



Operation Dodger.

Application to the Herman Goldstein Award
2005.

Summary of Project.

This project began as a result of the Police and the Community Safety Team (CST) of the Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) receiving a vast number of complaints regarding the activities of persons engaged in street drinking and begging. Residents, traders and tourists had also reported a dramatic increase in their fear of crime. The National Intelligence Model (NIM) process identified significant crime trends within these same hotspot areas.

As an initial response Operation Dodger was created in June 2003. The operation identified and defined the cause of the problems. The BHCC and Crime Reduction Initiatives (CRI), who provided the social care support to individuals, formed a partnership with the Police in order to tackle and address prolific offenders' behaviour. Many of the offenders had drug or alcohol addictions or had suffered mental health issues.

Members of The public kept street diaries to evidence the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) that street drinkers engaged in. Police provided reports on the number of street crimes that had been committed where alcohol was considered a contributing factor. The Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) implemented legislation under the Criminal Justice & Police Act 2001 that was the first in England or Wales to be granted, a city wide sanction on street drinking. This is known as a Designated Public Places Order (DPPO).

It became evident that it would be necessary to 'treat' the addiction of the individual concerned. This required the agencies to work to a problem solving approach. A regular multi-agency conference was convened, this Street Community Anti-Social Behaviour Case Conference (SCASBCC) would decide upon action plans for each individual to address their behaviour. This conference brought together statutory, private, charitable and voluntary organisations.

Monthly Street audits were conducted to count and help identify individuals engaged in begging or street drinking. A target to reduce begging by 60% by the end of March 2005 was

set in November 2003, by the Home Office in agreement with the local CDRP as part of the Trailblazer status afforded Brighton and Hove.

Over the next 15 months this work reduced beggars from 33 to just 3. This was a 90% reduction. Street drinking hotspots decreased from 18 to 5, with the numbers of persons engaged in street drinking being reduced from 158 to 70. Communities that had experienced criminal acts and ASB are now free to enjoy their public spaces.

Description of Project.

Introduction - Objectives of the Project

Operation Dodger was a policing operation formed in June 2003, to tackle the increased concerns of residents, traders and tourists alike on the activities of people who came to be known as the 'Street Community'. The activities ranged from criminal offences such as assault, to ASB such as street drinking and begging.

The visible presence of the Street Community created a fear of crime and disorder amongst the residents and traders as they questioned their sense of security and safety. Tourists were given a negative image of the city when seeing large groups of street drinkers about Brighton and Hove's tourist attractions, or being begged from within the city's shopping lanes.

One Police Sergeant and three Constables were dedicated to work alongside members of the CST of BHCC and members of the Rough Sleepers Street Services Team (RSSST), a social care team forming part of the charitable organisation CRI.

The visible behaviour exhibited by the street drinkers, when drunk, ranged from urinating in public to physical assault. Difficulties arose when the gathering drinkers became extremely drunk. The word extremely is used as a street drinker will often be in the state of 'drunkenness' twenty-four hours a day.

The objectives for Operation Dodger were to reduce the number of people engaged in street drinking together with reducing the number of street drinking hotspots (as defined by public survey). The Operation Dodger team led on the enforcement of the DPPO.

The Home Office recognised the partnership work being carried out in Brighton and Hove. As a result the city was designated as one of five cities to be given 'Trailblazer' status to

tackle street drinking. The Home Office set a target to reduce begging by 60 % by the end of March 2005.

In order to understand the extent of the begging problem further, to set a baseline figure and to measure our progress, repeatable 'Street Audits' were conducted once a month over a 16 hour period, 0800 hours to midnight. Enough knowledge of the issues existed to determine the locations that beggars and street drinkers could be found. These locations were plotted upon a map.

Members of relevant agencies would walk around the identified area during that sixteen hour period and ask pre determined questions of beggars or drinkers if found. A form was devised to prompt the worker, (see Appendix 1 'Intervention form'). It became impossible to ask these questions of street drinkers due to their drunken condition, and in some cases attempting this provoked a violent response.

As a result of the first 'Street Audit' conducted in November 2003, 33 beggars were identified. This gave a 60% reduction target of 13.

A MORI poll was conducted in August 2004 that reinforced the position that this issue was of significant concern to the community. It revealed that 68% of women would not use an Automated Teller Machine (ATM) if there was a person situated close to it.

