





Leicestershire Constabulary

**Northfields Project**  
**(Problem Orientated Policing)**

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## NORimiELPS PROJECT

Northfield is a Local Authority owned housing estate in Leicester comprising of 1265 houses. The area is a small compact community which should be safe but in reality leaves most residents living in fear. The estate has a history of criminality with anti-social behaviour a constant problem. New tenants have been driven out resulting in numerous empty properties. The Housing Department found it difficult to let empty properties, the only applicants being local criminals.

The estate accounts for 30% of the reported crime in the local policing area. Offenders and victims are often neighbours. The victims were frightened, the offenders confident they would not be caught. Residents felt because of where they lived they were classed as criminals. They felt no one cared. This resulted in an area with a poor view of itself and low esteem.

It was decided we would adopt a problem solving approach to the issues. We would have a firm stance on enforcement in the area, targeting the key offenders. This would run parallel with working closely with the local community and other agencies to address some of the long standing problems. We planned to increase the number of officers on foot patrol and attempt to increase the confidence of the residents in the forces of law and order.

The project was to run for two years starting in April 1997. Our aim was to reduce crime by 30%, 10% in the first year and 20% the second. Also to reduce instances of disorder and improve our links with the local residents. We also intended improving the reputation of the estate and to attract increased funding and facilities to the area.

The initiative has now run for 12 months, crime has been reduced by 29%, complaints of harassment to ourselves and the local authority have been significantly reduced. Although there has been an increase in calls relating to community problems this I believe indicates an increased confidence and willingness to contact the police.

Together with community and other agencies we have introduced a number of community initiatives in the area. Although we have further work to do the atmosphere on the estate has changed dramatically. There is little disorder, the residents have increased confidence. They can see that things are happening and that by working together success can be achieved.

## SCANNING

Northfields is a Local Authority owned housing estate situated on the outskirts of Leicester. The area is a small compact community of 1265 houses, most of which have central heating, double glazing and both front and rear gardens. The sort of houses which in most urban environments would be extremely desirable. However the truth was far from that.

I am the Commander of the Local Policing Unit which lies on the Eastern edge of the City of Leicester and comprises of five estates including Northfields. All of the four other estates are larger than Northfields. some having twice or three times the amount of houses. Northfields however accounts for one third of all the crime. The annual crime for the policing unit is about 6,000 and during the year April 1996 to March 1997 Northfields Estate recorded 1,903, this crime rate is totally out of proportion to the size of the estate. Research also showed that incidents of disorder and unruly behaviour followed a similar pattern, about one third of all incidents of disorder occurred on this one estate.

One of the main problems faced by beat officers was large groups of disorderly youths roaming the estate committing offences, with little fear of being caught or reported and generally terrifying the local residents.

The demands on the police far outweighed the resources available. We were responding to the same types of incidents daily but never dealing successfully with any of them. The attitude to representatives of any other organisation and the police in particular was at best indifferent and at worst hostile and aggressive.

The criminals wanted to make police officers feel unwelcome. The good people were too frightened to be seen speaking to officers for fear of being targeted as informants or 'grasses'. There was one occasion where a new tenant was decorating his house prior to moving in, the local police officer walked by and passed the time of day with the gentleman, who invited her in to see his decorating. That night petrol was poured through the letter box and the house set alight, needless to say the tenant relinquished the tenancy and moved to another area.

The Housing Department had similar problems even though the houses were sound and of good quality few wanted to live there. New tenants, if their 'faces did not fit' were driven out either by constant harassment or by being repeatedly subjected to crime. This resulted in a large number of empty or void properties on the estate which gave the area a derelict, neglected and frightening appearance. On certain roads whole blocks of houses were empty. These attracted their own problems such as graffiti or rubbish dumping which gave the estate an uncared for appearance.

