

Title of the project: **Newtown Neighbours**

Name of force/agency/CDRP/CSP: **CLEVELAND POLICE STWB Neighbourhood Police Team**

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Government Office North West, Government Office London etc: **GOVERNMENT  
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## Summary of application

This summary outlines an initiative by Stockton Neighbourhood Police Team Ward Officers and partner agencies to tackle a dispute between two Tristar tenants in Stockton on Tees, and the ongoing problems surrounding them.

In the two years prior to the POP becoming active there were 183 calls to the police in relation to incidents at adjoining semi-detached houses. Incidents included complaints of disorder, criminal damage and assaults.

The objective of the POP was to reduce the number of calls to the police and the level of disorder in the street, subsequently improving conditions for other residents. This was to be achieved by involving partner agencies who would act together to tackle the problem.

The agencies involved were:-

- Tristar, a company that was formed to administer council owned properties in Stockton District.
- Stockton Borough Council Anti Social Behaviour Team
- Anti Social Behaviour reduction officers
- Local Councilors

Ward officers carried out site meetings on a daily basis in order to reduce the number of calls and there were a number of multi agency meetings. One of the tenants was already on an ASBO but the long term solution was to move him to a new location.

In June 2006 he was put before the court for breaching his ASBO. On that occasion he was given a 3 month sentence suspended for 12 months. He was due to appear in court again in August 2006 for three further breaches and a custodial sentence was anticipated. On 25<sup>th</sup> July he breached his ASBO again and was arrested and remanded in custody and was dealt with in August at which time he received a custodial sentence.

Whilst he was in prison the agencies involved met in order to discuss alternatives and staff from Tristar visited him in prison several times to discuss his tenancy.

He was released from prison in December 2006, declared himself homeless and moved to sheltered accommodation away from his old address. On 10<sup>th</sup> January he returned to the street and was verbally abusive to his neighbour. He was arrested and put before the Magistrates Court for Breach of ASBO and released on conditional bail to attend Crown Court for sentencing.

He attended Crown Court on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2007 and received a further suspended sentence.

Since his arrest on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2007 he has stayed away from the street and there have been no further reported incidents.

## **Description of project**

### **Background**

The problem arose due to the high number of calls to one street in Stockton-on-Tees, involving neighbour disputes between an uncle and his nephew, and the uncle's behaviour towards his nephew and partner. It was also apparent that some neighbours were occasionally becoming involved and one or two were taking sides.

The POP was activated in June 2006 after other interventions had appeared to have failed and there had been a higher than usual number of calls to the location. The objective of the POP was to reduce the number of calls to the police, reduce the level of disorder in the street and subsequently improve conditions for other residents by involving partner agencies and other stakeholders to act together to resolve the dispute between the parties.

PC 108 Kirk, the Ward officer for the area, was nominated as the POP owner and he engaged a number of partner agencies.

- Newtown Neighbourhood Policing team
- Stockton Response Policing
- Tristar homes – Stephanie Wilmore (Area Manager) and Amanda Page (Patch Officer)
- Tristar Anti Social Behaviour Reduction Officers – John Mills
- Stockton Borough Council Anti Social Behaviour Team – Kirsty Hardy

### **SCANNING**

During 2005, the uncle was consistently involved in incidents of disorder and complaints were made by his neighbours and other members of the public. These complaints were mainly about him being drunk and abusive and playing his music too loud at all hours of the day and night.

Evidence was gathered by Stockton Borough Council Anti-Social Behaviour Team, neighbours filled in diary sheets and Newtown Ward police officers completed the evidence with supporting statements. This multi agency approach resulted in enough evidence being gathered to apply for an Anti-Social Behaviour Order on him.

The details of the ASBO are shown in Fig 1.

### **ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ORDER (CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998, s.1)**

The court found that:

- (i) the Defendant acted in the following anti-social manner, which caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household as himself.

Between 8 March 2005 and 22 July 2005, the Defendant has shouted verbal abuse, caused a nuisance, acted in a drunk and disorderly manner and posted notes through a neighbour's door.

And

- (ii) This order is necessary to protect persons in England and Wales from further anti-social acts by him.

And the court ordered that the Defendant must not:

- (i) Behave in any way that intimidates or seeks to intimidate one or more

- (ii) persons not of the same household as himself. Behave in a manner which causes or is likely to cause harassment alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household as himself.
- (iii) Incite or encourage any other person to act in a manner which causes or is likely to cause harassment alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household as himself.
- (iv) Be verbally abusive, violent or threaten violence towards any person within the Cleveland Police area.
- (v) Play loud music in such a manner as to cause annoyance to his neighbours.
- (vi) Seek to approach or communicate, directly or indirectly, with his neighbours or any members of their family.

This order shall remain in force until 3 November 2008.

