

**REPORT TO: SAFER & STRONGER STRATEGIC GROUP -
10TH SEPTEMBER 2009**

SUBJECT: CONGREGATION OF YOUTHS IN THE ELGIN AREA

BY: CORPORATE POLICY UNIT MANAGER

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 The reason for this report is to highlight the actions taken when youths congregate in various locations in Moray on a Friday and Saturday night and the associated issues.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 **The Safer and Stronger Strategic Group is asked to note the identified issues in relation to congregations of youths within communities throughout Moray and the actions taken by the various agencies to address any identified issues occurring.**

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Young people gathering on a Friday and Saturday night at various locations throughout Moray has been common practise for a number of years.

3.2 The location of these meetings change on a regular basis with the young people communicating the venue by the use of text messaging on mobile telephones. The young people travel from throughout Moray to the gathering using public transport or being transported by parents. It should be noted that all communities have locations where young people gather, however the numbers are not as large as at the locations highlighted.

3.3 The most popular venues in recent years have been Hopeman, Burghead, Lossiemouth, Fochabers, and Fairy Park, Doocot Park, Cooper Park, Mayne Farm Woods and the Old Quarryland, Birnie Road, all within Elgin.

3.4 No pattern can be identified as to why a certain venue is chosen by the young people, however once a venue has been decided young people tend to use that location for two to three months.

3.5 The impact on communities by the young people is reduced when the congregation occurs within parks or at more rural locations. However, the disadvantage of such rural locations is that they cannot be

supervised by police so readily and therefore the risk to the young people is greater.

- 3.6 Grampian Police have estimated numbers of young people who gather on a Friday night as being anything between 50 and 80. Although the gathering of young people is not in itself an offence, when the numbers are as large as stated, the gathering requires to be managed.
- 3.7 The vast majority of young people who gather are law abiding and are only out to meet friends and enjoy themselves, however there is a very small minority who cross the boundaries and regularly offend. The main offending occurring when the young people gather is under-age drinking, breach of the peace and vandalism, although just the sight of such a large group of young people can prove intimidating to members of the general public.
- 3.8 Operation Avons assist the agencies to manage these gatherings. They are funded by Safer Communities but managed by Grampian Police and target the areas frequented by the young people. Grampian Police circulate to Community Learning and Development, Moray Youth Justice and NHS Grampian the dates and venues of proposed Operation Avons asking for a commitment of Detached Youth Workers, Social Workers and the Mobile Information Bus, staffed by NHS staff.
- 3.9 These agencies within Operation Avon offer guidance and support to the young people involved in under-age drinking.
- 3.10 Community Learning and Development Detached Youth Workers work with the young people at the locations engaging, informing and providing them with advice. They also offer an advocacy service assisting the young people when they are being dealt with by other agencies and encourage young people to adopt healthier lifestyles. An example of good work undertaken is the "Elgin Young Cooper Troopers" where a group of young people take the lead in promoting good citizenship by organising a clean-up at the end of each evening presenting a positive role model to their peers.
- 3.11 Between 1st April 2008 and 31st March 2009, Grampian Police and other agencies carried out 25 Operation Avons and dealt with 93 underage drinking incidents.
- 3.12 In Moray there is no real gang culture and no perceived conflict on an ongoing basis between young people from different towns or areas. When feedback was provided by the young people after the 'Rocksafes' Disco the young people identified the meeting of people from other areas as being one of the benefits of the event.
- 3.13 There have been, however, exceptions to this ethos and this was most recently demonstrated by the forming of the 'Pivvy Possie' in Forres and the 'DC Crew' in Buckie. Both these gangs caused major issues in

their local environments, and were ultimately dealt with by Grampian Police rigorously enforcing the law with full use being made of the antisocial behaviour legislation.

- 3.14 A similar report was presented to the Communities Committee on 11th August 2009. It was the opinion of the committee that the report was very informative and the committee was pleased to note that gang culture was not a problem in Moray. Particular mention was made to the excellent inter agency working occurring in Moray when dealing with the congregation of youths, especially with Operation Avon and detached youth workers.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Community Plan/Theme Plans/ Partner Plans

- (i) The antisocial behaviour service supports the Single Outcome Agreement, Outcome 9 - We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger.
- (ii) Supports Service Improvement Plan Priority 1 Health – Improving the health and wellbeing of the population, and Priority 2, Alcohol – Reducing the personal and community impact of alcohol misuse.

(b) Policy and Legal

The Moray Council has a statutory obligation in terms of the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004 to tackle all forms of antisocial behaviour.

(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)

None

(d) Consultations

Sgt Adrian Moar, Partnership Development Officer, Grampian Police and Graham Jarvis, Community Learning and Development Manager, have been consulted and are in agreement with contents of this report.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Safer and Stronger Strategic Group is asked to note the identified issues in relation to congregations of youths within communities throughout Moray and the actions taken by the various agencies to address any identified issues occurring.**

Author of Report: Andy Jamieson, Antisocial Behaviour Co-ordinator

Background Papers:

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