

## **Tackling Low-level Volume: Reducing Criminal Damage in Bolton**

### **Be Safe Bolton Strategic Partnership**

**Matthew Emerson & Jonathan Bradley**

#### **Scanning:**

Reducing criminal damage is a strategic priority for the Be Safe Bolton Strategic Partnership (Bolton's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership – CDRP). A challenging target of 23% was negotiated and included in Bolton's Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy 2005-8. Historically, criminal damage has generated a large volume of crime for the Be Safe Partnership and between April 2004 and March 2007 accounted for more than one third of all British Crime Survey comparator crimes. This volume represented a real threat to the Partnership and a significant concern for Bolton communities.

The monthly Partnership Business Group (PBG) meetings started to identify an upward trend from the already large volumes of criminal damage recorded each month. Local Area Partnerships were also highlighting in more detail the increasing levels of criminal damage around the borough and the strong correlation with recorded levels of anti-social behaviour.

#### **Analysis:**

The Be Safe partnership commissioned a detailed problem profile of criminal damage in Bolton. The aim of the report was to provide a detailed profile of

criminal damage offences and related incidents in Bolton during the period March 2006 to February 2007. Data was used from a wide range of sources such as Greater Manchester Police, Fire and Rescue, Bolton Council and Housing.

The report identified seven priority neighbourhoods, demographic profiles, victim and offender profile, trends, time and spatial analysis.

**Response:**

The Reassuring and Supporting Communities Theme Group took ownership of the problem profile and set a sub-group to develop an action plan and act as project management board.

A number of activities were implemented which related directly to the problem profile focussing on the seven priority neighbourhoods, repeat victims and persistent offenders. Activity included targeted use of Antisocial behaviour tools and powers, including Anti-social Behaviour Orders and Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, situational crime prevention methods such as Gating Orders, CCTV and environmental work including Beat sweeps.

**Assessment:**

The assessment has shown how effective the criminal damage project has been. Since 2006/7, criminal damage has reduced by 13.4% across Bolton and by

21.5% in the seven priority areas identified in the analysis where the majority of activity has taken place.

The assessment has identified specific interventions which have had a direct impact on levels of criminal damage including Gating Orders, targeted multi-agency operations and the use of anti-social behaviour tools and powers.

Significantly, the assessment points to the established partnership business process as a real strength in delivering effective interventions.

### **Scanning:**

This application describes the SARA process followed by the BeSafe Bolton Strategic Partnership to reduce criminal damage (CD) across Bolton.

As with most other areas, CD had long been a large volume crime for BeSafe. Between April 2004 and March 2007 CD accounted for more than a third of all British Crime Survey comparator (BCS) crimes. This represented a real threat to the Partnership's March 08 target of a 21% reduction and a significant concern for Bolton's communities (see Chart 1).

BeSafe knew that CD was significant in Bolton, that there were links to juvenile anti-social behaviour (ASB) and that previous attempts to tackle CD had been ad hoc with varying success. However, at this point there was no detailed understanding of the issues involved such as victims, offenders, times, locations or methods and where the dependencies lay across the partnership for tackling these issues.

Central to the scanning element of this project and the subsequent management of the SARA was the BeSafe partnership business process. The process is centred on the GMAC process (Greater Manchester Against Crime – a derivative of the National Intelligence Model) and provides the partnership mechanisms for assessing crime and disorder issues affecting Bolton, both tactically and strategically. The Partnership Business Group (PBG) and Local Area

Partnerships (LAPs) drive this process, tasking partners via analytical products on a monthly basis.

Monthly PBG meetings identified an upward trend within the already large volumes of CD being recorded. Police data showed the levels of CD by location and that was mapped against ASB data, local authority data such as Environment DLEQ scores, fire data and the Vulnerable Localities Index (VLI). Strong correlations between different data-sets suggested this was a multi-faceted problem requiring a partnership response.

Analytical data was supported by community feedback picked up through formal consultation, and informally through neighbourhood police and other partners including housing officers, ASB officers and environmental teams. This community feedback also suggested that levels of CD were closely linked to issues of ASB and negative perceptions of their neighbourhood. Chart 2 illustrates the impact of CD on resident perceptions of general ASB.

In a regional Survey for 2006, 85% of respondents in Bolton were fairly or very concerned about having their property damaged. Fewer respondents were concerned about offences like vehicle crime and personal robbery. The only factors that more people were concerned about were domestic burglary and gangs of people on the street. Concerns about CD were, to a small degree, more

common in Bolton than most other Greater Manchester districts. Only Salford and Rochdale had equal or higher levels of concern.

Evidence also suggested that where CD was prevalent it was also a catalyst for other forms of ASB and crime.

The scanning process revealed issues that transcend a face value assessment of CD and that further analysis was needed to identify the roots of the problems and determine appropriate responses. There were obvious links to environmental issues such as graffiti and fly-tipping; the fire service were keen for a more coordinated approach to tackling small deliberate fires e.g. wheelie bins; Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive (GMPTE) wanted to tackle issues affecting their infrastructure including damage to the bus interchange and missiles thrown at buses.

The following factors influenced BeSafe's position:

- notable achievements against other key crimes already achieved;
- CD target off course;
- a host of data from partners hinting strongly at some noticeable correlations;
- a community identifying CD not just as a physical problem but as something which profoundly affects their quality of life; and,

- partners keen for a coordinated approach.