Operation Dodger staff, BHCC and RSSST became the lead agencies involved.

Defining the scale of the Problem.

Between April and July 2003 a public survey allowed the Council to identify eighteen drinking hotspots throughout the city. The most active hotspot for criminal activity and ant-social behaviour was Norfolk Square. The residents had suffered from street drinkers for many years. An estimated 40 individuals were thought to be engaged in street drinking on a daily

basis on the small and enclosed square. Analysis of incidents reported to the police revealed that Norfolk Square accounted for 25 calls from the public every week.

The RSSST, who had already been working with the street community for a number of years, knew that the individuals involved had a number of social factors at the root of their problem, the drinking or begging were the visible representation. The CDRP CST submitted a report that was placed before the BHCC indicating that approximately 75% of the street drinkers also had addictions to another substance (drugs or solvents) and that 35% of them also had mental health issues.

Street drinking hotspots were located in public areas such as greens or small parks. Usually, the area was not covered by CCTV. It was normal to find hostels, day service providers, off-licences and or chemists close by. The area would often become a 'no go' area for residents, traders or tourists and would fall into disrepair. This allowed the street drinkers to 'claim' the area as their own.

It became necessary for all interested parties to have terms of reference for the group that the lead agencies were calling the 'Street Community' and in turn who formed part of that community. There was no existing definition. A definition was created by the lead agencies:

'A person who spends a significant amount of time on the Streets or other public area, and who has no accommodation or is in hostel accommodation, or supported housing and will have a substance misuse issue, and or a mental health issue and or have a chaotic history.'

The true number of beggars within Brighton and Hove was unclear. Nine individual people were arrested in two months for eighteen separate incidents of begging. One of those individuals was arrested seven times next to an ATM cash point.

Only a few beggars refused to provide information during street audits, most were only too willing to talk about their issues. The information gained was then placed on an Excel spreadsheet and shared between the lead agencies in accordance with information sharing protocols.

The first audit took place in November 2003. Members of the lead agencies took part and 33 beggars were identified, thus defining the baseline figure.

The first audit provided a significant amount of information. Most beggars were willing to answer the questions including those regarding drug use. The figures below are based upon the baseline figure of 33, unless otherwise stated.

- 51% (17) chaotically housed, i.e. hostel accommodation or 'sofa surfing',
- 12 % (4) rough sleeping on the streets,
- 97% (28 of 29 as 4 refused to answer this question) using heroin or crack cocaine,
- 3% (1) were alcoholics,
- 21% (7) stated that they were a 'poly' user, i.e. using both drink and drugs,
- 85% (28) were known to be using other day services for food and shelter within the city.
- 100% (31 of 31 as two had failed to give enough detail to research upon PNC) had previous criminal records for offences other than begging.

Research showed that the 31 beggars had been convicted of 672 criminal offences in total, 57 convictions within the previous 12 months with 33 other cases yet to be heard at court.

People giving money to beggars believed it was spent on food or shelter. The reality of the issue was that the money was being used to buy drugs. One individual beggar was supporting a £ 150 to £ 200 per day drugs habit.

By analysing the data the following was revealed: (baseline figure of 33):

- 24% (8) of the beggars where situated next to ATMs,
- 15% (5) of the beggars were directly outside a convenience store or a restaurant,

- 6% (2) of the beggars were located at transport locations such as train stations, bus stations or taxi ranks,
- 30% (10) of the beggars were 'Mobile Beggars',
- 15% (5) of the beggars had a Big Issue magazine on display at the time, whether a legitimate vendor or not, and
- 9% (3) of the beggars were sat in the street or doorways.

From the arrests made by Operation Dodger staff and from the data contained within the first audit it was possible for the agencies to define three types of begging.

i) 'Mobile Beggars' - caused the most harassment, alarm and distress. They would walk about the city stopping people and begging for money. CCTV cameras identified one such beggar begging from 17 people in a 15 minute period. Another beggar would approach people sat at tables outside cafes and restaurants. He would lean over them begging for money and whilst doing so would drip blood from open wounds into their food and drink. Mobile Beggars that used a copy of the Big Issue magazine as a tool to obtain money were referred to as 'Rogue Vendors'

ii) 'ATM Beggars' - still caused a significant amount of harassment, and distress but not as much as the first type. They would ask people using the ATM for change.

iii) 'Passive Beggars' - would sit on the pavement either asking for money as people walked past or would have a sign asking for money. These were considered to cause the least harassment, alarm or distress but still gave a negative image of the city.

