is a profile that describes those with autism whose main characteristic is to avoid everyday demands and expectations to an extreme extent.

Back in 2020/21, we were approached by a mother of a PDA child who asked if we could provide bespoke Personal Safety sessions for her daughter in the hope that it will help her control her aggression and improve her balance and co-ordination. As well as autism and PDA, she had ADHD, dyspraxia and kyphoscoliosis.

Our founder Alan relished this opportunity as he had only recently been diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome after many years of suspecting that he was on the autistic spectrum.

Here is a testimonial from her mother following our training;

***"The biggest thing for Emily was the impact on her confidence.** She was selectively mute before we started with you, as the social anxiety crippled her. She was totally unable to leave the house on some days and also unable to join in group activities.*

*Training with you definitely opened the door for her. **Her communication skills improved as well as her confidence and self-esteem.** Her physical coordination was extremely poor beforehand and I really think your training did help with this.*

***The opportunity to try exercise in a safe place when she thought she was rubbish and worthless was priceless.** She was able to follow instruction and demands, as you made it fun and silly. Humour and laughing is the best way to connect with a PDA kid. And you were genuine about it.*

***It helped with routine and helped with connection with her dad,** as she would show him what she had learned after each visit.*

*Overall, **your training had a huge positive impact on Emily's mental health.** We are able to join other group activities now and I think your training was the catalyst for that. If you knew Emily before we started with you and see her now – it's like two different people.*

And it was you, Alan. Primarily you. To meet someone who was also autistic and so funny with your stories was great for Emily. She related to your secret weirdness about collecting and acquiring stuff, as you were just describing her. And to be able to hear about all the stuff you have done in your life despite your autism, for someone who has been stuck in the house, it's a big, big thing.

And it was really her only opportunity to exercise. But she didn't really know she was exercising. Thank you."

Since then, we have developed this course into a **Personal Safety for People with Learning Disabilities** course to include people with a variety of learning difficulties and disabilities, not just autism / PDA.

We have ran these courses for **INCLUDED**, a learning & development group service for adults with mild/moderate learning disabilities & Autistic Spectrum Disorder based within Yoker Community Campus.



This generated the following comments;

Odette; ***"Very exciting, trainers very good at explaining things."***

Julie; ***"Loved it, learning how to keep yourself safe, I feel more confident going out."***

Frank; ***"Very interesting, I really enjoyed the pad work."***

Barry; ***"Trainers were brilliant, they took their time and were very good at demonstrating techniques."***

Emma; ***"I really enjoyed whacking the bag."***

From November 2022 until present day, we have been running individual weekly training sessions for James who has Autism and Cerebellar Ataxia. This causes James to experience a loss of balance and coordination, gait abnormality and speech issues, as well as other symptoms such as fatigue and poor muscle movement and motor skills.

Personal Safety for Children and Youths



Following on from successful knife defence workshops in Ardrossan Academy in June 2022, we were approached by **Auchenharvie Academy** in Stevenston, North Ayrshire and asked to run similar training workshops following concerns over an increase in knife carrying and knife crime in our area. The workshops, which ran in September and October 2022, included knife defence and focused on the legal ramifications of carrying a knife, as well as the life-changing impact of carrying and using a knife. We ran **21** training sessions for **502** pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 as part of their PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic) lessons.

Comments included;

"I really enjoyed it and I would like to have more training sessions in the future."

"I liked the stats and the different scenarios"

"There were blind people teaching us and I loved hearing their stories"

"They did teach us a lot of self defence and I would like it if they visited us more."

Last year, we highlighted a recent paper in the Harvard Review of Psychiatry, 'How Well Do We Understand the Long-Term Health Implications of Childhood Bullying?' by Zarate-Garza, et al. which stated; ***"a woman who has been bullied as a child is 27 times more likely to have a panic disorder as a young adult. Among men, childhood bullying resulted in an 18-fold increase in suicidal ideation and action."*** And we summarised that if schools focused on teaching their pupils self defence so that they can effectively defend themselves, plus empower all pupils to go to the aid of others who are being bullied, this would ***take away the imbalance of power, and reduce school bullying.***

These reports prompted further discussions with **Auchenharvie Academy** and in November 2022, we launched a pilot programme for an intensive, 5-year Personal Safety plan for their pupils. We ran **18** Personal Safety workshops to **436** Year 1 – Year 4 pupils, followed by **5** sessions to Year 5 – Year 6 pupils in January 2023.

