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**LANCASHIRE CONSTABULARY SUBMISSION TO THE 2007
HERMAN GOLDSTEIN AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN
PROBLEM ORIENTED POLICING**

OPERATION ABATE

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2007 Herman Goldstein Award

‘Operation Abate’

Blackpool South Reassurance Area Neighbourhood Policing Team

Summary of Project

Scanning:

- The “Reassurance Plus South Area” is made up of Bloomfield Waterloo & Victoria wards of Blackpool South.
- They have historically been hotspots for criminal damage, violent crime and ASB.
- Reassurance Plus is a multi-agency initiative working to eradicate signal crimes and make communities feel safer.
- The problems associated with violent crime, criminal damage and ASB within area is also regularly raised at PACT, street surgeries and outlets within Reassurance Plus scheme.
- 2006 was largely successful for reductions. September however showed increases in damage in Bloomfield and Waterloo.
- Expected increase in crimes during Oct/ Nov due to half term, Halloween, bonfire night and darker evenings.

Analysis:

Offenders:

- Nearly half of damage during September 06 committed by unknown offenders during hours of darkness. Scrutiny of CRS, crime reports and Intel links offences to congregation of youths and reports of ASB.
- Similarly, violent crime and ASB are linked, especially where alcohol is a factor.
- List of targets suspected of involvement compiled.

Location:

- ASB hotspots and areas where youths congregate are linked with criminal damage and violent crime.
- Particularly applies to problem addresses and open public spaces such as parks.
- List of hotspots compiled.

Victim:

- Household/ car owners in the locations are victim of damage to property.
- Those passing through those areas are subject to violent crime.
- In cases of parks and open spaces the local authority is the victim.

Response:

- Clear needs to target both the offenders and the location, as the victims are so diverse they could not be tackled as effectively.
- Members of the NPT deployed into the identified hotspots in plain clothes.
- Collating intelligence on persons gathering in hotspots and robust dispersal of groups.
- Checks on identified targets.
- High visibility in other parts of the area to prevent displacement.
- Working with partners to target properties and hotspots linked to ASB and damage/ violent crime.
- £3,000 was acquired for extra policing during the half term holiday.

Assessment:

Compared to same period in 2005:

- Violent crime reduced by 29%.
- Reports of ASB reduced by 18%.
- Criminal damage showed a slight increase of 1.4% (2 incidents).
- 2 of the 3 wards showed reduction and there was a 20% increase in detections.
- The operation has had long term effects in assisting reductions in the period since.

Description of Project

Scanning

The Reassurance Plus scheme is a multi-agency initiative which tackles fear of crime and quality of life issues by making them feel safer. The Reassurance South area of Blackpool is made up of the Bloomfield Waterloo and Victoria wards of Blackpool South policing sector. The Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) responsible for policing that area are tasked with reducing criminal damage violent crime and anti-social behaviour as part of their core business. 2006 was largely a successful year for reduction in these categories. September 2006 showed increases on 2005 figures in the Bloomfield and Waterloo areas. Nearly half of all criminal damage that occurred in the Bloomfield area in September 2006 was caused to vehicles. It was caused by unknown offenders mainly during hours of darkness.

The period 1st October 2006 to 19th November 2006 was identified as a window where damage, violent crime and anti-social behaviour would represent a threat to performance and reverse the trend of reduction seen in preceding months.

This threat was identified by members of the NPT due to the fact that there had already been a pattern developing where offences and incidents were increasing. It was anticipated that this trend would be in danger of increasing due to the impending school half-term holidays as well as the fact that Halloween and Bonfire Night fell within that period. This was a period of time when the evenings were getting darker earlier. This would be beneficial towards those persons intending to commit crime as they would have cover of darkness for longer.

As well as being a threat to performance the problem of criminal damage, violent crime and anti-social behaviour also affects the people who live and work in the Reassurance area. They are issues that directly affect their quality of life if they are a victim of incidents of this nature. They are also signal crimes which if seen by members of the public can lead to a fear of being unsafe within the community which is something the reassurance plus scheme seeks to eradicate. It has been confirmed that this is a problem as Violent Crime and Signal Crimes have been identified through Government consultations as key areas which cause concern. In addition these issues are regularly raised as community concerns at PACT meetings and public forums through the Reassurance Plus Scheme.

Analysis

Location:

Through scrutiny of crime figures and incident records in the period leading up to 1st October 2006 as well as information provided by the community through consultation at engagement forums such as monthly PACT meetings, a list of sites was identified where criminal damage, violent crime and anti-social behaviour have been prominent or are emerging as a threat. These locations will be then be targeted through the operation. These locations were predominantly residential side streets with the exception of 2 open public spaces. Also identified was a sea front amusement arcade.

Victim:

The victims and callers are predominantly householders and business people living and working within the Reassurance Plus area. On some occasions, particular in cases of violent crime, they have been holiday makers or clubbers who are either staying in or passing through those areas. This is particularly the case around the 2 arterial main roads in the area which are also the main thoroughfares south from the town centre. The holiday areas within the wards are also liable to become areas where violent crime and damage occurs due to the influence of alcohol fuelled disorder at weekends and people living and staying within those areas are liable to be targeted.

