

**Completed Project Summary:**

**Criminal damage by young people behaviour change project – ‘It’s No Yolk!’**

**Methodology**

An analysis of academic research on the use of social marketing to change behaviour was undertaken; this work was led by a university student on summer placement with the Constituency Team. The vast majority of research identified related to public health issues, with social marketing only being used relatively recently in other applications and therefore the data being limited for the purposes required. The principles of social marketing generally were applied to the issue of criminal damage to form some initial thoughts and to focus further analysis with young people. Focus groups took place with young people engaged within Wirral Youth Support Service and one-to-one interviews took place with young people involved with the Youth Offending Service; to explore the motivations for committing criminal damage and the impact/effects in particular. This work reinforced the theory that vandalism is ‘mindless’, with little thought given to the consequences or impact on individuals and communities. A number of other findings came out of the research with young people:

- The legal penalties were not a significant deterrent;
- Perpetrators/potential perpetrators considered criminal damage a ‘bit of fun’ but would be angered or upset if it happened to a family member;
- Young people took a firm view on penalties for offenders and restorative justice was highlighted;
- Criminal damage was committed by young people when with their friends, for fun and/or to impress their peers.

**The Project**

Based upon the findings and the experience of professionals working with young people, the campaign was branded ‘Criminal damage: It’s No Yolk!’. The throwing of eggs particularly around the ‘Operation Banger’ period (Mischievous, Halloween and Bonfire Nights) was seen as a good example of mindless (potential) vandalism, which would resonate with more young people than focusing upon something potentially more serious such as throwing bricks through windows or damaging car wing mirrors. Building the campaign around eggs and using props that would evoke interest and encourage engagement by young people, would enable serious and hard hitting messages to be delivered without turning young people off and giving the perception that they were being preached to. Focusing the campaign around the eggs allowed for other (potentially more serious) forms of criminal damage to be explored once young people were engaged.

The campaign uses simply imagery on a series of posters focusing upon some of the key findings of the research. Information was also posted on the [teenwirral.com](http://teenwirral.com) web site.

The toolkit for practitioners contains a range of similarly branded activities that can be undertaken with young people. It explores what vandalism is using some common examples; what motivates young people to commit vandalism; considers incidents of vandalism from different perspectives; the impact on victims and communities and the potential penalties and consequences for perpetrators.

The exercises can be undertaken with one or multiple groups of young people and can also be used in a one-to-one setting. Each toolkit includes an egg box containing stamped rubber eggs that feature in a couple of the activities and can be used in themselves to attract young people. Exercises can be timed if it helps focus the discussion or provide pace. A themed egg timer is provided within the resource pack to facilitate this. Provision is also made for delivering to school assemblies and a PowerPoint presentation included.



## Initial feedback

The campaign was launched during the Operation Banger period in October 2014 with 'test' toolkits. The packs were used by youth workers within the Council's Youth Support Service and Merseyside Police's Safer Schools Officers within Wallasey Constituency. Feedback forms are provided within each toolkit and were received from some of those young people worked with over the Banger period. Whilst this is too small a sample to be statistically significant, the initial feedback showed the following:

- The understanding of criminal damage improved following the intervention (one young person reported it had stayed the same);

- All young people reported having learnt something new and found the activity/activities enjoyable;
- One young person reported that they would be less likely to commit criminal damage following the intervention. The remainder stated they would not commit criminal damage in any event. As the young people recorded their names on the forms (albeit optional) the answer to this question *may* have been affected by the lack of anonymity.

#### Observations by youth workers:

- The young people responded well to the material and stayed engaged throughout the session;
- It helped young people to understand the impact criminal damage can have on someone (the victim) and give them 'food for thought';
- It encouraged young people to consider the impact on the community as a whole;
- Young people "loved" the rubber eggs. It made the activity more interesting for them;
- Delivery during outreach work was hampered when the Kontaktabus was not in use (when nights were dark and wet).

In 2015, Wirral Community Safety Partnership provided additional funding to extend the initiative across the borough. Police Neighbourhoods across Wirral and all Youth Support Service youth work teams were provided with the resource packs.

#### Next steps

Responsibility for this project will now be transferred to the Community Safety Partnership to lead and develop the project and evaluate further its impact.