Th workshops covered a range of age-related issues from anti-bullying skills to how to prevent a sexual assault and knife defence, with further input on a variety of topics including the Law regarding self defence; bogus taxi drivers; spiking; date rape drugs; domestic abuse; plus the effects of pornography on the young brain and how this links with males treating women disrespectfully and forming sex-driven, uncaring and unloving relationships.

The success of this pilot saw us apply for funding to **The National Lottery's Improving Lives and Awards for All** fund to help launch the first year of this five-year programme. Our plans were discussed with young people from North Ayrshire Mental Health Commission (NAMHC) which aims to highlight and empower young people's voices to be heard on major issues in Health, Criminal Justice, Education and Policing. This resulted in our charity receiving funding to launch our programme with the overall aim of improving young people's mental health. A huge "Thank you" to the National Lottery and National Lottery players for making this programme happen.



Further workshops at Auchenharvie Academy took place in November and December, providing our empowering Personal Safety training to the entire school of approx. **650** pupils.

Claire Scott, the Principal Teacher of Pastoral Care at Auchenharvie Academy commented; "I spoke to pupils and the consensus is they have really enjoyed the sessions, and many commented they would like it as a regular class. **Many pupils feel they have benefited from the sessions** and have felt this year has been better as they have had 2 sessions relatively close together, so they are getting to experience more.

Although many pupils have enjoyed the sessions and have felt they have benefited, **many vulnerable young people in particular have commented on feeling more confident.**

The sessions are linking in well with our PSE course and we are linking in with the statistics the team have shared when addressing topics such as knife crime. It is clear from discussions, pupils are much more aware of the law and charges / sentencing with topics such as knife crime because of what they have learnt through the sessions. **Pupils are definitely much more informed and I feel it's because of how the team work together and address the young people**, and the fact that these sessions are being delivered by volunteers out with the school.

Pupils also commented on liking that there were visually impaired volunteers as it showed them you could have a disability but you still have the ability to keep yourself safe by using these skills.

Teachers who have observed the sessions mentioned they saw a different side of pupils, particularly some more vulnerable pupils who were keen to engage in activities.

Pupils and staff can't thank the team at The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety enough for their support."



In November 2022, news of our successful workshops in Auchenharvie Academy began to reach other schools and we were asked to run a Personal Safety workshop for **32** pupils at **Prestwick Academy** in South Ayrshire. The organiser commented; "Just wanted to say a big thanks on behalf of everyone who came to the workshop – all young people were buzzing for another week after that Friday and are asking to have you back." Comments included;

"I feel more prepared for future, more confident and less scared."

"I feel less vulnerable. Straight forward info, not sugar coated."

"I feel empowered, safer."

"Very clear instructions, hands on, motivational workshop."

"Brilliant diverse team."



We now have bookings to run more courses in **Irvine Royal Academy** and **Kilwinning Academy** starting in January 2023.



It is our hope that we will see a reduction in school bullying in all of these schools plus, with the introduction of our five-year programme in Auchenhavie Academy, that we will see a local reduction in domestic abuse, knife crime and sexual assaults. Time will tell if our training will have the impact we are hoping for.



Aside from schools, in October and December 2022, we also ran some Personal Safety workshops for **Ardrossan Girl Guides**.

Plus, in December 2022, we ran a very successful Personal Safety course for teenage girls from **The Rainbow Muslim Women's Group** in Falkirk.



Also in December, we had a referral of a 14yr old girl from the North Ayrshire Self-Harm Service of **Penumbra Mental Health**. She joined our weekly Krav Maga self defence and fitness class and hasn't looked back.

Personal Safety for Ethnic Minority groups



In October 2022 and November, we ran courses for **Score Scotland** in Edinburgh and have been asked back for February 2023.