Following a visit by Superintendent Brookes to the 1996 Problem Orientated Policing Conference and after speaking to officers involved in the El Dorado Park 'Stone Soup Partnership'<sup>1</sup> in Fresno, California, it was decided to try to adopt a similar approach to Northfields Estate and its problems. It was decided that our aim was, over two years, to reduce crime on Police Beats E10 and E11 which cover the area by 30%. 10% the first year and 20% the second. We would also, by working with other agencies and the community attempt to improve the quality of life for the residents of this frightened and fractured community.

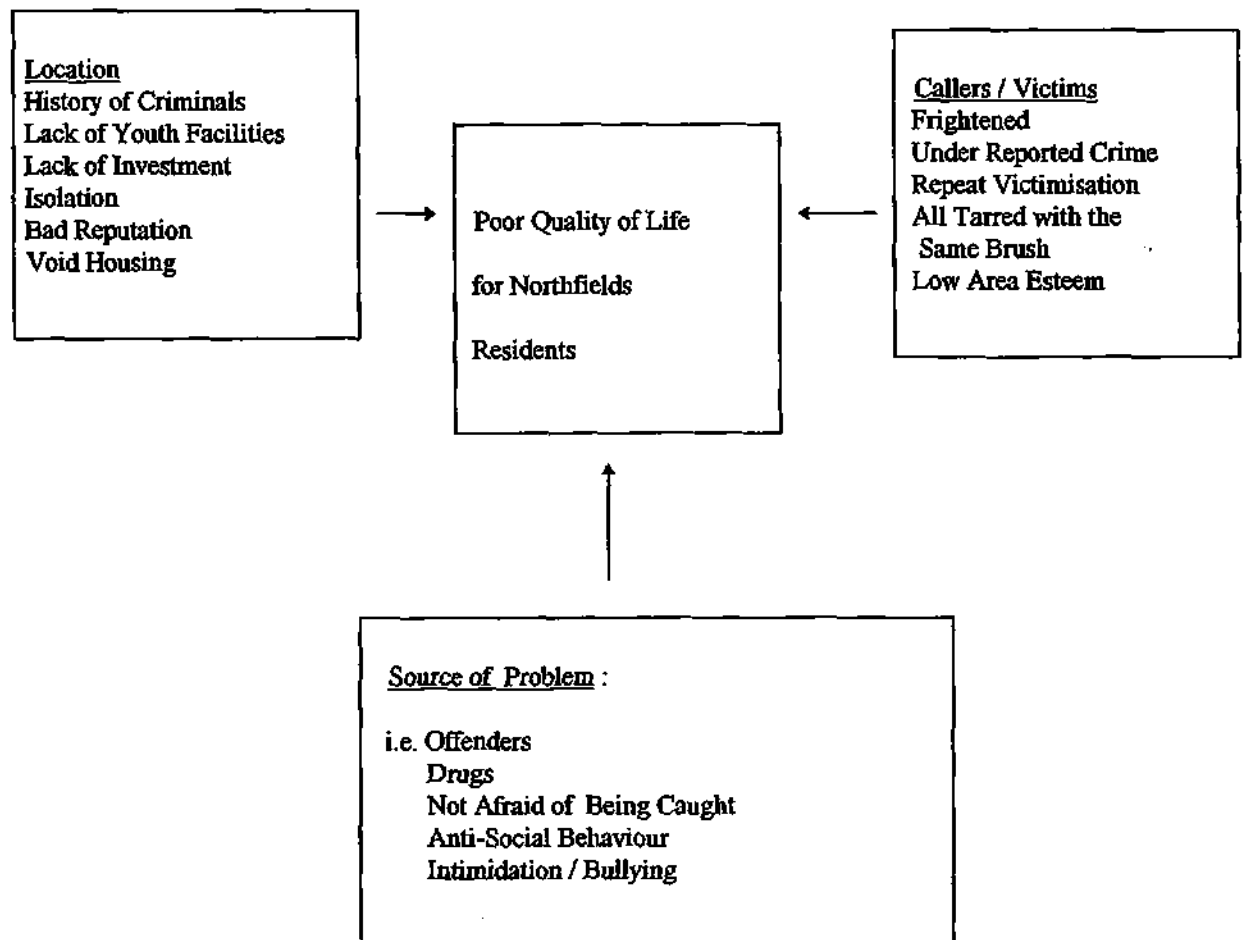
## ANALYSIS

So what were the problems. At first the picture looked bleak, they appeared to be everywhere and everything on the estate.