BeSafe commissioned a detailed criminal damage problem profile to provide a far richer picture than was previously available, and to enable a response which was evidence based, focussed on partnership, and which lent itself to evaluation.

## **Analysis:**

The objective for the analysis report was to provide a detailed profile of CD offences and related incidents in Bolton, during the period March 2006 to February 2007. The report aimed to:

- identify specific problems;
- analyse the characteristics of these problems;
- suggest solutions and appropriate responses; and,
- evaluate previous initiatives.

The analysis looked in detail at:

- Locations
- Offenders
- Victims
- Offences
- Methods
- Review and evaluation of previous initiatives/operations
- New resources
- Causes

BeSafe's existing data capabilities and business processes made accessing data and other relevant information straightforward. Innovative tools used by the BeSafe analytical and research team like the Vulnerable Localities Index (VLI)



and Key Individual Networks (KIN) provided added value to the analysis. Quantitative and qualitative information was obtained from a number of sources:

Bolton at Home (Bolton's Housing Service)

Bolton Council (BMBC)

British Transport Police

General Resident's Survey

GMPTE

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service

Greater Manchester Police (GMP)

Greater Manchester Probation Service

Other tools and national data complemented locally sourced information. Mosaic data helped us to explore the demographic profiles of the worst affected neighbourhoods, and the VLI pointed to links with wider community fragmentation. KIN data allowed a 'reality check' to take place with members of the community.

## **Location**

Analysis of locations was aimed at identifying those vulnerable neighbourhoods most at risk of CD and the situational risk factors which made opportunities to commit CD in these areas more likely.

Using GMP data of reported CD, analysis showed that the same neighbourhoods appeared in the top of the table year after year. Some areas in particular showed increasing levels of CD over the preceding two years (Brightmet North, Tonge Moor and Horwich West). However, despite a general decrease, Great Lever neighbourhood had the highest volume with 10% of the borough total. Seven neighbourhoods accounted for 46% of all damage. This analysis gave the partnership an indication of where the priority neighbourhoods were and where most gains could be achieved.

Other findings:

- 7 priority neighbourhoods identified – Great Lever, Brightmet North, Brownlow Fold, Deane and Willows, Horwich West and Tonge Moor (map 1)
- At neighbourhood level, month by month incidents of CD and ASB tended to increase and decrease together.
- High repeat locations for bus shelters identified
- Seasonal peaks at Easter
- Most offences happening between 1900hrs and 0500hrs, with specific locations featuring at different times within this period.
- Very high numbers of offences involving windows being smashed, many with bricks or stones

- Specific clusters / patterns, often at street level, of other types of damage, especially vehicle damage including scratched bodywork, broken wing-mirrors and slashed tyres.
- Under-reporting of graffiti offences, when compared to the results of environmental District and Local Environmental Quality (DLEQ) surveys (link to beat sweep action)
- Hotspots for CD offences also featured as hotspots for “hazardous waste including broken glass”, “alcoholic drink related general litter” (including “4 pack holders”), and deliberate small fires (therefore, multiple stakeholders with an interest in reducing offences) (link to beat sweep actions)
- Particular clusters involving damage to rear of properties (link to gating order response)
- Specific problem with moving vehicle damage in Brightment North neighbourhood
- Clustering of offences in space and time, with 75% of offences happening within 5 days and 500m of a previous offence (linked to deployment of covert CCTV)

## **Victim**

The aim of the analysis was to identify the CD victim profile.

Our analysis showed that 83% of victims were white European, 14% Asian and 2% African-Caribbean. Individuals of Asian ethnicity appeared to be

disproportionately victimised particularly in relation to vehicle damage, arson, and attacks on buildings other than dwellings.

Repeat victimisation was identified as a significant problem. Overall 23% of damage offences happened somewhere which had already been attacked in the last 12 months. A list of 48 repeat victims was identified which included private dwellings, commercial enterprises and public property.

Other findings:

- Disproportionate occurrence of offences within particular demographic groups (as measured through Mosaic), characterised by low incomes and relatively young populations. Poor areas identified as “relatively stable” through Mosaic reported relatively few offences.
- Disproportionate victimization of individuals of Asian ethnicity, who featured particularly amongst groups of taxi-drivers and “proprietors”.
- High levels of repeat victimization: St James Church in Breightmet, in particular, featured as a graffiti hotspot, as well as being close to the main hotspot for moving vehicle damage. No capable guardianship at this location with easy access to a large, dilapidated churchyard, not overlooked.
- A number of individual residents identified as suffering more than 5 CD offences over a two year period.

## **Offender**

The aim of the analysis was to establish the profile of an offender in Bolton, identify who are Bolton's prolific offenders and what are the conditions which motivate them to offend.

More detailed work was carried out on a sample of 135 offences to identify what motivated offenders to commit damage. Most offences appeared to be malicious in origin (that is motivated by rage or frustration) whilst the other most common motivation appeared to be vindictive (that is to gain revenge on another).

