

PRESS RELEASE

To: education correspondents

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Sacro Launches Restorative and Mediation Service for Schools

Sacro, Scotland's leading community safety organisation, is launching a new service for schools designed to encourage teachers, and in turn, their pupils, to adopt mediation and restorative approaches to solving conflict and addressing harm. These approaches develop valuable life skills that can also have a positive effect on reducing anti-social behaviour in the wider community.

Two schools in the Falkirk Council area, Braes High School in Polmont and Larbert High School have already committed fully to the programme that will involve the whole school community.

Courses delivered by trained Sacro staff will demonstrate how restorative approaches can help young people, staff and parents/guardians deal with the underlying factors that result in people being harmed. The restorative approach allows those responsible for causing harm, an opportunity to understand how their behaviour affects others. It can also help reduce the need to exclude children from school. The training will help the schools in areas such as resolving disagreements and teacher/pupil disputes; class disruption; anti-social behaviour; physical violence; bullying and truancy.

Richard Hendry, Sacro National Co-ordinator for Work with Schools, said,

“What we are aiming to do here is to bring our extensive experience in mediation and restorative youth justice into schools so that all those involved are more able to build positive relationships and create a safe, productive learning environment. From our work in youth justice we know that when the person responsible for causing harm has a better understanding of the impact of their actions, there is a greater chance of bringing about meaningful changes in behaviour. In some instances this can involve dialogue with the person harmed. Similarly mediation, including peer mediation, has a proven track record in helping people to resolve their disputes. We will be using these tried and tested methods of improving communication in our work with schools.”

The programme has the support of Falkirk Council which has selected the schools taking part.

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Falkirk's Director of Education, Julia Swan, welcomed the joint development with SACRO and said,

"Anything that helps young people learn to live together more positively will help us improve their achievement and prospects for the future."

Councillor Tom Coleman, Convener of the Education & Leisure Committee said,

"Promoting positive behaviour and reducing exclusions in our schools is a serious priority for us and using this service will help us achieve our goal.

"We already have a number of different approaches to dealing with this issue and the addition of these resources in our schools will benefit both teachers and pupils in their learning environments".

Sacro is the only Scottish organisation accredited to deliver SVQ4 in mediation. Sacro works with 19 local authorities in the area of restorative youth justice.

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For further information please contact Richard Hendry, National Co-ordinator for Work with Schools on 01337 858473 or Lisa Stewart, Communications Officer on 0131 624 7270.