The manager of the Big Issue magazine was consulted with regard to 'Rogue Vendors'. He engaged with the project which resulted in a reduction in this type of begging.

Brighton and Hove's Business Crime Reduction Partnership (BCRP) were also brought into the joint working as they reported that beggars were having a negative impact upon the shopping trade.

97% of beggars spoken to during the first audit had stated they were using illicit drugs. One Doctor, who sat on a local safety forum for a day service provider that allowed the consumption of intoxicating liquor on the premises, the Equinox wet centre, stated that a typical street drinker would consume 80 units of alcohol a day. It was quite clear that substance abuse was the root cause of the issues.

This was challenging as many of the street community had been addicted for a long period of time. Arresting them and placing them before the courts for offences such as begging or being drunk and disorderly had not provided sufficient deterrent. Suspended sentences or one day in the court cells as default to any fine imposed had been the usual sentences.

Agencies such as the Substance Misuse Service (SMS) from the NHS and members of the 'Get it while you can' program were consulted and became actively involved. First Base day centre where a number of the street community were attending to receive food and shelter were also asked to contribute to the tackling of this issue.

Police attendance to reports of street drinkers had become routine, drinkers would be dispersed but would soon return after the police had left and would behave in an even more anti-social manner, leaving residents frustrated at the police's apparent lack of effectiveness.

This led to the involvement of residents through the recording of incidents in street diaries, public meetings and personal interaction with other agencies to help fill the information gap. This was aimed at facilitating continued analysis of the problems and the targeting of repeat offenders.

Response to the Problem.

As a result of the 'street diaries' completed by the community and the Police figures on the number of street crimes where alcohol was considered a contributing factor, the BHCC implemented a piece of legislation under the Criminal Justice & Police Act 2001 that was a city wide sanction on street drinking. This is known as a DPPO. The option of having a number of separate DPPOs covering all the hotspots was dismissed due to the belief that any enforcement would cause displacement to the non DPPO areas. The legislation came into effect in September 2003 allowing the Police to require the surrender of containers believed to contain alcohol. Refusal to comply rendered the drinker liable to arrest.

Some Norfolk Square residents volunteered to receive a photo pack of known street drinkers and were asked to submit 'street diaries' evidencing identifiable individuals if the resident witnessed anything such as, urinating in public, abusive language and or threatening behaviour. Without the photo packs of prolific offenders the identification issues of evidence gathering would have been undermined.

Other residents formed a group known as, 'Friends of Norfolk Square'. They set about tidying the square. They planted new flowers; they worked together with the BHCC in replacing the grass that had become worn and old looking. The public toilet was closed by the BHCC and turned into a flower stall. As part of the strategy to retake the Square on behalf of residents the BHCC adapted the brickwork of two walls to prevent use as seating by drinkers.

A monthly meeting was created that became known as the Street Community ASB Case Conference (SCASBCC). The conference nominated individual street community members whose actions were considered anti-social. The agencies that had a stake in each of the individuals' behaviour would discuss and plan a response to assist that individual recognise their impact on residents, traders and tourists.

The agencies involved in this conference on a regular basis were: BHCC, RSSST (CRI), Sussex Police, The Big Issue, SMS and key workers representing 3 day service providers and 7 hostel accommodation providers together with the Community Mental Health Team.

The flow chart depicting the formulation of the planned response to any nominated individual provided structure to assist the multi-agency work (see Appendix 2). This formed the model for the SCASBCC.

The planned response aimed to tackle the root causes of the behaviour, namely substance abuse. The social care agencies provided assistance to tackle the substance abuse for individuals who were willing to engage. Many of the 'street community' did not want help and were unwilling to engage with the social care agencies. Enforcement was used as a tool on targeted individuals to encourage them into treatment. Operation Dodger staff would actively partake in joint patrols with social care agencies to reinforce to the street community the belief that multi-agency work to address their behavioural issues was the solution.

The beggars and street drinkers that caused the most harassment, alarm or distress were targeted first. These included the mobile beggars, ones situated next to ATMs and ones using a Big Issue magazine. Street drinkers who were violent or abusive were also targeted.