Other findings:

- The average age of individuals linked to damage offences in Bolton was 23 (higher than the national average). The overwhelming majority of them were male (85%) and 79% classified as White European.
- 38 prolific offenders were identified in the analysis who were responsible for 2 or more offences with many targeting the same location/victim more than once. Of these offenders, 12 were already on Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) and 3 on Anti-social Behaviour Orders (ASBO).
- The most common method of causing CD was smashing (49% of all offences)
- Evaluation of a previous dispersal order conducted in the Bromley Cross and Bradshaw area of Bolton during 2005 showed a reduction of 17% (compared to 3% in the control area of Bolton South, and with relatively

small degree of apparent displacement). See subsequent use in Horwich West.

**Response:**

The BeSafe Reassuring and Supporting Communities Theme Group took ownership of the problem profile and responsibility for developing an appropriate response. A sub-group of relevant partners was established to develop an action plan and act as the project management board for reducing CD. The sub-group had access to some capital funding for target hardening. However, most of the resource would depend on more effective and efficient coordination of mainstream services. The sub-group's short term objective was simple: reduce levels of CD and meet BeSafe's target of a 21% reduction by March 2008.

The sub-group chose actions which were focussed on the 7 priority neighbourhoods, had repeat victims and offenders at the core and which were complementary across the 'PES framework' – Prevention, Enforcement and Support. They were also interventions which had shown evidence of previous success on an individual basis. By following this methodology, the sub-group ensured there was a balance to the proposed interventions and that they were focussed in the areas of greatest need.

In addition to the monitoring carried out by the CD Subgroup, the action plan was embedded in the PBG process ensuring a mechanism for ongoing review and tasking of resources.

## **Main Activity**

**Action** - Targeted use of partner activity including Stop and Account and Copshop in priority neighbourhoods.

**Objective** – Advise and reassure, increase intelligence, identify offenders and disrupt criminality

**Rationale** – The analysis identified the correlation between levels of anti-social behaviour in an area and CD. GMP had already used Stop and Account forms to some effect in operations to tackle anti-social behaviour and viewed them as a valuable tool in intelligence gathering. The information is used for identifying consistent names in hotspot areas with a view to implementing enforcement action but also passing onto Children’s Services in order to inform longer term youth programmes in the area. The stop and account operations were focused on the priority neighbourhoods identified by the analysis.

Several initiatives were implemented in the Brownlow Fold and Deane and Willows’ high intensity hotspots specifically to tackle CD and ASB (Operation Chalice and Copshop). These initiatives ran in conjunction with Beat Sweeps (see below) as part of sustained partnership activity in some of the worst affected areas.



**Action** – Targeted use of ASB tools and powers

**Objective** – Reduce offending of prolific offenders

**Rationale** – From the analysis it was apparent that more could be done to ensure ASB legislation and other intervention tools were being maximized. A list of prolific offenders was identified and action taken against relevant individuals. BeSafe had plenty of evidence to suggest that its incremental approach to dealing with ASB was effective and that more could be done to effectively manage these offenders. Through the ASB processes five of the most persistent CD offenders who were on ABCs were given ASBOs.

Following on from the success of the Brownlow Fold Dispersal Order identified in the problem profile, the same intervention was implemented in Horwich West, one of the priority neighbourhoods. Horwich West had high levels of juvenile ASB, CD, arson etc (200 incidents reported in three months) with groups of up to forty youths gathering at certain locations. The dispersal order was in force from July to December 2007.

**Action** – Beat Sweep in the Brownlow Fold and Deane and Willows area of Bolton

**Objective** – Remove the visual effects of CD and the opportunities for further CD

**Rationale** – Following on from successful Beat Sweeps in other parts of Bolton which had achieved notable reductions in offences and marked differences in the

environment, a Beat Sweep was implemented in Deane and Willows (one of our priority neighbourhoods). This was a true partnership activity which addressed the link between CD and hazardous waste. The operation covered a range of different issues which were either directly or indirectly related to CD for example targeted street cleaning removing rubble and debris which could be used for missiles, removal of fly-tips and graffiti, and enforcement activity on wheelie bins. This work was not only preventative but also proactive in dealing with some of the issues around perception and quality of life.

**Action** – Situational crime prevention and intervention for repeat victims and vulnerable locations

**Objective** – Reduce the likelihood of further damage by addressing risk factors

**Rationale** – The analysis identified locations with heightened risk factors because of their physical design, location or other environmental conditions. Safer Communities Officers (SCO) were tasked with assessing the risk factors, identifying improvements and implementing change.

Examples of situational crime prevention measures:

- The use of Gating Orders in Great Lever and Horwich West (the first time they had been used in Bolton) based on the problem profile.
- Fencing schemes at high risk repeat locations such as St James's Church

- In partnership with Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive and J C Decaux, a number of cameras were placed in high risk bus shelters in order to identify offenders and causes of CD.
- Use of covert and overt CCTV in the priority neighbourhoods tasked in relation to ASB and CD analysis.
- Victim Support addressed long term victimization through mediation, target hardening and other support services

**Assessment:**

Since the project started in April 2007, **criminal damage has reduced in Bolton by 19%** compared to the Partnership's 2003/4 PSA baseline, and **13.4%** when compared with 2006/7. More significantly, within the 7 Priority neighbourhoods identified within the analysis, offences dropped by **21.5% in the twelve months of the project** when compared to 2006/7. Chart 3 shows the dramatic turnaround in performance following implementation of the CD project.