In November and December 2022, we ran Personal Safety courses for **Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre** in Glasgow. The organiser and Volunteer Development Officer **Usma Ashraf** commented;



*"This was a taster session for 2 hours and it was very well planned out. The trainers were open to all questions asked, friendly and accommodating to the women's requests. No negative comments from anyone, all feedback received was positive. We are keen to book another session for the ladies as well as a session for staff because **it was fantastic and to learn about spotting warning signs before any harm occurs**. The women were great at getting involved in practicing moves and **the overall atmosphere was calm, engaging and fun with some laughs to ease the tension**.*

*The trainers were great at answering questions about objects in the home for self defence. **Learning about what the law says when defending yourself, going over scenarios of being in public or in your home and what the best steps to take was very helpful. Many women were thankful to have been able to know what to do when being attacked by learning about the T zone**. They also enjoyed getting to practice moves on the dummy including the Velcro tennis balls. I appreciate that the trainer brought along 2 female trainers too."*

Some feedback from the women;



"The discussion and questions allows you to learn more and think of things you wouldn't have thought about."

"I've got a bit of knowledge now that I didn't have before coming here today."

"You never think this would happen to you but it's important to know."

"It's a pity this isn't taught mainstream, the world is changing, its needed."

"I really enjoyed this today, I'm glad I came, I would like to come back for another session."

Throughout the year, we also ran courses for **Rainbow Muslim Women's Group** in Grangemouth and Falkirk. Comments include:

Samina Ali; *"These were hands-on Personal Safety training sessions in which the participating women were given training to protect themselves and their loved ones in dangerous and often life-threatening situations. Various dangerous scenarios were discussed in detail along with extensive practice of various manoeuvres that would help women of any build to get out of those tricky situations in the quickest and most efficient way. A very useful book was also given to each participant containing illustrated manoeuvres which will be helpful in future. The whole atmosphere was very friendly and comfortable and all the queries and reservations about self defence and personal safety were answered.*

*All the participants felt that they **feel more confident in tackling dangerous situations after the training session.** A big thank you to Alan Bell and his team for conducting such a successful and informative programme."*

Tasneem; *"Many of us don't feel safe when we are walking alone in the dark, and that's why we invited The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety along tonight.*

We want to know how to protect ourselves if something were to happen, we want to pass what we learn onto other women and our daughters so they can feel a bit safer too."





We also ran courses for ethnic minority groups at **The Prince's Trust** in Glasgow and in South Ayrshire. The **Operations Executive** for **The Prince's**



**YOUTH
CAN
DO IT**

Trust, Sally White, commented; “**Absolutely amazing sessions** with The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety. Alan, Yvette and David showed some of our young people how to protect themselves. **A very serious lesson with great impact and humour throughout.** Can't recommend them enough!”

Personal Safety for People who are Sensory Impaired

According to RNIB's recent report “The effect of lockdown and social distancing on blind and partially sighted people”, two-thirds (**66%**) of blind and partially sighted respondents **felt less independent now compared to before (COVID) lockdown.**

Unfortunately though, Covid precautions and fears have so far prevented us from restarting our group courses with RNIB members.



We have however restarted courses at **Forth Valley Sensory Centre** near Falkirk and individual courses at our Barony St John Centre in Ardrossan. Our individual courses included the following feedback;

“After taking part in the class, **my confidence has boosted and I feel I am more than capable of going out by myself.**”

On 22nd June 2022, we also ran a course at **Deafblind Scotland's Learning and Development Centre** in Kirkintilloch.



Unfortunately, due to a fire in their building, our courses at **The Disability Resource Centre** in Paisley, which have been funded by **Merchants House of Glasgow**, have had to be postponed until later in the year. We will keep you posted on their progress.



Comments from people attending this training include;

Laura Grant;

“I've had **stones thrown at my house which resulted in broken windows.** It has forced us to **move house twice.** I've had **guide dogs attacked** as well. Stones thrown at my working dog during a route. And my dad, who is also registered blind, has had an **airgun shot at his working dog** as well.

Since coming along to the weekly classes, **I have seen my confidence grow** – so much so that I trained and recently passed as a Level 1 Instructor with the charity. I really enjoy passing on the skills I learned to other blind / visually impaired people and **I cannot emphasise enough how these classes can change your life for the better.**”



Dr Hazel McFarlane; Pan-Ayrshire Sensory Impairment Coordinator

“On one occasion, there were some teenagers coming towards to me and they were chanting “in the eye, in the eye”. That didn’t mean anything to me but they were eating fish suppers and **one of them spat the fish supper into my eyes.**

I was obviously upset – it just felt really degrading.