Each nominated person whether drinker or beggar was targeted by the Police for enforcement action at the same time as social care agencies offered help and assistance. If the individual refused to accept the offers of help ASBOs were applied for. The ASBO prohibitions ranged from exclusion areas to abstentions from begging, street drinking or being drunk and disorderly. Although 11 ASBOs have been applied for by the SCASBCC and granted by the courts, this was perceived as a failure rather than a success. In order to address the longer term problems, the social needs of the individual needed to be addressed. Enforcement action alone would not be effective.

Those taking illicit drugs needed to engage in a process of replacing their choice of drugs with scripted methadone. In order to maintain the script the individual would need to comply with a

strict SMS policy. It was identified by the SCASBCC that a number of the nominated individuals were falling foul of the policy. Evidence that the policy was too strict for the chaotic individuals was presented to the SMS. SMS changed their regulations to allow a more flexible scripting policy. Once this was changed, none of the individuals failed to comply with the process and to date are still scripted.

The prospect of long imprisonment terms did have an effect. One beggar was given two years imprisonment for seven breaches of an ASBO. The BHCC provided a solicitor that was dedicated to obtaining civil ASBOs. This solicitor recently initiated a civil action under Section 222 Local Government Act 1982, to prohibit a passive beggar from continuing to beg.

The involvement of charitable service providers is exemplified by the Foundation Project. They provided group therapy for individuals that had a history of rough sleeping and substance abuse. The Foundation project workers were 'in reach' workers, i.e. the client comes to them. Individuals that had previously been engaged in ASB were reporting to RSSST that they were struggling to keep themselves busy without committing further anti-social acts. At the same time they found it difficult to entertain the idea of group therapy. Due to these difficulties one of the workers started to interact with the individuals out on the streets, an 'outreach' service. This was to provide the first stepping stone to a full structured day program.

Below is a case study of a beggar that was first found on the November 2003 street audit.

He was subsequently found on 5 other street audits the last being June 2004.

Case Study.

An example of this partnership work involved a persistent beggar who was also a rough sleeper. He was drug dependent and very chaotic. It was a priority for the RSSST to get this individual contained, i.e. into accommodation. The work to reduce his drug habit could then be addressed. The individual refused all offers of help from the RSSST.

He was targeted for Police intervention, i.e. locating his rough sleeping pitch of a morning; targeting his begging activities and arresting him when evidence supported it; searching him for drugs when his behaviour and activities provided sufficient suspicion. Throughout the engagement with the Police, regardless of the reason, the Police would mirror what the RSSST were saying to him i.e. that he needed accommodation and help. He was referred to the Street Community ASB case conference. After a short period of joint working the individual concerned accepted accommodation together with the care plan and his criminal activity dropped significantly. He subsequently accepted the offers of help to address his drug addiction. The key to this successful outcome was the consistency in the message he received from the RSSST and the Police.

It was accepted that the some members of the public saw all beggars as homeless and or hungry. This issue of negative public perception was addressed through the local press, who provided information regarding the work of the lead agencies.

Operation Dodger staff attended briefings of the police patrol units to reinforce the need for their day to day duties to include interaction with members of the street community. It was necessary for them to understand the impact the street community were having on the residents, traders and tourists. A crucial phase of this project was the engagement of those police officers not dedicated to the street community. By mainstreaming the approach taken by Operation Dodger staff the opportunities to tackle the substance misuse were maximised.

Evaluation of the intervention.

It was soon recognised that a potential limitation on the project was the lack of diversion provisions resulting in a lengthy process of detoxification and rehabilitation for street drinkers. Despite lack of facilities such as detoxification for alcoholics, by the end of 2004, an extra 50 individuals had taken treatment options with the social care providers when compared to the previous year.

The 16 street audits were critical in evaluating the project. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of the number of beggars found on each audit. It can be seen that the numbers of persons found begging did significantly reduce over time. Over the period of the street audits a total of 110 identifiable individuals were found begging.

Figure 1. Total Number of Beggars Found on Each Street Audit.