The assessment looked at overall changes to performance against criminal damage targets, performance within the priority neighbourhoods identified in the profile and the effectiveness of the activity put in place to tackle criminal damage specifically in relation to the PAT triangle.

Chart 4 shows performance from the start of the project to March 08, against the previous 12 months. Two months during 2007/8 (October and December) saw totals more than three standard deviations below the previous year's performance. Only April and May exceeded the previous year's monthly average.

Each of the previous three years had seen increases in October, December and at Easter. In 2007-8 (the period of our project) there were **decreases** in October and December. The CD project also succeeded in **eliminating** Bolton's highest seasonal peak (Easter) identified through the profile. In 2007-8 this risk was

particularly acute, as Easter fell twice within the project period. Chart 5 shows the reductions achieved compared with previous years:

Home Office research on the economic and social costs of crime was used to estimate the savings obtained as a result of the project. These calculations show that there was a 13% saving overall achieved through reductions in such a high volume crime type (See Table 1).

### **Repeat Victims and Vulnerable Locations**

The average number of repeats at all identified repeat locations reduced from 1.73 during the period April 06 – Mar 07 to 1.65 from April 07 – Mar 08. In other words, vulnerable locations were attacked less often on average.

With the exception of arson offences, the percentage of offences at identified repeat locations actually increased, and in some cases the actual number of repeat locations also rose. This suggests that reductions in Criminal Damage were also accompanied by an increased concentration in some areas: a renewed focus on (low volume) repeat victims is likely to improve performance further (see Table 2)

In terms of commercial property, the percentage share of CD offences reduced for the worst affected victim (JC Decaux) from 3.2% to 2.4% (231 offences down to 153).

The situational interventions have been shown to have a positive effect particularly in repeat locations. Following the erection of fencing, offences at the top repeat location in Bolton, St James Church, reduced by 59%.

Gating Orders appear to have been an effective intervention for reducing criminal damage for repeat victims and locations. Parkside Garage, for instance, in Great Lever, benefited from the targeted use of a Gating Order and contributed to an overall decrease in offences at this location since gates were installed. Gating Orders have also proved effective in terms of reducing fear of crime and ASB with residents and businesses reporting increased levels of satisfaction and safety. Chart 6 shows the change in resident perceptions across Bolton.

## **Offenders**

Through the ASB processes five of the most persistent offenders who were on ABCs were given ASBOs. Offences linked to these individuals reduced from 40 between April 06 and March 07 to 13 between April 07 and March 08

The dispersal order in Horwich West led to a reduction in criminal damage of 33% in that area, along with a reduction in juvenile ASB of 38%. The Fire Service also reported reductions in malicious fire incidents during the period of the dispersal order. The conclusion of the dispersal order in Horwich West has instigated an exit strategy involving youth services, Area Working teams and local community groups in establishing a sustainable outcome for this area.

Stop and Account records were compared for the periods April to September 2006 and April to September 2007. Across the whole of Bolton, the number of stops recorded increased from 6104 to 8177 (34%). Stops on streets within the high intensity hotspots for CD increased from 2031 to 2922 (44%). This indicates that stop and account activity took place in line with the tasks arising from the problem profile, and also suggests a general relationship between this activity and the more dramatic overall reductions in hotspot areas.

## **Priority Neighbourhoods**

Map 2 is a dual KDE (Kernal Density Estimate) thematic showing the absolute change in crime densities for CD offences between the target period and the

preceding twelve months. Significant improvements can be seen in the priority areas of Horwich West, Tonge Moor, Highfield, Great Lever, Brightmet North and Brownlow Fold. Increasing problems are evident in Brightmet North, the northern part of Brownlow Fold, Deane & Willows and Farnworth. The proximity of some hills to some dips suggests an element of displacement

### **Problem Locations - Brownlow Fold and Deane and Willows Case Study**

Brownlow Fold and Deane & Willows were both targeted through multi-agency Beat Sweeps, deployments of the mobile Copshop, and Operation Chalice, the latter being a police-led operation to reduce ASB and CD which ran in both neighbourhoods during May and June 2007 (see Map 3).

Whilst the same interventions were deployed, very different results were obtained. Offences within the Brownlow Fold neighbourhood reduced particularly sharply within the two previously identified high intensity hotspots. In the southern hotspot they fell by 35% from 2006-7 to 2007-8, and in the northern one by 34%. In the Deane & Willows hotspot they increased by 47%.

In Brownlow Fold the Copshop boundary was the same as the neighbourhood boundary and encompassed the Beat Sweep area and the high intensity hotspots (see Map 3). Chart 7 shows that offences in the southern hotspot began to dip early in 2007, independently of these operations, though in other parts of the neighbourhood they continued to rise. Offences in the Halliwell Road hotspot began to fall with the commencement of Operation Chalice, soon followed by



offences across the neighbourhood as a whole. Offences in the area targeted through the Beat Sweep began to fall during Operation Chalice, but then reduced at an even sharper rate after the Beat sweep than before it.

In Deane & Willows the deployment of the Copshop was confined to the north-eastern section of the neighbourhood, nearest the town centre (see Map 3 and Chart 8). However, this deployment was not focused on the main hotspot area. Across the neighbourhood as a whole, and specifically in the hotspot area, offences saw a continuing rise following both the Beat Sweep and Operation Chalice.