Since coming to The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety’s training courses, I’ve learnt different techniques about using the pressure points on somebody’s body to fend them off, so it actually doesn’t matter what size you are, or what size they are, by using those pressure points you can take someone down to the ground.

When you have no vision, if you are in a situation that is really busy or if people have been drinking alcohol or if you are out in Glasgow on a Saturday night - although it’s not actually directly threatening, you still feel threatened. So to come along to these sessions has been really useful because it just **gives you the confidence that you could actually defend yourself if you had to.**”

Anon, Deafblind Scotland;

“My life before this course was like living in a cupboard with the door closed. This was a brilliant course – I would thoroughly recommend it.”

Personal Safety for People with Dwarfism

There are more than 400 kinds of dwarfism affecting the lives of approximately 6,000 people in the UK. As with any kind of disability, people with dwarfism are often targeted in muggings and violent assaults and, unfortunately, with an increase in “dwarf tossing” as a pub game (where people with dwarfism rent themselves out to be thrown at a velcro wall) there has been an increase in people with dwarfism being attacked in the street and thrown by drunken revellers as a “prank”.

These particular assaults have resulted in people with dwarfism sustaining injuries and have also seen one person die from those injuries (Harry Potter actor Martin Henderson). The release of the Leonardo Dicaprio movie “*The Wolf of Wall Street*” in 2017 showed a scene where people with dwarfism were thrown around an office for entertainment, and this saw another sharp rise in physical assaults against people of short stature. This in turn prompted members of **Short Stature Scotland** to visit our Centre in November 2017 to discuss the possibility of our charity developing a Personal Safety course specifically for people with this restricted growth condition.



The “taster” course was run in our Centre over a weekend in February 2018 and was hugely successful. Members of **Short Stature Scotland** travelled from all over Scotland to attend and members of **Restricted Growth Association UK** travelled up from England to attend. Since then, we have been running annual courses for these groups at our Centre.



Comments included:

“Great and informative workshops. It’s already **making me feel more confident.** **Very useful.** Thank you.”

“Brilliant workshops. Hate Crime input very useful; Theory about self defence **very useful** too.”

“Great workshops . Friendly and warm staff. **Great tailored defence moves.**”

“Great course, well adapted so it was relevant to dwarfism.”



“Just wanted to thank you very much for the **excellent workshops and training** you and your team provided to us all at the weekend. **It was brilliant and I thoroughly enjoyed it.**”



Personal Safety in the Workplace

According to ACS (The Voice of Local Shops), the 2021 Crime Report reveals that **89% of colleagues working in local shops have experienced some form of abuse, with over 1.2million incidents** recorded over the last year.

Despite a drop in shoppers due to the Covid pandemic, there was also an estimated **1.1million incidents of shop theft** recorded in the convenience sector. The financial cost of theft and abuse committed against the convenience sector cost **£142m over the last year alone, equating to over £3,000 per store.**

According to the British Medical Journal, the number of Public Order offences including **threatening behaviour increased last year at Health Centres and GP surgeries with incidents of stalking and harassment almost tripling.**

Additionally, **violent incidents at Health Centres and GP surgeries in the UK recorded by the Police have almost doubled in the last five years.** Dr Chaand Nagpaul, Chair of the British Medical Association, said that the rising tide of violence had left GPs and their staff increasingly “afraid and at risk of being verbally or physically abused”.

With regard to workplace violence, the latest Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) found;

- An estimated **307,000** adults of working age in employment experienced violence at work at least once.
- There were an estimated **688,000** incidents of violence at work consisting of **299,000 assaults** and **389,000 threats.**
- An estimated **60%** of workplace violence offenders were strangers to the victim. Among the 40% where the offender was known, they were most likely to be clients, or a member of the public known through work.
- **62%** of workplace violence resulted in no physical injury. Of the remaining 38%, injuries described as severe bruising or minor bruising or a black eye accounted for the majority of the injuries recorded.
- **12%** of violence incidents resulted in more serious injury including stab wounds; broken bones; nose bleeds; broken nose; broken, lost, or chipped teeth; dislocation; concussion; loss of consciousness; internal injuries; face or head injuries; or other injuries.
- **Those working in protective service occupations (such as security officers) faced the highest risk of workplace violence at 8.4% - 6 times the average risk of 1.4% across all occupations.**

- Health and social care associate professionals and health professionals are also higher than average risk at 3.9% and 3.3% respectively.