First we looked at the history of the estate. Things appeared to start going wrong in the late 1960's, certainly by 1975 when I joined the police and was an officer in the area, it was recognised as one of the worst estates in Leicester. Evidence from local newspapers 20 years ago refer to it as "The worst estate in Leicester", and five years later an article cries, "This area is a right shambles."

We decided that we would try to identify some of the key facts that had led to such a poor quality of life for residents. We looked at three key features:

1. The Location
2. Callers / Victims
3. Source of Problems (Offenders)



### History of Criminality

The offenders who were mostly locals had built up reputations that frightened the ordinary residents. Whole sections of streets had been taken over by members of criminal families. They had little fear of being caught knowing that residents would not make witness statements against them.

### Lack of Youth Facilities

Although there were some youth facilities in the area these were under used, certainly the more difficult, disruptive youths were excluded and youth crime and its problems were seen as one of the key areas of concern for the estate.

### Lack of Investment

Neither the area nor its people are politically active, they are not articulate and when funding is discussed they are constantly overlooked or ignored in favour of other areas.

### Isolated

Although the estate is on the edge of the city, there is a real feeling that people are trapped in there. Their whole life experience revolves around the estate.

### Bad Reputation

The area has a bad reputation which constantly works against the residents in their everyday lives, it also makes the letting of properties extremely difficult.

### Void Housing

This is a cancer on the estate. They attract their own problems such as graffiti or rubbish dumping and give the area a run-down, neglected appearance which deters new tenants from moving in.

## **VICTIMS**

**Frightened**: Residents of the estate were terrified, not only of reporting incidents to the police but also being seen to talk with or having anything to do with the police or other agencies for fear of being targeted as an informant.

**Under Reported Crime**: Although crime on the estate was high it was still under reported, residents fearing that to report crime would leave them with further problems.

**Repeat Victimisation**: Some residents, particularly new tenants found themselves targeted again and again by offences of harassment, burglary or damage.

**All Tarred with the Same Brush**: The residents felt that the reputation of the estate constantly worked against them. They felt that other people knew Northfields as a home for criminals therefore if they lived on Northfields they must be criminals

**Low Esteem**: All these factors resulted in an area with a poor view of itself; who saw the situation as hopeless and the police and other agencies standing on the sidelines either unable or unwilling to take action.

## **Source of Problem**

### **Drugs**

Drugs are a major problem on the estate, there were a number of key dealers who made drugs readily available, resulting in crime to fund the habit.

### **No Fear of Being Caught**

Offenders who were mainly local had little fear of being caught, the police appear ineffective, the residents too frightened to complain.



### Anti-Social Behaviour

Anti-social behaviour was rife on the estate. Groups of youths roamed the estate and people were terrorised in their own homes.

As stated earlier the estate accounted for a third of all crime on the Local Policing Unit area. Further research showed the problem in more detail.

In the years 1992-96 crime nationally was reduced by 10%. In Leicester the reduction was lower but again it showed crime during this period reduced by 4%. In 1996 the crime rate for Leicester was 15 offences per 100 population.

In the Northfields the picture is different. In 1995 the area experienced a 24% increase compared to 1994 and a further 10% in 1996 compared to 1995. Overall between 1992 -96 crime on the estate increased by 20%. The crime rate for Northfields in 1996 was 22.6 offences per 100 population.

This in reality meant almost one in four residents were victims of crime.

Information from other sources tells a similar story. Research by Leicester City Council shows that the overall rate of vacant property in proportion with the homes in Northfields was one of the highest in the city.

The most common reason for refusing accommodation on Northfields being the fear of burglary and vandalism. A tenants survey in 1994, conducted by Leicester City Council, showed the tenants to be some of the most dissatisfied in Leicester.