Offenders:

From analysis of crimes that have been detected and again referring to intelligence both from the community and from officers, the offenders for these incidents of violent crime, criminal damage and anti-social behaviour are in the main juveniles who congregate in the identified areas in groups. Usually they are consuming or have consumed alcohol and other substances affecting their inhibitions. They are congregating in these residential areas usually as a result of associations in or very near to those areas. In the case of the parks and the amusement arcade, they are areas which have become established meeting places for groups of youths where they can congregate away from the streets. In many cases the offenders are very hard to identify when they are simply one of a large group all dressed in similar clothing. In the residential areas the offenders and offences can be linked to the presence of a particular problem family or household.

Response

In response to the problems identified the NPT adopted a 2 pronged approach in Operation Abate. Between the hours of 7pm and 12am each Friday and Saturday and between the hours of 6pm and 10am each Sunday officers worked in pairs and were deployed on foot in plain clothes into the predefined hotspot areas. They were supported by uniformed officer/ PCSO presence covering the rest of the area but providing assistance to the plain clothes officers where appropriate. The plain-clothes aspect of the operation was organised around the following objectives:

- 1) To gain intelligence into those persons congregating in the hotspot areas to facilitate appropriate targeting.
- 2) To arrest those responsible for the commission of criminal damage and violent crime where observed.
- 3) To provide a robust response to those committing ASB in damage hotspot areas by stopping and where appropriate searching those responsible. This also provided a “shock” disruption tactic that those people were not used to.

The NPT also obtained £3,000 funding from the local crime & disorder reduction partnership for the operation. It was used to run a high visibility element to the operation during the half term holidays 23rd October 2006 to 29 October 2006. This was intended to counter act the anticipated traditional increase in youth ASB and associated crime whilst youths were not attending their educational establishments. This element ran between the hours of 6pm and 2am through the half term week. On the Sunday it ran between 4pm and midnight. Officers worked in pairs in the South Reassurance area conducting high visibility foot patrol. During each shift at least three of the identified hotspot areas were visited. Also 2 of the identified targets were visited and issued stop forms. A bail/ PNC/ local warrants check was conducted and clothing recorded on the stop form.

This part of the operation was intended to fulfil the following objectives.

- 1) To gain intelligence into those persons congregating in damage hotspots.
- 2) To arrest those responsible for the commission of criminal damage.
- 3) To provide a robust response to those committing ASB in damage hotspot areas by stopping and where appropriate searching those responsible.

In addition to these tactics, officers from the NPT worked during the weekdays targeting premises linked with ASB Damage and Violent Crime. This was done with partner agencies such as the private

housing enforcement unit from Blackpool Council. It was noted that many such properties linked with ASB etc are in a poor state of repair and joint visits of this type helped hold rogue landlords to account. In the case of properties owned by the local authority joint visits were conducted by the NPT and a housing officer. Target hardening was carried out in areas where damage and violent crime were prevalent especially where these problems are being caused by youths. Hotspots were referred to Blackpool Youth Service who sent outreach workers to engage with youths in those areas.

Over 50 recorded actions were conducted during the period of the operation. Some of them are as follows:

- A local youth was issued an Acceptable Behaviour Contract after being identified as a problem individual.
- During the course of Operation Abate officers from the NPT issued 30 youths referrals, conducted 75 Stops checks and Stop/ Searches, submitted 158 intelligence entries and made 24 arrests.
- Throughout the duration of the operation plain clothes officers were complimented by officers working together on high visibility cycle and foot patrol in other areas preventing displacement.
- Each Friday Saturday and Sunday 2 officers from NPT patrolling the South Reassurance area in plain clothes targeting identified hotspots and targets.
- Feedback received from the youth service states they actively targeted hotspot areas and that they have successfully engaged with youths and got them involved in activities at a local park and that they have started to use the facilities regularly. Their behaviour has been noted as good.
- 2 problem youths were made subject of a strategy meeting with social services and other agencies after concerns raised by NPT officers. The NPT liaised closely with other agencies to facilitate the removal of the family to more suitable accommodation out of the area.
- During the course of the operation officers identified youths from problem addresses and completed referrals to the Positive Activities for Young People service. 2 older youths (15 years) who regularly congregate with others in the area were engaged by the officers and helped them obtain application forms for work permits so that they can work and more positively fill their free time.