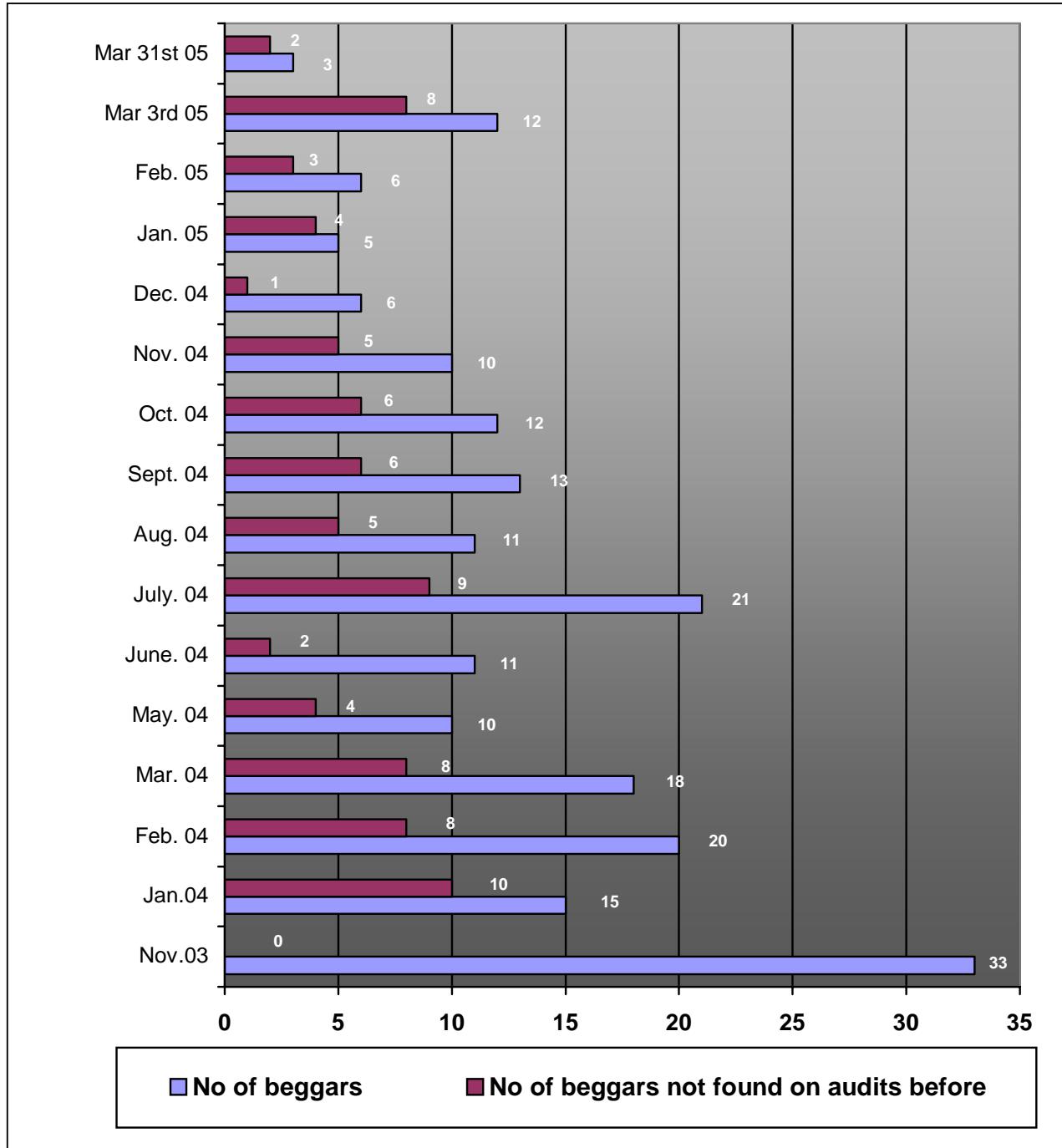
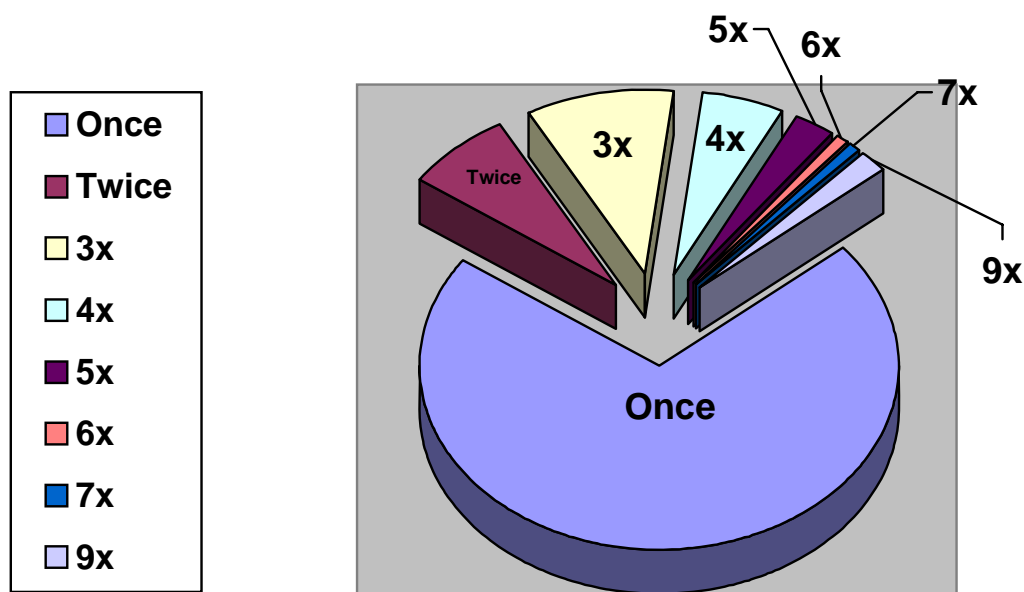


