



AYRSHIRE UNITES AGAINST VIOLENCE

A host of agencies from across Ayrshire including police, education, social work and health bosses have joined together to unite against violence.

The anti-violence pact was sealed at a seminar held in the Park Hotel in Kilmarnock at the end of last year.


Speaking at the event organised by Strathclyde Police, the Justice Minister Cathy Jamieson MSP, highlighted the Scottish Executive's commitment to tackling the issue. While Chief Constable Sir Willie Rae outlined the Force's plans to reduce incidents of violent crime in the long term.

Other guest speakers included Detective Chief Superintendent John Carnochan, head of Strathclyde Police's Violence Reduction Unit, Ayrshire Detective Chief Inspector John Mitchell, Dr Crawford McGuffie, an A&E consultant with NHS Ayrshire and Arran and Pat Hewitson from Victim Support.

Opening the seminar, Divisional Commander for Ayrshire, Chief Superintendent Hamish Cormack said:
"Ayrshire is a very safe place to live, work and visit – particularly when you compare the figures to other areas - however, we must not be complacent. Today's seminar aims to get this issue out in the open, so we can make a difference and make our streets safer for everyone."

Justice Minister Cathy Jamieson, said:
"Violence in any form is unacceptable – for far too often, people have suffered from the fear of violence. Violence destroys the lives of victims, their families and the local community – it can sap the strength of communities. However, the Scottish Executive is taking this issue very seriously – we want to see a safer, stronger Scotland.

"We have to try new ways of tackling this cycle of violence in Scotland and by working together we can achieve this."
The Justice Minister then spoke about the importance of partnership working and of effective enforcement and swift and visible justice. She also stressed that new legislation such



as increasing the sentence for carrying a knife would make a difference.

She added:

“Crime levels are currently at a 25 year low, however, levels of violence remain constant. We have to be relentless in our efforts to tackle this problem.”

Chief Constable Sir Willie Rae reiterated the words of the Justice Minister, saying:

“We do not need another survey to tell us that the level of violence in the West of Scotland is intolerable. But I don’t believe it’s too hard a problem to crack. Tackling violence is a priority for Strathclyde Police today and beyond.

“We have an excellent reputation for detecting murders, however, we would rather have a reputation for preventing them from happening in the first place. We have to rid Scotland of its reputation for violent crime.

“This will not happen next week or next year, it will take a long time and we have to keep the momentum going. At the moment we are working hard at containing and managing the situation, however, we are also looking at long term sustainable solutions. We need to get to the heart of the problem and I believe the time is now right.”

Strathclyde Police has created a specialist unit to tackle violent crime. The aim of the Violence Reduction Unit is to tackle violent crime – particularly knife crime – in the long term.

Spearheading the unit is Detective Chief Superintendent John Carnochan, he said:

“The unit has been established to work with our partner agencies, such as education, health and social work, to make a real impact on reducing violent crime in the west of Scotland in the long term.”

Over the past three years there have been 16 murders in Ayrshire, 97 attempted murders and 1,638 serious assaults.



Detective Chief Inspector John Mitchell from Kilmarnock Police Office, said:

“This type of violence occurs for no other reason than violence. Sixteen people have been murdered in Ayrshire in the past three years and every one has been detected. We put a lot of effort into detecting violent crime, however it would be much better if we put more time into preventing these crimes from happening in the first place.

“There is a great deal of good work already underway in Ayrshire, however, let’s build on this and work together to make a real difference.”