

Have message will travel

Surrey
Care Trust
Working with young
people at STEPS

Young people at the Surrey Care Trust's STEPS learning centre in Woking have been doing their bit to beat drug abuse.

They were commissioned to help design the Surrey Police's anti-drugs bus and came up with an illustration for the police's "Not in my Neighbourhood" slogan. It's urging people to keep drug abuse and other anti-social behaviour out of their communities.



The bus belongs to local bus company Countryliner and is carrying big bold messages everywhere it goes about how tackling drugs can change lives.

Four young people from the STEPS learning centre were invited to an official launch in Guildford with the government minister for the South East, Jonathan Shaw, pictured right, during June's Tackling Drugs Week.



BUILDING BRIDGES

Detective Inspector Paul Mizzi and two civilian Surrey police staff have been meeting young people on our STEPS programmes.

They plan to visit the Woking Learning Centre regularly to build bridges with the young people, who are usually deeply suspicious of the police.

"It was a bit frosty at first but then they were really warm to us. I think they saw that I was a human being rather than just one of those 'nasty' cops," said DI Mizzi.

He shared some of his life story from young tearaway to CID officer. The boys were impressed to hear he had been in the army.

Drugs were the main topic of the first visit and the ice-breaker was a quiz to think of as many slang names for drugs, which the young people joined in with gusto.

DI Mizzi also spoke candidly about the heartache for a police officer of finding a young person

dead with a needle in their arm and having to break the news to their parents.

"Young people of this age know all about drugs. They may not be taking them themselves but they will know people who are and they will know where to go to get cannabis and possibly stronger stuff as well."

DI Mizzi wants to influence young hearts and minds and declares that as a police officer he knows what it is like to have his outlook changed by experience.

He started his police career as a "a go and get 'em and lock 'em

DI Mizzi is pictured in the centre, with students, police staff Charlie Kendal and Jo Grimshaw and STEPS leader Sue Buckerfield. Gabbie Johnson, Anti-Social Behaviour Officer from Woking Borough Council, was also on the visit.



up cop" as he describes himself. "Of course, I still believe in enforcement but I have realised that is only the start."

Education and treatment are also key in beating drugs, says DI Mizzi.

"I used to see drugs as being about a problem. Now I see drugs as being about the individuals who are affected by them."

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