Figure 2 below, shows that 71% (78) of beggars were never found on another street audit.

This shows that the interventions to stop any further incidents of begging were successful.

Figure 2. Number of times individual beggars found begging on a street audit.



The final street audit took place between midday on the 31st of March 2005 and midday of the 1st of April 2005. A large number of agency workers took part. Only three beggars were located throughout that 24 hour period. This was an astonishing 90% reduction.

In summary the reduction target was significantly surpassed as a result of the agencies working together with a common goal of tackling the root causes of anti-social behaviour. Enforcement had been effectively used as a tool for targeting individuals to direct them into the social care pathways. The BHCC secured an agreed strategy with members of the CDRP, MPs and local wards. They secured the services of a solicitor to assist with civil ASBO applications. SMS changed a national policy to support the project. The hostel key workers took responsibility for tackling the individuals' behaviour even though it occurred outside their premises.

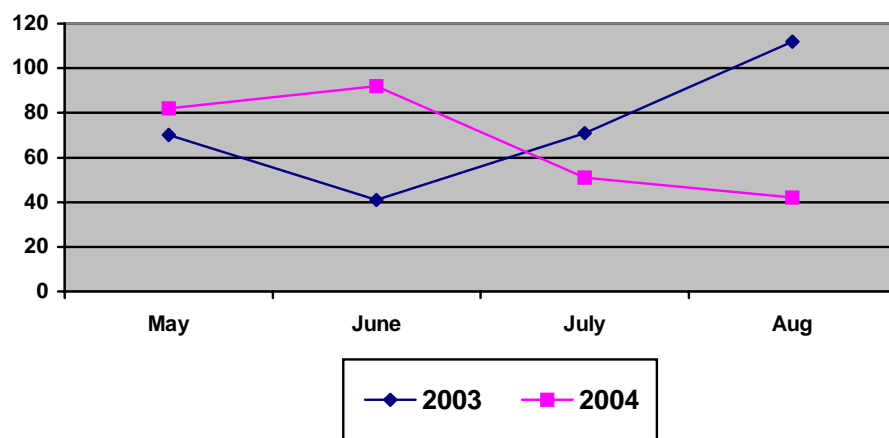
158 street drinkers were identified to be drinking on the streets of Brighton and Hove on a daily basis throughout the 18 drinking hotspots in 2003. In 2004, this was reduced to 70 drinkers throughout 5 hotspots. Today Norfolk square remains devoid of street drinkers, with no associated violent crime occurring there since October 2003. Residents of Norfolk square

have been formally recognised by the Prime Minister and received the regional 'Taking a stand award' for their efforts.

Initially the first photo pack that was given to those eight residents of Norfolk Square contained just five prolific offenders. The photo packs currently being distributed contain up to 60 persistent offenders and have been provided to 42 residents and traders around the city.

Figure 3 below, shows the number of calls from members of the public concerning incidents involving street drinkers to Norfolk Square during the summer months of 2003 and 2004, traditionally the worst months for street drinking activities.