The turnover of tenants on Northfields is calculated at 23% (each year around a quarter of the population move out). This is amongst the highest in the city. This results in a negative effect on the stability of the estate and a population which is constantly changing make community development particularly difficult.

Further research by Leicester City Council shows a quarter of the population consists of children aged between 0-14 years and a further 25% consists of people aged between 15-29 years. One in two households consists of one or more adults with children with single parent households accounting for 9% of all households.

The majority of the residents on the estate are of white origin.

## **RESPONSE**

So what were we going to do.

Firstly we increased the number of officers on foot patrol from two to four. We selected these officers, recognising that if we were to succeed these officers would be the cornerstone. Their remit was to see and be seen. They were to work with the community but were also to investigate crime and to be seen as police officers who arrested criminals.

We then targeted two key groups:-

1. Tenants
2. Other Agencies

We formed close links with the local Residents Association consulting them on the communities needs and working together on joint projects. We held a series of public meetings on the estate to tell residents what we hoped to do and to seek their help, ideas and support. Showing them that things could be done if we worked in partnership. (Appendix "A")

We held meetings with both voluntary and statutory local groups and agencies to seek their help in identifying and working to solve problems of local concern. From this we have now developed The West Humberstone Community Forum, made up of residents and agencies. Its aim is to be a meeting place for the residents and all the agencies engaged on the estate. To form a strategy group dedicated to the improvement of the area and the attraction of funding and resources.

The Community Forum also produced a 'one off Community Newsletter to which we all contributed. This let residents know that things were happening. One was delivered to each house on the estate. We also saw the media as having a key role to play. Initially this was to highlight the problems and let people know what we were doing. This then developed into a positive campaign 'drip feeding' new initiatives, showing that things were happening.

It was now time to show the community that not only had we the will but that we were able to tackle the crime issues of the area.

We developed a strong approach to enforcement. The number of search warrants for drugs and stolen property increased dramatically. We targeted key offenders taking every opportunity to arrest.

We constantly sought the help of the courts to remand in custody or apply bail conditions which we rigorously enforced. We launched several High Profile operations which involved arrest and stop check campaigns, again targeting key offenders but equally show the good people, the majority, that we were there.

Harassment and bullying had been rife on the estate. This it was decided would be a key target for the project. Again we developed a pro-active approach, we dealt with all incidents as they happened, no problem was too small to bother about. Officers visiting the victim, often away from the estate, to discuss the problem. We used covert cameras to gain evidence and provide the victims with alarms to reassure them. If the problem persisted I would send the offender a letter highlighting the problem and telling them firmly to address it. If it still persisted we would undertake joint investigation with the Housing Department to gain evidence and seek action through the Civil Courts, (where the standard of proof is lower than the Criminal Courts) either in the form of an injunction or eviction from their house. In certain cases we visited a large number of residents who had been driven from the estate, seeking their help to gather evidence to enable us to proceed against the offenders.

We also worked with the Local Council who financed "Professional Witness"<sup>1</sup> private investigators who lived on the estate as tenants and gathered evidence when the tenants were too frightened to come forward.

As can be seen from the analysis, the estate has an extremely young profile and youth crime and disorder had been a major problem. To tackle this we launched 'Northfields Football Scheme.' (Appendix 'B') This was run by two local officers and ran the course of the main summer holiday from 1st July to 31st August, to give the young people an alternative to 'hanging around'.

It ran: Monday - Wednesday 11am x 4 pm for 8 - 12 year olds

Wednesday - Friday 6pm x 9.30 pm for 12 to 16 year olds

The project was supported by the local professional club and local stores provided refreshments.

Daily attendance averaged 60 and at the conclusion of the summer a presentation night was held.

During the winter the scheme has continued to run for two evenings a week, at a local school and this year will again run throughout the summer. During Easter 1998 a group were taken to Scotland to

play local teams. Seven of the young people have been signed on by professional clubs. The results of this project have been amazing, the attitude to the police has changed dramatically from negative to positive, the young have been shown there is a life off the estate and that they can achieve success.