The assessment of these two areas points to the need for synergy in the delivery of actions to tackle criminal damage in the priority neighbourhoods. It also suggests that interventions such as Beat Sweep are not necessarily sustainable on their own but need additional, longer term interventions in the same area such as Copshop.

## **Conclusion**

Be Safe recovered its Criminal Damage target through the SARA process. Despite the broad nature of the problem, the analysis enabled BeSafe to achieve significant reductions, distilling its focus to seven priority areas and focusing on a response which targeted repeat victims, locations and offenders. The analysis provided partners with a picture of criminal damage far richer than previously available which enabled the right interventions to be deployed at the right time, in the right area and by the right mix of partners.

The assessment shows that many of the interventions put in place have had a positive impact on levels of criminal damage, on community perceptions and on the costs to society. As a result, a number of processes have been established which will go on to provide future benefit such as a Council Gating Order policy, a criminal damage risk assessment checklist for vulnerable areas, and an analytical product which can be refreshed for future use. The project has provided BeSafe with knowledge and learning, invaluable for informing future programmes of work and to share with partners and other colleagues, e.g. in the use of Gating Orders, Dispersal Orders, exploitation of NIM (GMAC), use of Key Individual Networks.

The success of the criminal damage project has much to do with the established BeSafe business structure, an obsession with obtaining quality information both

qualitative and quantitative and a wide and committed partnership. This business framework has underpinned the CD project, enabling successful delivery with few additional resources.

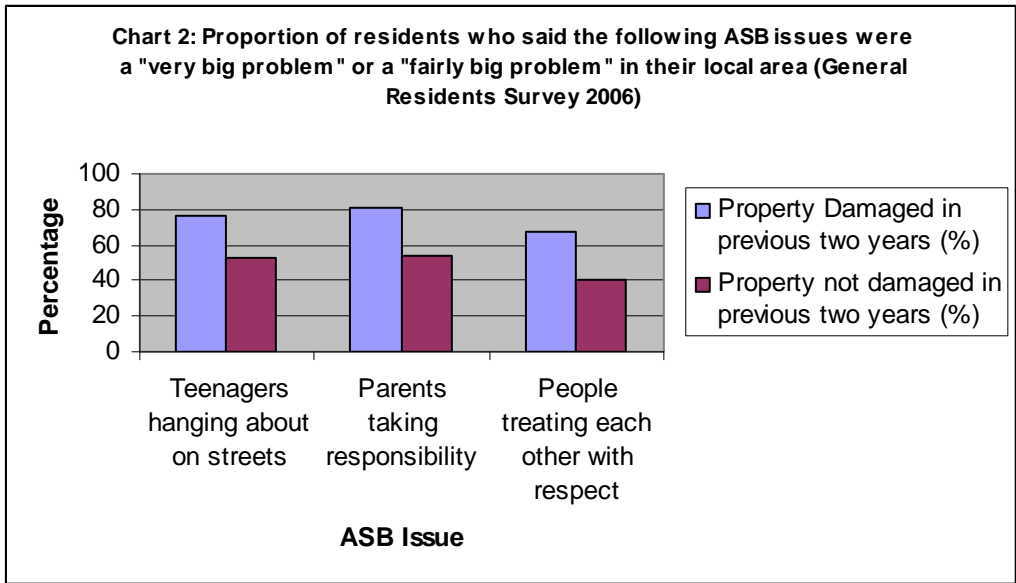
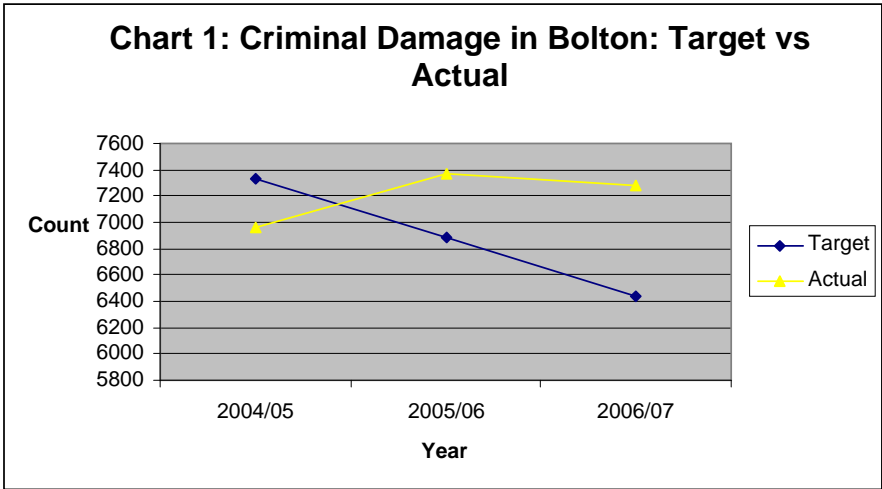
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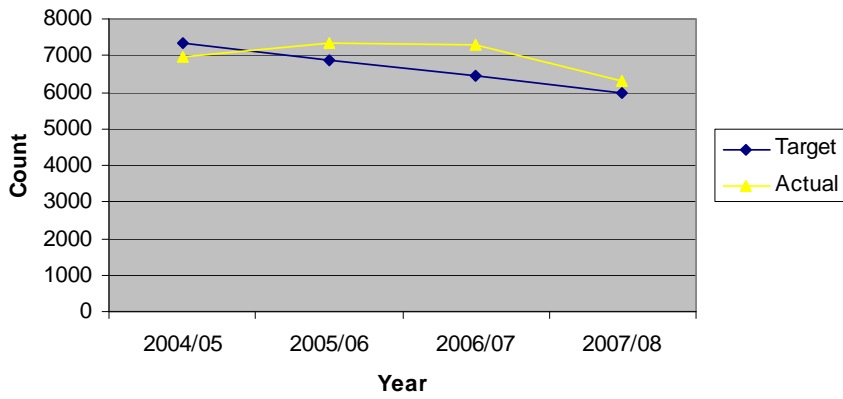
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# APPENDIX 1

