

Keys Group Police Liaison Specialist Advisor Steve Challinor

A valuable addition to Keys Group's network of residential children's homes are the Keys activity and intervention services. These services can support young people effectively at a time of crisis.

Part of this support sees the Keys activity and intervention teams supporting young people to take part in a range of adventurous outdoor activities, including regularly spending time in the UK's national parks. This is a crucial part of the support and positive development provided to the young person as part of the crisis intervention.

The social restrictions put in place as a result of Covid-19 resulted in the day to day crisis intervention support and activities the young people were taking part in being reported to police by concerned local people as contraventions of the newly introduced law, which prevented movement into and within certain areas.

When local people or police patrols saw staff and young people arriving at an accommodation site or when out in the community, on a number of occasions, police robustly challenged Keys staff and on occasion indicated they may prosecute. At a very early stage, Steve Challinor, Keys Group policing specialist was able to identify and understand the issues that were arising and made

contact directly with police at various levels, in the areas where Keys Group staff work.

Senior officers and front-line supervisors in those areas were provided with context around the important work being carried out by Keys staff and were provided with details of all vehicles being used in those areas and of the locations where Keys staff and young people would be based.

The Keys specialist stressed the importance of police being supportive of the valuable work being carried out by staff with each young person.

The policing specialist also made contact with national police leaders who were also briefed about the nature of the work being carried out by Keys Group and other care providers and the importance of police being supportive.

As a result of this early intervention, positive police support became routine and staff were enabled to carry on providing the support which is so effective in helping some of our most troubled young people to develop positively. There was also an associated benefit for the rest of the Keys Group residential homes.