Whilst this was all going on we continued to work with the community on projects but we became aware that we were asking some residents of the estate to work with us on some issues for which they had little training, we therefore identified the key group and provided them with basic training by police trainers in vital areas such as, Managing Conflict, Body Language and Communication.

Simple things but helping to provide the tools to do the job.

By now things were really moving and every month new ideas were generated. Northfields was being recognised as a place where things were changing.

During September 1997, information packs were made up providing Crime Prevention Advice, a property marking ultra violet pen, Crime Stoppers information and the details and contact numbers for the beat officers. The packs were launched at a Community Information Event held at a local park where Police, Fire & Rescue Service, Residents and local Hospitals were all represented.

During the following week officers personally visited each house on the estate and presented the pack to the tenant.

Following a visit to the estate by Jack Straw, M.P., The Home Secretary, a project was launched by Leicester City Council, Tenants and Police to install C.C.T.V. on the estate. The tenants conducted a survey to gauge the residents feelings, only one objection was raised. The Council, supported by the police, obtained funding for the project. In March 1998 two C.C.T.V. cameras were installed, a further two are to be erected later this year, providing residents with both security and reassurance. (Appendix 'C')

Another project we have undertaken in partnership with the local council is the setting up of a Police and Community House. The house will provide a base for the Beat Officers to work from and hopefully increase our presence on the estate. It is also hoped other agencies will use it to meet residents. Again increasing the appearance that someone is out there and that things are happening.

We have also worked closely with Leicester City Council to address the problem of empty properties. By working together we have initiated a campaign aimed at attracting new tenants to the estate. Together we looked at the problem of burglary, identifying that most properties were entered by the rear window or door. We identified key problems with window hinges and rear fencing. Together we designed a new style of rear fencing which offered privacy but views into gardens. The council also agreed an improved type of window for all new tenants. All the houses now have central heating. A positive advertising campaign to attract new tenants to the estate was adopted. The campaign was launched in the local press. Advertisements highlighted the positive aspects of the estate and that it was a good place to live. We targeted local estate agents to attract people who were currently in private rented accommodation. (Appendix 'D')

We were also aware of the lack of facilities in the area, particularly sporting facilities. Situated on the edge of Northfields is Arnold Lodge, a medium secure mental health unit, which houses convicted prisoners. In the past the unit has had problems due to concerns regarding its security. The residents and police have worked closely with the unit to address these problems. Now we all joined forces for the benefit of the community. The unit obtained funding and is seeking further resources to build a sports complex consisting of football pitches, gymnasium, badminton court, boxing room and cafe. These facilities will be used by patients but for a significant period of the day will be available to local residents bringing much needed leisure facilities to the area.

To improve the appearance of the estate and to reduce the fear of crime a Northfields Task Force is to be set up and funded by the local council. Local long term unemployed people will be recruited and training given to enhance their skills. These wardens will be equipped with the appropriate resources and will patrol the streets removing rubbish and undertaking minor external repairs (fences, walls & pavements) remove graffiti and act as a reporting mechanism to the police and local council. This it is hoped will significantly improve the environment in which the residents of the estate live.

Although I feel the result of our response to the problems of the estate have been significant, there is still a lot of work to do.

In June 1998 we entered in partnership with the Residents Association, Health Centre and Housing Office to launch a Domestic Violence Project, which is hoped will provide the service we offer to victims of domestic violence, a crime which I believe has a major de-stabilising effect on the area. We also hope to launch a befriending scheme made up of local residents for new tenants on the estate, to provide a friendly face when they move in, and who can help if problems arise.

However, it was not all plain sailing, problems are encountered in the response stage. We found we were constantly seeking community involvement and although there was significant help from the community it was usually the same people coming forward. There is still reluctance to 'get involved' either from a fear point of view or due to community apathy. It is hoped that as things develop this will change.

The Community Forum, although comprising of the right sort of people, still lacks direction. However I feel if we continue to work are thus it will in time provide significant benefits for the area.