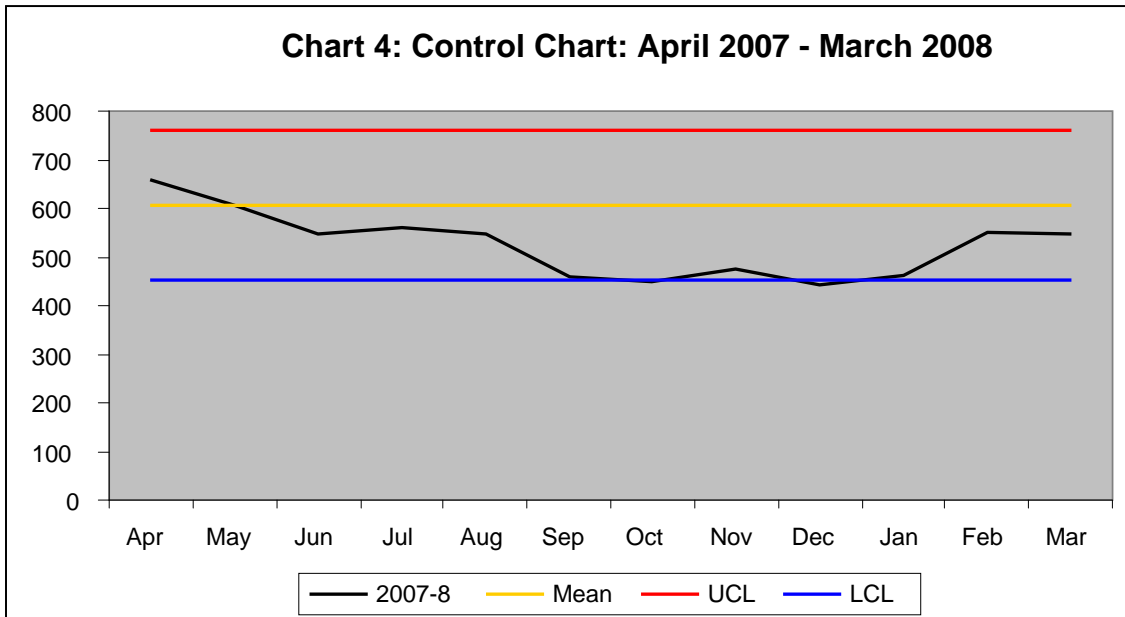
## Charts



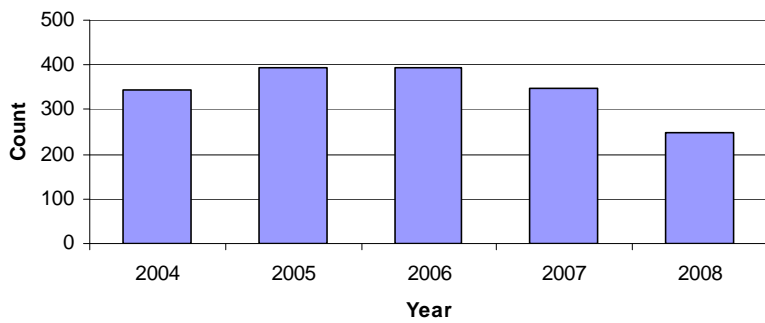
**Chart 3: Criminal Damage in Bolton: Target vs Actual April 04 - March 08**