Fig 1

The police incident recording system and crimes database were researched to identify the full scope of the problem involving police action. In the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006 to June 2006 there were 108 calls to the street of which 69 related to the uncle's address, 19 related to his neighbour's address and the remaining 20 calls were to other addresses in the street not connected with this dispute. The number of calls per month was showing a steady increase as shown in Fig 2.

Year	Incident Created Datetime	Total
2006	Feb	3
	Mar	10
	Apr	10
	May	40
	Jun	45
Grand Total		108

Fig 2

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Offender**

The uncle, aged 49 years, lived alone, is an alcoholic and can be very abusive when drunk. He also becomes aggressive under the influence of alcohol and can be very intimidating. He became a Tristar tenant following the death of his mother several years ago. He had lived with her and took over the tenancy after she died.

Prior to being the tenant at the address, he had previously been subjected to abuse by local children on the estate which resulted in him becoming involved in several incidents including a couple of assaults against him for which he had received criminal injuries compensation. He chased children away from his home a number of times after they had thrown eggs or other items at his property and some parents of these children had occasionally approached and confronted him.

Over the years he had been involved in two previous neighbour disputes. He would constantly play loud music and occasionally threaten violence against his neighbours or their visitors. These situations were resolved only after the neighbours moved away.

## Victim

### Nephew and partner

The nephew moved in with his partner next door to his uncle in 2004. As they were related it was believed at this time that the historical neighbour disputes that the uncle had always been involved in would cease due to the new neighbour being a family member and for a time this was the case as there were no problems between the uncle and his nephew and partner.

The nephew and partner had a child together who was born around Christmas 2004.

### Location

The street is situated in a housing estate with mixed housing. There are privately owned properties, council properties, housing agency properties and properties owned by private landlords on the estate. The houses in the street are mainly privately owned properties but there are also some council houses. Stockton Borough Council's housing stock is managed by Tristar Homes, a company which was created specifically for this purpose.

There are 35 houses in the street and all of them are semi-detached properties with gardens to the front and rear. The uncle and nephew lived in adjoining semi-detached houses situated at one end of the street.

### The Problem

Around Christmas of 2004 the uncle loaned some money to his nephew and partner prior to the birth of their first child. Part of this money was to help with some financial problems and the remainder of the money was intended as a gift. By the early part of 2005, the nephew had fallen behind with the repayments and this was causing friction between him and his uncle.

This was the start of the neighbour dispute with the nephew regularly accusing his uncle of playing loud music or shouting through the walls at night. There were complaints from both sides of assault, allegations of burglary and also reports of disorder with police being called on a regular basis. The uncle was quite often drunk and most of the time appeared to be the main cause of the problems.

This ASBO started in November 2005 and is valid until 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2008. The ASBO placed specific restrictions on The uncle's behaviour. Condition (vi) of the ASBO directed that he must not:

***"seek to approach or communicate directly or indirectly, with his nephew, his nephew's partner or any members of their family".***

This clause was difficult to enforce due to the proximity of the addresses and the ASBO was breached on several occasions.

The uncle was arrested for these breaches but the Police were unsuccessful with convictions and sentencing even though the ASBO stated that

***"If, without reasonable excuse, the Defendant does anything which he/she is prohibited from doing by this order, he/she shall be liable on conviction to a term of imprisonment not exceeding five years or to a fine or to both.***

## RESPONSE

In February 2006, due to the ongoing problems, PC Kirk held a meeting attended by the uncle, his nephew and partner and Kirsty Hardy from the Anti Social Behaviour Team. All three were warned regarding their conduct and advised against using the Police to get each

other into trouble by making false allegations. They discussed their problems and agreed that the difficulties centred around the unpaid debt. They both agreed to a new arrangement to resume making repayments for the loan and the meeting ended on a positive note with them shaking hands and leaving as friends.

For a couple of months the calls reduced and it appeared that the problem had been resolved but a young couple moved into a house across the road and this started the problems up again. A short time after they moved into the area these new neighbours began to get involved in the dispute between uncle and nephew and took sides with the nephew. They also occasionally became involved with name calling and a generally low level of anti social behaviour. On several occasions they were present at the nephew's address when officers attended and provided alibis in response to allegations made by the uncle against the nephew.

Analysis of the information had indicated that most of the incidents in the location were caused by the actions of the uncle. Initiatives were considered to try and alleviate the problem and one of the immediate short term responses was to formally warn the occupants of all three houses regarding their involvement and conduct.

The uncle stated that the problems had re-emerged due to the money not being paid on time and during May 2006 there were 40 calls with a further 45 in June 2006. At this point it was decided to set up a POP.

At a site meeting attended by Tristar staff and Police, the uncle stated he wanted to move away from the area so Tristar started to make efforts to locate a property. Due to the conflict with other neighbours, all parties were spoken to and warned regarding residence contract breaches.

It was apparent that all parties were making allegations and counter allegations. It was decided that CCTV should be installed in an effort to establish the accuracy of the allegations and who was to blame.

In July 2006 PC Kirk contacted John Mills of the Anti Social Behaviour Reduction Team and they took over the case from Tristar officers.

