

For a little over a year now family support charity Scottish Marriage Care has been helping the young people and young parents of Greater Easterhouse change their lives for the better through their relationship counselling project REACT.

REACT was established in January 2005, with funding from The Scottish Executive and the Camelot Foundation, to empower young people and young parents to overcome barriers by creating learning opportunities with a focus on relationships. Research had revealed 48 percent of mothers in Greater Easterhouse were less than 25 years of age and that 87 percent of young people in the area experienced some form of relationship difficulty.

“We wanted to establish a programme based around relationships that would benefit people in an area who needed it,” said SMC Chief Executive Mary Toner.

REACT’s early intervention work with young people builds awareness of important relationship skills such as communication, listening and conflict negotiation. Through developing relationship skills, REACT aims to aid in the formation and maintenance of positive healthy relationships at all levels. This includes couple relationships and also relationships with extended family, peers, employers and other community members.

The benefits gained from having strong relationships are numerous. There is conclusive evidence to show that good parenting is less likely when parents have a troubled relationship. The development of children both at home and in school can be adversely affected if parents, whether together or separated, have a dysfunctional relationship.

”I didn’t realise how much communication between me and other people affected my children”

said a participant on the young parents project.



Improved relationships promote a stable family life, which has the added benefit of enabling individuals to manage family situations more effectively and thus reduce stress levels. A stable and happy home life invariably leads to improved health, increased success with sourcing and retaining employment and increased social and economic inclusion in the wider community.

“I’ve completed my first year at college and it’s through REACT cause it built my confidence enough to go into further education,” said Jill, one of REACT’s young parents.

Recent findings have revealed that young people today find it increasingly difficult to talk about a number of topics but especially sex and relationships. This situation is exacerbated by a general lack of access to quality information. Young people said they found it difficult to express their feelings openly and honestly and that they did not possess the skills to negotiate the complexities of personal relationships.



This demonstrated a real need to work with young people in schools, enhancing emotional intelligence and increasing relationship knowledge. As with adults, young people who have good knowledge of relationships will be better equipped to build and maintain them.

REACT provides a safe place for young people to talk and learn about the subject of relationships. Since it began REACT has delivered group sessions in youth clubs and schools to 166 young people and the number continues to grow. Workshops have been established in a number of local schools and continue to be delivered with an overwhelmingly positive response.

**“I’m thrilled with the work the REACT team have done and have great hopes for the continued, successful delivery of this service,”**  
said Mary Toner

By providing education and counselling about relationships REACT has equipped the young people in Easterhouse with important life skills and provided the community with a much needed resource. Additionally, REACT has enabled couples and individuals to improve their quality of life by encouraging communication and reducing stress. A project like REACT empowers young people and is another vital part of developing confident contributing citizens who are proactive in making their local community a better place to live.

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