In relation to the other agencies, some were supportive from day one, particularly the Housing Department, others came on board as the profile of the project was raised. Some unfortunately never really became involved, often due to their own internal problems and this is something that must be addressed within the next 12 months at a senior level.

The only extra costs to the police for the project was £3,000 which was provided for such things as printing, kit for the football scheme and items relating to the police house. The only other significant cost was CCTV which the council funded. This cost £50,000,

## ASSESSMENT

It was agreed at the outset of the project that the two key targets from a police perspective were:

- 1) Reduce crime by 30% over 2 years
- 2) Improve the quality of life for residents of the estate

In relation to point one, we had almost achieved the first target by the end of year one:

- Reported crime is down from 1,903 to 1,349, a fall of over 29%.
- House burglaries dropped from 391 to 273 a fall of 30%
- Commercial burglaries dropped from 283 to 168 a fall of 40%
- Automobile Crime dropped from 382 to 201 a fall of 47% (Appendix 'E')

However the figures only tell half the story. When I arrived at this Local Policing Unit incidents of public disorder were a nightly occurrence with large groups of youths roaming the estate doing as they pleased and generally destroying the quality of life of other people. (Appendix 'F')

Initiatives such as the football project have changed not only the local youths perception of the police but the officers' views of young people. (Appendix 'G')

The Police were not the only agency to notice change, a comment from the housing department demonstrates the success of the project. During the summer of 1996 the department was swamped with reports of harassment and requests for house moves from the estate, due to youth problems.

During the Summer Football Scheme not one complaint was received - This is not academic theory but real life and shows what successes we can achieve if we take a wider view of the problem.

(Appendix 'H')

The local housing officer states that complaints of disorder and nuisance have dropped significantly and that comments such as, "Its never been so quiet on the estate," are heard.

Research does however show that calls to the police concerning community problems appear to have risen during the course of the project by about 15% from 198 to 230, this could be viewed as a negative but I feel this demonstrates the increased confidence of a once frightened community to

report incidents to the police. It is hoped that as things get better and further problems are addressed that the number of calls will decrease.

The Tenants Association and the police are now in daily contact having the confidence to address situations as they arise and the courage to tackle them together.

One of the main concerns at the beginning of the project was the issue of displacement. We have found no evidence of this. The criminal and disorderly element on the Northfields are not major players they were small local criminals who for years had been allowed to 'get away with it'. They could only function in the small pond in which they were supposed to be big fish, outside the pond they could not operate.

The letting of houses on the estate and roads which at the beginning of the project were three quarters empty are now three quarters full.

However there can be no room for complacency despite our success, last year a lot of people still had their homes broken into and their cars taken. We still have work to do. We will build on our success and in particular try to develop quality of life initiatives.

We must also try to draw into our partnership some of the more reluctant agencies, in particular those involved with youth work, to develop new approaches to divert local youths not only from crime but to support with advice regarding drugs, starting college, finding a job or starting a home.



## **AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION**

The Northfields Project is fully supported by the Eastern Area Senior Management Team and the project and its aims form part of the Area Business Plan agreed to by The Chief Constable.

Although the main drivers of the project are;

Inspector Jim Donaghy

PS Neil Hancock

PC Alex Walmsley

PC Kim Potter

PC Clive Jones

PC Mark Hayes

The Hamilton Policing Unit as a whole sees the initiatives as one in which they are involved and recognise it as a priority.

All the key officers on the project received training in both the concept and application of Problem Orientated Policing and problem solving from Professor Nick Tilley of Nottingham Trent University.

Also the Eastern Area as a whole piloted POP's for the Leicestershire Constabulary assisted by Andrew Leigh and Tim Read from The Police Research Group bases at The Home Office in London. POP's is shortly to go force wide in the Leicestershire Constabulary.

A computer package was developed by PS Paul King to assist the officers to identify 'Hot Spots', clusters of incidents in a certain area which resulted in a police response. A new computer system, INSIGHT, is shortly to go live on the force to improve the information available to officers to assist in problem solving.