Figure 3. Number of incident calls received by Police to Norfolk Square.



The decrease in calls during the summer of 2004 was a significant success.

The same approach to other hotspots, Brighthelm Gardens, York Place and Upper Rock Gardens has been or is in the process of being developed.

Analysis revealed the significance of street communities' criminal activities. It reinforced the need for the 'street community' to be policed with the emphasis on treatment to address their

needs. Less than 20% of the street community were on Sussex Police databases, this highlighted a gap in the NIM process when attempting to establish possible offenders for priority crime. Operation Dodger staff maintained a database of all street community members stopped within the city. Table 1 and 2 show that there was a critical gap in establishing the link between the street community and priority crime.

Table 1. Headline Criminal and Risk Figures.

Heading	Number	Comments
Total number of Street Community members located in the city	625	These account for 21,325 recorded convictions. An average of 34 convictions per person.
Total number those located with no criminal record.	13 (2%)	
Criminally active within last 12 months	449 (72%)	
Marker on PNC for violence	213 (34%)	
Persistent Offenders	89 (14%)	An individual that has six or more convictions within the last 12 months.
Arrested in Sussex between October 2002 and April 2005	474 (76%)	.

Table 2. Street Community Convictions for Priority Crime Areas.

Type of Criminal Conviction	Number Convicted	Total Number Convictions
Convictions for burglary	330 (53%)	Those 330 account for 1820 convictions for burglary
Convictions for violence offences	454 (73%)	Those 454 account for 1898 convictions for violence offences
Convictions for vehicle offences	271 (43%)	Those 271 account for 1186 convictions for vehicle offences
Convictions for quality of life offences	492 (79%)	Those 492 account for 3763 convictions for quality of life offences
Convictions for drug offences	347 (56%)	Those 347 account for 1020 convictions for drug offences
Convictions for shoplifting`	474 (76%)	Those 474 account for 4486 convictions for shoplifting

Agency and Officer Information:

Operation Dodger was initially set up with one Sergeant and three Constables. These were abstracted from three Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) sections, the Sergeant and one constable were taken from the same section that had geographical responsibility for the area that these issues had been concentrated on.

Once it was decided that the operation would continue a rolling three month attachment was implemented so that the experience could be shared across the NPT sections.

The role performed by the officers on Op. Dodger was specific and targeted, however the role that was required to be adopted by the divisions' NPT sections was one of general reinforcement of legislation.

None of these officers received specific problem solving training, but did receive training on the principles of the working model. The officers also received regular briefings as to the progress of individuals that needed to be targeted.

The project involved work that had not been conducted before therefore no manual of tried and tested methods was available. A positive approach with a willingness to try different methods and learn from any mistakes was key to the success.

No problems were encountered other than there being limited information available initially. The Police service had to adapt it's working methods, developing a much more focused targeting method, whilst simultaneously working alongside social care providers.

Since the inception of Op. Dodger one Police Sergeant has remained the lead for the Police. In the last year three Constables have been assigned to the project that have been abstracted from NPT sections.