- NPT conduct a joint visit with housing enforcement officer to a problem family. Notice is served by the enforcement officer condemning the house and moving the family elsewhere.
- Target male charged with racially aggravated harassment. An anti-social behaviour order application is to be submitted against him by NPT due to his persistent ASB and involvement in crime.
- Another local youth was issued an Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC) after being identified as a problem individual.
- Due to numerous breaches of his ABC and no sign of curbing his behaviour a target youth was served a cease and desist notice to attempt to control his behaviour.
- On Bonfire night officers not engaged in plain clothes patrol patrolled the area on high visibility cycle and foot patrol in South Reassurance area targeting known fireworks hotspots. Large fire started by youths on waste ground near to a park which was put out. Fireworks confiscated from youths. Fireworks shop near a park visited.
- NPT members not engaged in plain clothes conduct high visibility disruption around fireworks hotspots to prevent damage being caused by them. CCTV van out on patrol in area.
- Evaluation of half term high visibility operation sees 64 visits to the various hotspots, 39 stop checks conducted 2 arrests and 15 intelligence entries.
- Landlord of a problem address was spoken to after persistent complaints from neighbours about youths congregating outside the address and subsequent damage and ASB being caused. The landlord issued a written warning to the tenant.
- Joint visit to problem address with housing officer from Blackpool Council. Tenant is warned by Council and told her unauthorised lodger must leave which she subsequently does.
- Joint visit to problem address organised with landlord, letting agent, NPT officer and rent bond scheme officer. Tenant has quit the address and damage has been caused. To prevent any further damage the landlord has the ground floor boarded up at request of police. A statement was taken re damage.
- Patrols engaged in Op Abate attend report of multiple damage (10 properties) caused by gloss paint. Details are taken and enquiries commenced. Witnesses identify a target male as responsible. He is arrested and interviewed later that day. After investigation the Crown

Prosecution Service authorise 3 specimen charges of causing damage which leads to the detection of all 10 offences.

- Problem family are served 2 months notice by the landlord due to the problems and tension they are causing on the street which resulted in numerous street disturbances incidents of damage violent crime and ASB. The family have also been referred to social services by the NPT after concerns for the children. A visit has also been conducted by housing enforcement officer as their are concerns regarding how fit the property is for habitation.
- Due to his persistent involvement in ASB criminal damage and violent crime in the area another local youth was served with an ABC where he has agreed to adhere to several conditions including a voluntary curfew and to not enter a specified place.
- A problem household was identified as a target address. A large amount of ASB and criminal damage was in immediate area. 2 operation targets are associating with others at the address. Disruption visit conducted by NPT together with Rent Bond Scheme Officer and Letting Agent. Social Services case conference called and child, aged 10 months, put on at risk register and PPO subsequently taken out on child whom remains in care of family members.

Assessment

The success of this operation was assessed based on a tangible reduction in Criminal Damage and Violent Crime as well as reports of Anti-Social Behaviour across the period of the operation compared to the same period in 2005. This was monitored from figures extracted from the search facilities on police information systems, specifically the crime recording system and also the police communications room system.

In the case of criminal damage and violent crime, assessment was based on comparison of recorded offences on the police crime recording system between 1st October 2006 to 19th November 2006 with the same period in 2005.

In the case of anti-social behaviour, assessment was based on comparison of reported incidents of anti-social behaviour on the police communication room system 1st October 2006 to 19th November 2006 with the same period in 2005.

During the initiative the NPT completed 56 recorded actions. This lead to a 29% reduction in recorded incidents of violent crime across the 3 ward areas and an 18% reduction in reported incidents of Anti-

Social Behaviour. There was a slight increase of 1.4% in Criminal Damage which equates to 2 incidents. However, 2 of the 3 ward areas showed a reduction in criminal damage and the increase on Bloomfield has been actioned with detected incidents of damage showing a 20% increase in 2006 compared to 2005. This small increase comes on the back of much bigger increases in other ward areas at Blackpool South policing sector, which in some places has been up to 50% over the school holiday week.

Due to the drastic decrease in the levels of ASB particularly, there has been a real difference made in the quality of life of those living within the South Reassurance area. This is illustrated by a letter of thanks praising the work of team members by a community group.

The following table illustrates in real terms what difference has been made by the tactics employed in the operation and is broken down to show each of the 3 ward areas.

Violent Crime

| | <u>2005</u> | <u>2006</u> |
|--------------------------|-------------|---|
| Victoria | 33 | 25 |
| Bloomfield | 99 | 72 |
| Waterloo | 35 | 22 |
| <u>TOTAL</u> | 167 | 119 |
| <u>Difference</u> | | <u>48 incidents, 29% reduction</u> |

Criminal Damage

| | <u>2005</u> | <u>2006</u> |
|--------------------------|-------------|---|
| Victoria | 42 | 34 |
| Bloomfield | 72 | 86 |
| Waterloo | 32 | 28 |
| <u>TOTAL</u> | 146 | 148 |
| <u>Difference</u> | | <u>2 incidents, 1.4% increase.</u> |

ASB

| | <u>2005</u> | <u>2006</u> |
|--------------------------|-------------|--|
| Victoria | 182 | 128 |
| Bloomfield | 462 | 431 |
| Waterloo | 216 | 145 |
| <u>TOTAL</u> | 860 | 704 |
| <u>Difference</u> | | <u>156 incidents; 18% reduction</u> |

Agency and Officer Information

The operation was owned and managed by the neighbourhood policing team responsible for the Reassurance Plus wards at Blackpool South policing sector. The team consists of 1 Sergeant, 5 Constables, 7 Community Support Officers and a Special Constable. The tactics employed in this operation are now used as good practice with all operations of this type across at the Blackpool South sector. As part of the basic training of Constables entering service with Lancashire Constabulary extensive training is given in POP and implementing it effectively.

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