Nearly 1 in every 10 workers in the UK is employed in the retail trade and for them the risk of encountering threats and abuse is increasing year-on-year. The British Retail Crime Survey 2021 shows an estimated **165,000 violent incidents** occurred 2019-2020 – approximately 1 every minute of an 9hr average working day.

Home-Start Clackmannanshire

In March 2022, we ran a Personal Safety course for **Home-Start Clackmannanshire**. Comments included;



"We all enjoyed the personal safety training very much. It was delivered very professionally by Alan and David, and with some humour too. We all felt we learned quite a bit. We all agree that this should be taught in schools, colleges, universities, etc."

"Very informative and felt safe and in control the weekend after when walking home. 5 stars."

"It was fantastic, learnt a lot. The guys were great and made me feel comfortable. Really enjoyed it."

"Excellent, informative and fun. Everyone should learn these skills. I feel much more confident out on my own."



We also ran a course for **Dunedin Canmore Housing Association** in Edinburgh in September and received some fantastic feedback. 100% felt their confidence had improved and that their self defence skills and abilities had improved. Comments included:

"The course was empowering – because it taught me self defence techniques which were extremely effective and made me feel safer."

"I feel the full course was required. The day went so fast because it was so enjoyable but practical and could be relevant in all walks of life. I will be sharing aspects with my female family members and friends."

"Highly recommend it – I think anybody and everybody should do this course."

"The course exceeded my expectations."

"Alan & David – I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you both for your outstanding professionalism, commitment and passion for the work that you do. You are super-heroes because your self defence and personal safety courses really do make a difference to people's lives."

Ardrossan Connections cycle route safety campaign

Sustrans Scotland have partnered with North Ayrshire Council and Ardrossan Community Development Trust for an 'Ardrossan Connections' cycle route project which will allegedly "improve the experience for everyone using National Cycle Network Routes going through Ardrossan whether they choose to walk, cycle or wheel".

However, the project has raised a number of issues which we as a local charity feel will affect the safety and daily lives of the elderly, mobility impaired people, sensory impaired people, people with learning disabilities, dog walkers and families with young children.

We have four main areas of concern; Floating Bus Stops, Shared Paths, Continuous Footways and Uncontrolled Crossings – all of which are featured in the new cycle route plans.

Starting a campaign to highlight our safety concerns back in January 2022, we have since received letters of support from RNIB Scotland, Guide Dogs Scotland, The Scottish Sensory Hub, Health & Social Care Alliance Scotland (Alliance), Deafblind Scotland, Sight Scotland, Sight Scotland Veterans, Visibility Scotland, Age Scotland, Spinal Injuries Scotland, Sense Scotland, our local MSP Kenneth Gibson and Colette Walker, Leader of the Independence for Scotland Party.

We have also had our safety concerns written about or been featured in 8 articles in our local newspaper (The Ardrossan & Saltcoats Herald).

This campaign resulted in Sustrans Scotland retracting their proposed cycle route plans and they aim to revise them within the next few months, hopefully making them more accessible to disabled people. We will keep you posted on the progress of this safety campaign in our next Social Impact Report.

Our courses and our achievements

As you will see from the photo on the cover of this Report, 2022 marked our **25th anniversary**. We started teaching Personal Safety / self defence skills to vulnerable people back in 1997.

Initially, we offered our *Personal Safety for Women* courses to victims referred to us by Police Scotland, clients of various Women's Aid Centres throughout Scotland and clients of Rape Crisis Centres.

We also developed a *Personal Safety for Pupils and Students* course to combat bullying and knife crime, which ran in every secondary school in Ross-shire and parts of Sutherland over a five-year period as well as various colleges and almost all of the Scottish Universities.