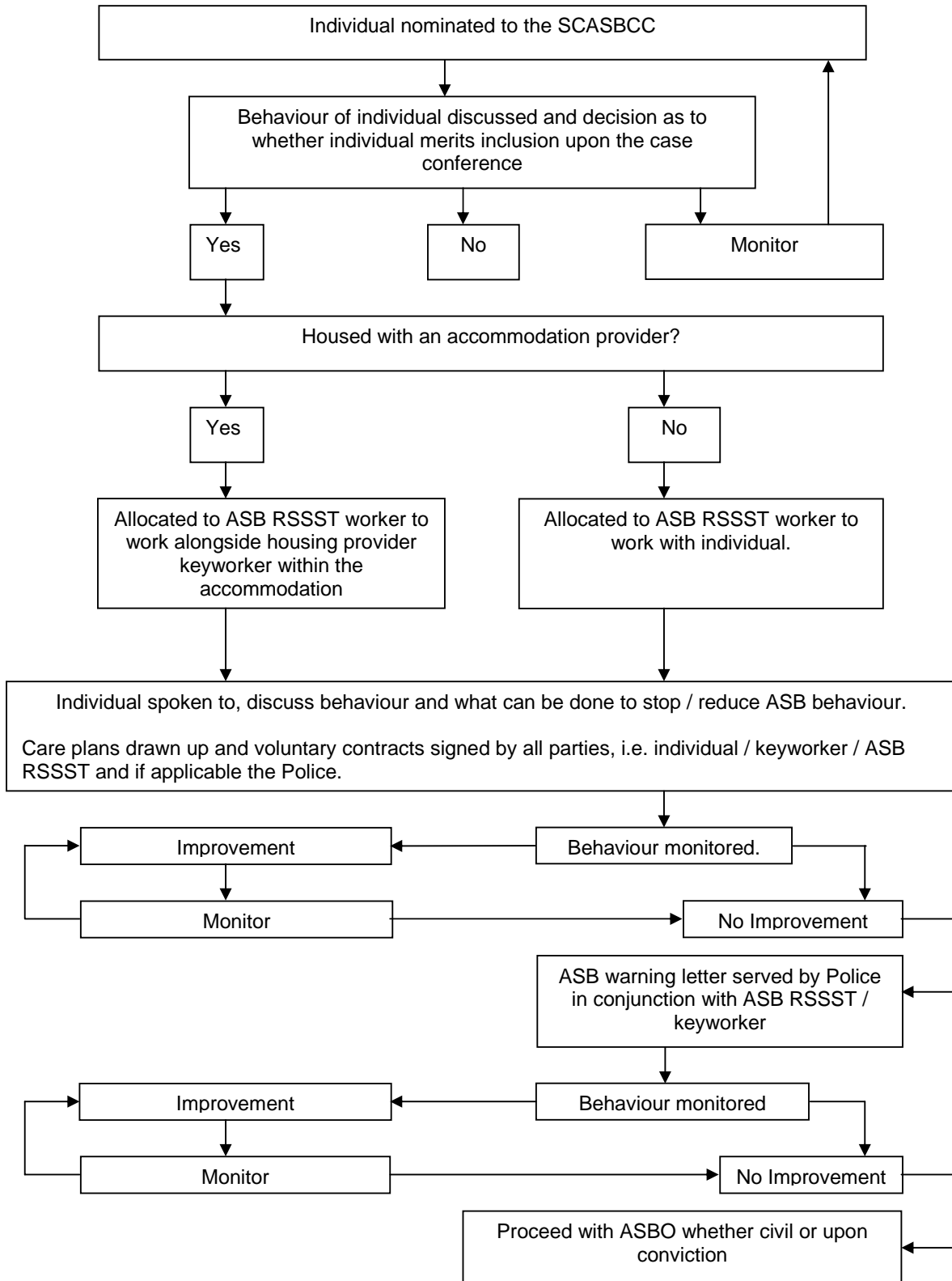
Concluding Remarks

The structure that has been put in place and that has been shown to be successful is now being used to tackle the most persistent and prolific shoplifters within Brighton and Hove who are all illicit drug users. The BCRP have secured funding through the local Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT), this has enabled the CRI to dedicate one out-reach worker to work alongside police officers targeting prolific shoplifters. By using the joint-working model from Operation Dodger it is anticipated that prolific shoplifters will engage with social care agencies and reduce their need to offend. This process and structure is also being considered for the other priority crime areas where the offenders are substance abusers e.g. burglary, car crime.

Appendix 1. Street Audit Intervention Form.

ISSUING _____
TIME _____ DATE _____
LOCATION _____
FULL NAME _____
D.O.B _____ SEX M <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/>
BORN _____
ADDRESS _____ _____
ROUGH SLEEPER Y/N SITE _____
DESCRIPTION _____ _____ _____
DRUG USER Y/N _____ DRINKER Y/N _____
BIG ISSUE:
BIG ISSUE ON DISPLAY Y/N ON PITCH Y/N
BIG ISSUE NUMBER _____
SERVICES:
KEY WORKER _____
DDU _____
1 ST BASE Y/N _____ ADDACTION Y/N _____
EQUINOX Y/N _____ ST. JOHNS Y/N _____
ST. PATS Y/N _____ OTHER _____
Benefits? Y/N Type _____ £ _____ per week / fortnight

Appendix 2. Street Community Anti-Social Behaviour Case Conference.



Title of the project

Operation Dodger – Policing the Street Community in Brighton and Hove.

Name of force/agency/CDRP:

Sussex Police, UK

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