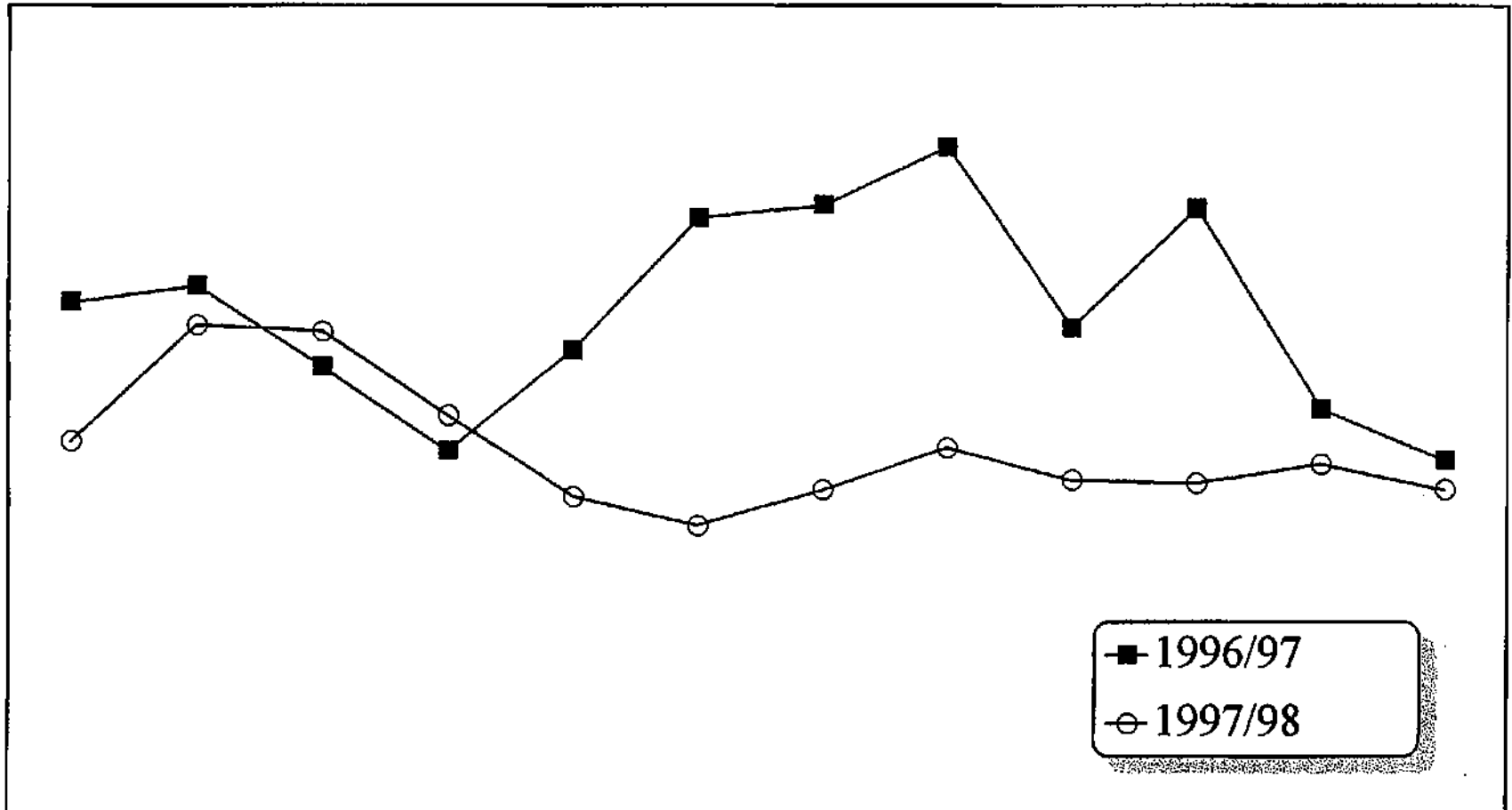
As the project developed problems were encountered in reducing the abstractions of the beat officers who were frequently called away from their beat to carry out other duties. These issues were addressed and although we tried to avoid the officers from the area there were occasions when this was unavoidable.