Although we got localized recognition for the empowering effects of our training on participants, we failed to get regional or national recognition – and this had a major impact on us receiving funding. In fact, from a recognition award point of view, it wasn't until we reached the 2018 final of **The British Quality Foundation's UK Excellence Awards** in the category of '**Equality and Diversity Excellence**' that the benefits and holistic nature of our courses were finally recognized nationally. Since then, we have grown from strength to strength.

Having heard that blind people are more than twice as likely to be attacked as sighted people, presumably because they cannot identify their attacker, we developed a *Personal Safety course for the Blind* course which went on to win the '**Pioneering Project**' award at **The Scottish Charity Awards 2018**. The life-changing results of this course helped us win the UK's **The Charity Awards 2019** in their '**Disability**' category, and the '**Team of the Year**' category at the **RNIB See Differently Awards 2019**.



We have since developed various courses for people targeted by Hate Crime including *Personal Safety for Ethnic Minority groups*, *Personal Safety for Sensory Impaired People*, *Personal Safety for LGBTI groups*, *Personal Safety for People with Dwarfism*, and most recently, *Personal Safety for People with Learning Disabilities*.

Uniquely, our team of volunteer instructors are predominantly composed of previous service users. So we have blind people (the UK's first blind self defence instructors) teaching our courses for the blind; we have female survivors of violence training our courses for women victims; we have hearing impaired instructors teaching our courses to the deaf and hearing impaired; LGBTI instructors training our LGBTI courses, Ethnic Minority instructors teaching BME courses, etc.

Soon, we began to be noticed for the life-changing effects our training had on vulnerable people in our diverse society. We won the '**Diversity in the Third Sector**' category of **The Herald Diversity Awards 2018** for "the contribution The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety has made to the diversity and inclusion agenda". We also won the '**Empowerment Champions**' category of **The Scottish Diversity Awards 2019**, **The Scottish Public Service Awards 2020** in the category of '**Voluntary Sector Partnership Award**' for partnering with the North Ayrshire's Health & Social Care Partnership to provide our empowering Personal Safety training to their Sensory Impaired clients, and, most notably, **The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (2020)** for "empowering vulnerable people and saving lives through bespoke Personal Safety training since 1997".



We also won the UK's biggest diversity awards, **The National Diversity Awards** in 2020 under the category of '**Community Organisation (multi-strand) of the Year**' and managed to win **The Herald Diversity Awards** again in 2021, in the same category as our 2018 win, '**Diversity in the Third Sector**'. And in June 2022, our team won the '**Health & Wellbeing Award**' at **Arran CVS & The Ayrshire Community Trust's Volunteer Awards 2022** for our work with female survivors of violence, people who are sensory impaired, children, and people targeted by Hate Crime.

Michelle Sutherland from North Ayrshire's Health & Social Care Partnership presented the award commenting; "The support given to clients from the charity's volunteers has often been likened to a family. Caring, supporting and encouraging."



We firmly believe that none of this would be possible without that first recognition from the BQF's **UK Excellence Awards** back in 2018. But what makes our success even more amazing, is that all of this has been achieved by **only 9 volunteer staff** – 8 volunteer instructors and 1 volunteer Compliance Officer – no paid staff.

As they don't get paid for their services, we have been delighted to see our volunteers being individually recognised for the work they do in our community;



One of our registered blind volunteer instructors, **Yvette Robertson** won the "**Volunteer of the Year**" award at the **North Ayrshire Community Sports Awards 2018** as well as the "**No.1 Volunteer**" award at the **North Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership Staff Awards 2018**. Yvette was also a finalist at the **No.1 Amazing Women Awards** in 2019, beating thousands of nominees to reach the final four in the category of '**Amazing Charitable Contribution Award**'. She is soon to receive a **Palladium Award** from the North Ayrshire Provost at **The North Ayrshire Volunteer**



Recognition Awards later this month for her “*outstanding contribution to the community*”.

Another of registered blind instructor, **Norma Baillie**, reached the final of **The Cream of Ayrshire Awards** in 2018 in the category of ‘**Unsung Hero**’.