At a further meeting, a list of objectives and targets were drawn up. It was planned that the short term measures would include:

- Tenancy warnings to all parties
- Mediation using UNITE
- CCTV cameras to be installed in the new neighbour's address to cover the other two addresses.

The long term solution was to move the uncle to a new location. This would reduce contact between the two parties and fall in with his wishes.

RIPA forms were completed and submitted to Tristar in relation to CCTV and Paul Noddings, Tristar manager, approved the cost involved and authorised installation. At the same time Tristar had examined and eliminated a number of properties for various reasons.

### **Breaches of Anti Social Behaviour Order**

In June 2006 the uncle was put before the court for breaching his ASBO and given a 3 month sentence suspended for 12 months. He was also due to appear in August 2006 for 3 further breaches and a custodial sentence was anticipated.

On 25<sup>th</sup> July 2006 he smashed the front window of his nephew's house, scattering glass over 2 children in the house aged 5 months and 2 years. He was arrested for Criminal Damage

and breach of ASBO and was remanded in custody until 28<sup>th</sup> August pending sentencing at which time he was given a custodial sentence.

Tristar held a meeting to revoke his tenancy upon his release from prison and PC Kirk spoke to his solicitor. The solicitor was hoping to prevent the uncle from returning to the address upon his release.

It was decided that staff from Tristar would visit the uncle in prison on a number of occasions to discuss his tenancy and he was presented with a number of options either to declare himself voluntarily homeless or face eviction.

Upon his release from prison in December 2006 he was accompanied to his home to collect personal belongings. He was then re-housed in another area of the town, over a mile away from his nephew and an application was made to revise his ASBO to prevent him from entering the street.

On 10<sup>th</sup> January he went to his nephew's house, barged in and began shouting at his nephew's partner. He was subsequently arrested, detained overnight by police and put before Teesside Magistrates Court. The case was adjourned to Crown Court for sentencing and he was released on conditional bail. He appeared before Teesside Crown Court in February 2007 where he was given a suspended sentence for 6 months, placed on a supervision order for 18 months and required to carry out 100 hours of unpaid community work.

### **ASSESSMENT**

During the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006 to 30<sup>th</sup> January 2007 there were 157 calls to the street as shown in the chart in Fig 3, with 108 in the five months leading up to the introduction of the POP. In July 2007 after the POP was activated there were another 23 calls to the street but then following the uncle's imprisonment there was a complete cessation of calls relating to the neighbour dispute and there were only 26 calls to the street in the following 6 months between August 2006 and January 2007.

Year	Incident Created Datetime	Total
2006	Feb	3
	Mar	10
	Apr	10
	May	40
	Jun	45
	Jul	23
	Aug	2
	Sep	3
	Oct	2
	Nov	6
	Dec	8
2007	Jan	5
Grand Total		157

Fig 3.

Of the 157 calls to the street there were 85 calls to the uncle's address and 30 to the nephew's. Combined calls to these two addresses accounted for 73% of all calls to the street. Of the 85 calls to the uncle's address, there were 27 in May 2006, 30 in June 2006 and 15 in July 2006. The number of calls to each house in the street is shown in the chart in Fig 4.

	Feb 200 6	Mar 200 6	Apr 200 6	May 200 6	Jun 200 6	Jul 200 6	Aug 200 6	Sep 200 6	Oct 200 6	Nov 200 6	Dec 200 6	Jan 200 7	
Uncle's address	2	6	4	27	30	15	1						85
Nephew's address		3	1	8	7	6				2	2	1	30
All other addresses in the street	1	1	5	5	8	2	1	3	2	4	6	4	42
Total	3	10	10	40	45	23	2	3	2	6	8	5	157

Fig 4.

Since the uncle's release from prison there has only been one call to the street involving him, in January 2007.

Prior to his term of imprisonment there were over 40 calls per month to the street in May and June. In July after the initial introduction of the POP there were still over 20 calls to the street but, during the period of his imprisonment, the number of calls reduced to single figures per month.

The application of partnership action by the Police, Tristar Homes and the Anti Social Behaviour reduction team highlighted the full range of the uncle's behaviour to all of the partners.

This joint action resulted in the uncle being put before the court for breaching his ASBO and committing other illegal acts.

The Court's action in imposing a custodial sentence combined with the reasons for his detention gave Tristar homes relevant reasons to apply for eviction.

His custodial sentence completely prevented the uncle from continuing his behaviour while allowing time for consideration to be given to further initiatives that would be implemented upon his release.

While there is nothing to physically prevent the uncle from returning to the street and committing offences against his former neighbours, the restrictions imposed upon him and his relocation to a different address place a level of inconvenience upon him that hinders his behaviour. In addition, changes in his ASBO and an injunction obtained by Tristar allow the partners to take more immediate action in the event of further breaches.

Since the incident in January 2007 he has not returned to the street and there have been no further reported incidents.