As stated earlier the only extra funding from a police perspective was £3,000. The rest came from our existing budget.

I did however have the full support of my senior officers who are fully behind the project and willing to offer help and advice whenever I require it.

# Northfields: Recorded Total Crime

1997/98 vs 1996/97

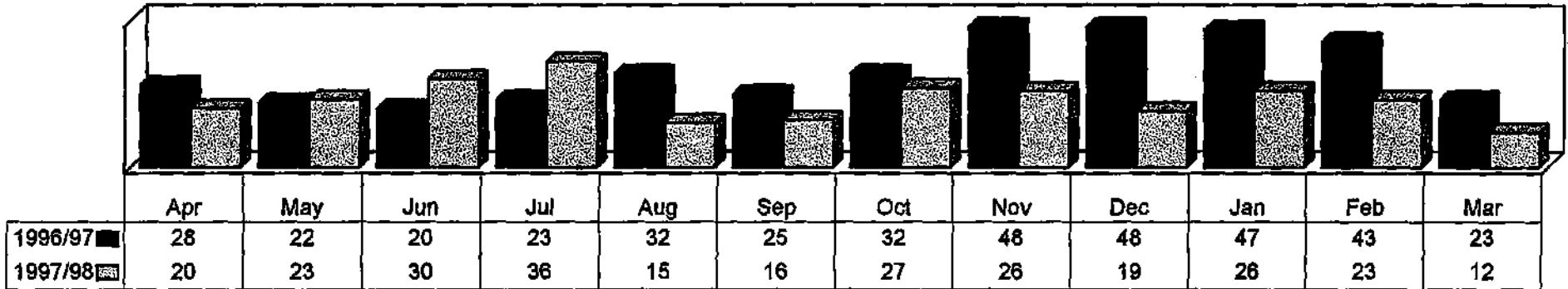


	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
1996/97	158	163	138	112	143	184	188	206	150	187	125	109
1997/98	115	151	149	123	98	89	100	113	103	102	108	100

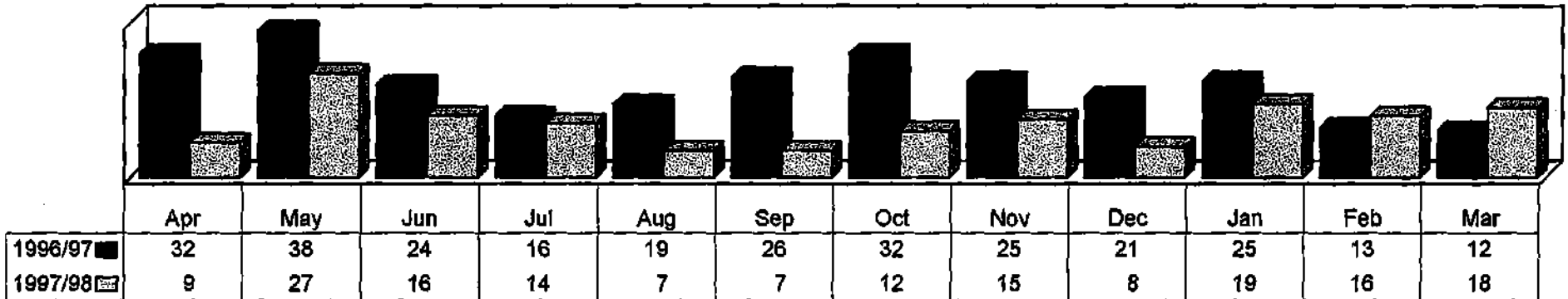
# Northfields: Burglary Dwelling, Commercial Burglary & AutoCrime

1997/98 vs 1996/97

## Burglary Dwelling



## Commercial Burglary



## AutoCrime