**Chart 4: Control Chart: April 2007 - March 2008**



**Chart 5: Criminal Damage Offences over Easter Fortnight in Bolton**



**Chart 6: Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage  
General Residents Survey Results**

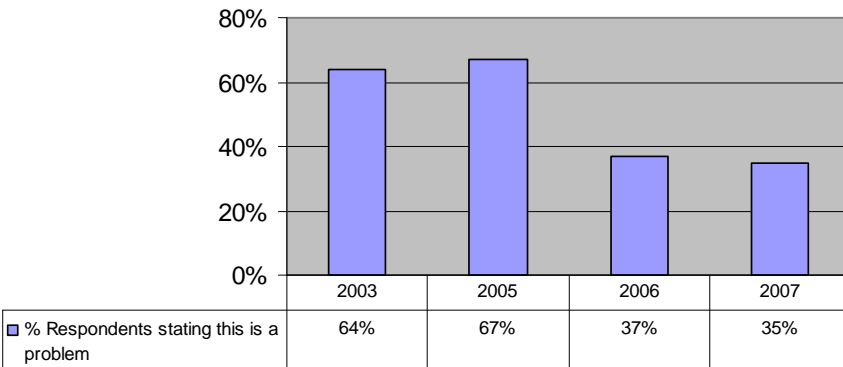


Chart 7: Criminal Damage – Brownlow Fold

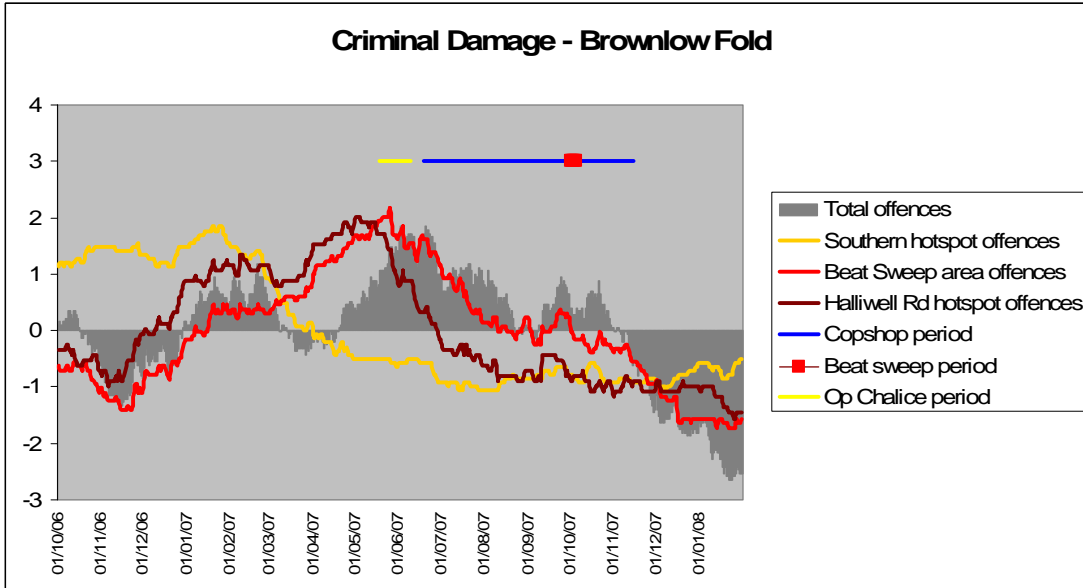
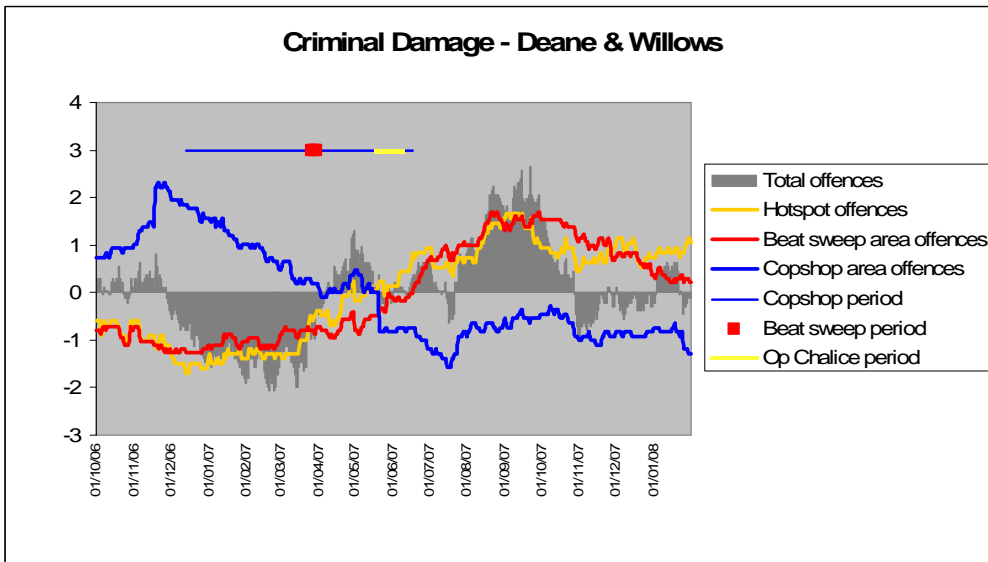