In 2020, our volunteer instructors reached the finals of the **North Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership's Staff Awards** in 6 award categories; **Innovative Team of the Year**, **Volunteer Champions** and **Community Superheroes**. PLUS 3 individual awards for **Barbara Pokryszka-Soltys** and **Laura Grant** for the “**No.1 Volunteer**” award and **Yvette Robertson**, for the “**Everyday Hero**” award.



Our deafblind volunteer instructor **David Black** has been featured in many newspaper articles, radio programmes and news reports including STV Five Live, BBC News and BBC Radio 4's “In Touch” programme. He also won the “**Social Isolation**” award at **The Ayrshire Community Trust's Volunteer Awards 2021** for his amazing work with sensory impaired people during Covid lockdowns.

And our Level 2 instructor **Claire McLaughlan**, beat thousands of nominations to win the “**Volunteer of the Year**” category at the **Third Sector Awards 2022** in London.



Our founder, **Alan Bell**, was also recognised with a “**Lifetime Achiever**” award at the **Inclusive Companies Awards 2018** for devoting his life to diversity and inclusion. He was honoured with a **British Citizen Award** in 2020 for his services to education in developing our many, life-changing, Personal Safety courses and was interviewed in 2022 by **BBC Radio Scotland** for their “**Our Lives**” programme showcasing “*positive and inspirational people in Scotland*”. Alan was also chosen as one of North Ayrshire Council's “**70 Stories: celebrating North Ayrshire's unsung heroes**”. The project, which celebrates Her Majesty, The Queen's Platinum Jubilee, aims to showcase 70 people in North Ayrshire from a population of over 134,000 who “*have willingly given up a huge amount of their time to help or improve their local community*”. And he was honoured to receive a **Platinum Champion Award** from HRH Camilla - the then, Duchess of Cornwall. Most recently, Alan was awarded an **MBE** in this year's New Year's Honours List for his services to vulnerable people.



In June 2021, The Ayrshire Community Trust set up a new **Adult Volunteer Recognition Award** to commend volunteers for their volunteer work in our local area.

On 31st January 2023, **Barbara Pokryszka**, **Yvette Robertson** and **Alan Bell** will be presented with a **Palladium Award** by North Ayrshire Provost Anthea Dickson for committing over 200 hours to volunteering duties as well as their “*outstanding contribution to volunteering in the community and extremely valuable service to his organisation*”.

Steven Grant and **John Divers** will later be presented with **Gold Award** for committing over 100 hours to our charity and **Craig Bainbridge** will receive a **Silver Award** for committing over 50hrs.

We sincerely hope that our charity and our team of volunteers will continue to help those most in need for many more years to come and that this Report will hopefully demonstrate not only the huge social impact we achieve, but that we also help change people's lives for the better.

Winning awards not only gives us regional and national recognition for our achievements, but also propels us into the spotlight and encourages potential funders to fund our future and on-going activities. Without funding, our charity simply cannot function, so we are extremely grateful to the following funders;



The Volant Charitable Trust who have funded a part-time "Safe & Sound" Project Manager for us for **the next 3 YEARS**.



Plus **Comic Relief's #ShiftThePower** who have agreed to pay for our travel and accommodation costs, enabling us to provide our services to more Women's Aid groups, Rape Crisis Scotland, LGBTI, ethnic minority groups, local schools and various community groups for women, throughout the whole of Scotland **for the next 2 YEARS**.



And a huge "Thank you" to **The Robertson Trust** who have funded our core costs **for the next 4 YEARS**, enabling us to save our small revenue stream from hall rental to go towards vital repairs to our Centre.



A grant from **The National Lottery Community Fund** and **The Wakeham Trust** also enabled us to buy new equipment for our Centre's gym area including a multi-gym, dumbbells and rack, barbells and rack, a Body Opponent Bag, medicine ball, curl bar, abdominal roller



The Wakeham Trust

and a cross trainer. This has allowed us to provide free-of-charge weekly fitness classes to females plus free-of-charge weekly self defence for females.



And a donation from **Asda's "Bringing Communities Back Together" Fund** also enabled us to purchase two freestanding punchbags for our main hall plus BBQ food for our "Safe & Sound" Open Day.

Thank you to ALL of our funders – without YOUR help, we simply could not function.



This funding and the dedication of our team of 8 volunteer instructors, helped us to run **201** sessions this year alone - 60 of these were individual Personal Safety / Counselling sessions with female survivors of violence who, due to the complex trauma they have experienced, need more individual time for informal counselling, self defence training and Personal Safety advice.

In total, we trained **1,855** throughout 2022 which brings the total number of people we have trained to date to **7,983**.

To summarise why we feel we would be worthy winners of the **Patrons Award** at **The British Quality Foundation's UK Excellence Awards 2023**;

As well as increasing confidence, decreasing anxiety levels, reducing stress and helping people live more richer, fuller lives, our empowering services have a **huge** social impact, not only for our service users but also for their friends, families and local communities;

Saving Lives

Our Personal Safety training promotes personal awareness, making participants more vigilant and less prone to attack. Our training also teaches de-escalation techniques enabling participants to withdraw or escape a potentially violent situation and self defence skills enable participants to take practical steps to escape an attacker. All of these actions can potentially save lives.

Experience has shown us that participants get enthused with self-confidence following our training and often teach the skills they have learned to friends, family and colleagues thereby reducing the fear of crime and potentially giving the skills to save a life to a wider community.

Promoting Inclusion

Our target groups have increased and now include people with various disabilities, female survivors of violence, children, ethnic minority groups, LGBTI groups and other vulnerable people whose needs are well documented. Some experience problems with competency issues, self-confidence and self-esteem but given the right training and support many of these issues can be overcome.

By providing adequate supervision and creating practical self defence scenarios in a safe and secure environment to a wide variety of groups, we know our Scotland-wide courses are truly fully inclusive – which is why we are so proud of the many national diversity awards we have won in recent years.

Communities are safer, stronger and more able to work together to tackle inequalities

We have a direct impact on making communities safer by helping people from across all sections of the community able to understand and mitigate against situations that might endanger their personal safety.

Following our training, the overall fear of crime is often reduced as people become confident in their ability to deal with it and we also provide individuals with the strength and confidence to face life and empower them to engage within their community regardless of their personal circumstances or background.

People have better and more sustainable services and environments

By enhancing people's awareness of safety threatening situations, this in turn leads to an improvement on how they perceive their local environment and there is anecdotal evidence that safe and secure environments are generally more sustainable.

Encouraging Health Gain

The nature of our activities, our Personal Safety courses, training sessions, workshops and classes (including evening classes at our Barony St John Centre), involve physical activity at a level to suit each individual. By structuring our activities in this way, we not only aim to improve the personal safety, awareness, self-confidence and empowerment of participants, but also to increase their levels of physical activity and so improve their overall health and well-being. Additionally, our informal counselling combined with our Personal Safety training has proven mental health gains. These are the hidden health benefits of our self defence training and of our Centre as a whole.

With regard to school pupils, the Scottish Government is promoting one hour per day of physical exercise for young people. In schools and often at home, young people do not get this amount of exercise but by attending

our Personal Safety / self defence courses or an evening class, this can be overcome leading to a healthier community that promotes safer lives.

Supporting Individual Development

By providing opportunities for individuals from across society to learn skills that will allow them to identify and avoid situations likely to endanger their personal safety, we are able to help people from within identified vulnerable groups secure the best chances that life has to offer them.

By transferring skills that result in a greater degree of self-confidence and personal empowerment, participants can improve employability options and life chances in general.

Additionally, Personal Safety and self defence training although performed individually, is usually taught in groups, thereby encouraging social development and it promotes both physical and mental health to the individual. By engaging in these skills on a regular basis, participants will become more confident, socially adept individuals with a higher degree of employability skills.

And there's more.....

Associated with the direct community and individual social benefits as described above, are the indirect impacts on the economic well-being of communities and individuals as a result of savings on health services, a greater opportunity to engage in economic activity, savings in workplace absence and reduced costs for providing public services. These impacts are carried through into the establishment providing more sustainable environments within our communities.

It is our goal to continue helping those most at risk, breaking down barriers and encouraging people to live more fulfilling lives. We look forward to informing you of our social impact achievements in the forthcoming year of 2023/24, in the meantime, stay safe.

Alan Bell MBE, BCAe

Volunteer Executive Manager