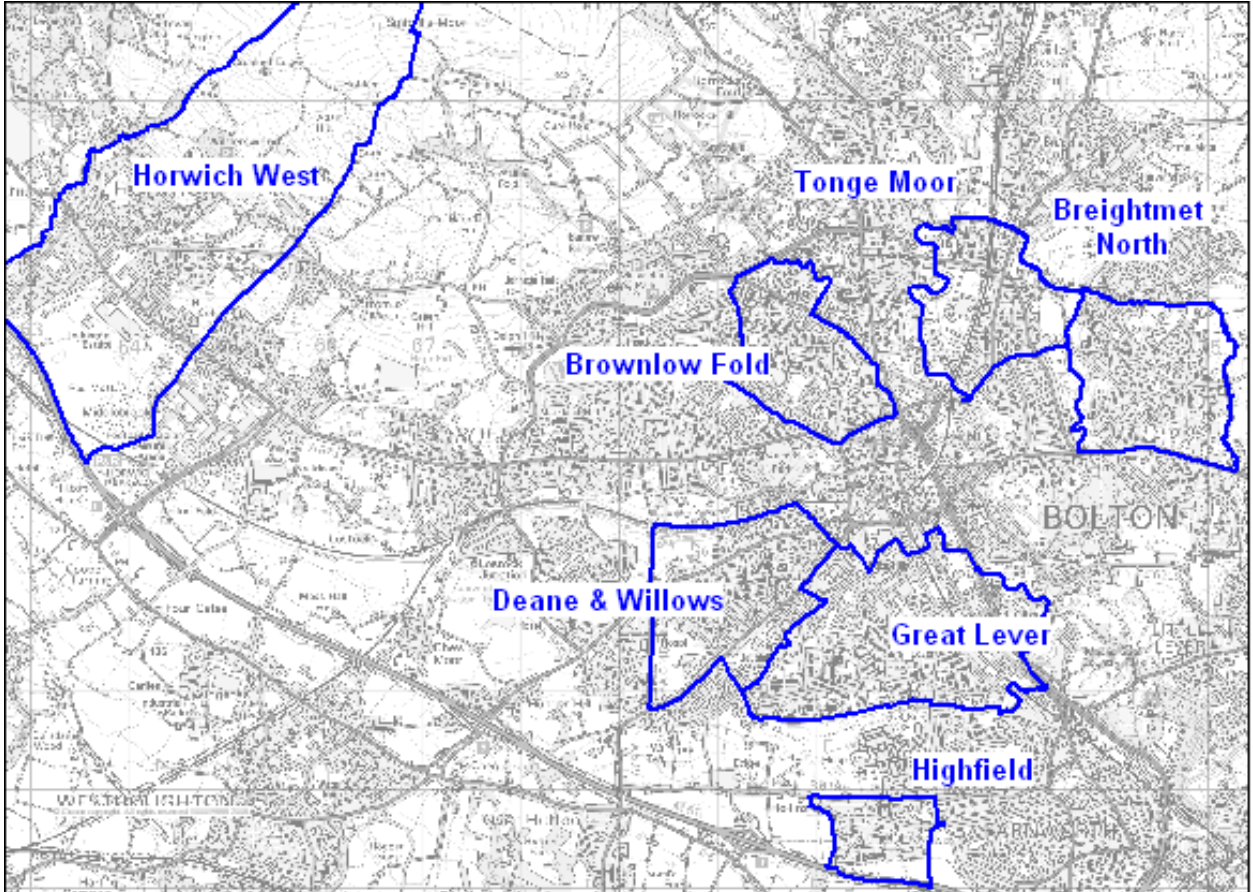
Chart 8: Criminal Damage – Deane and Willows



## APPENDIX 2

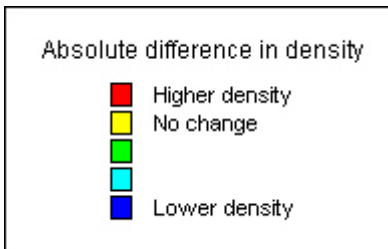
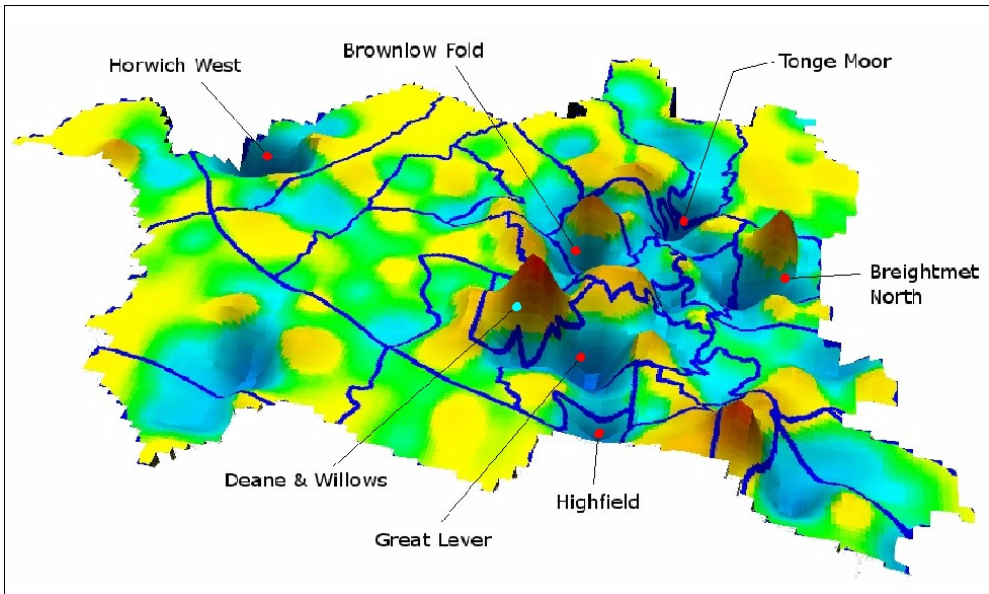
### MAPS

Map 1: Priority Neighbourhoods



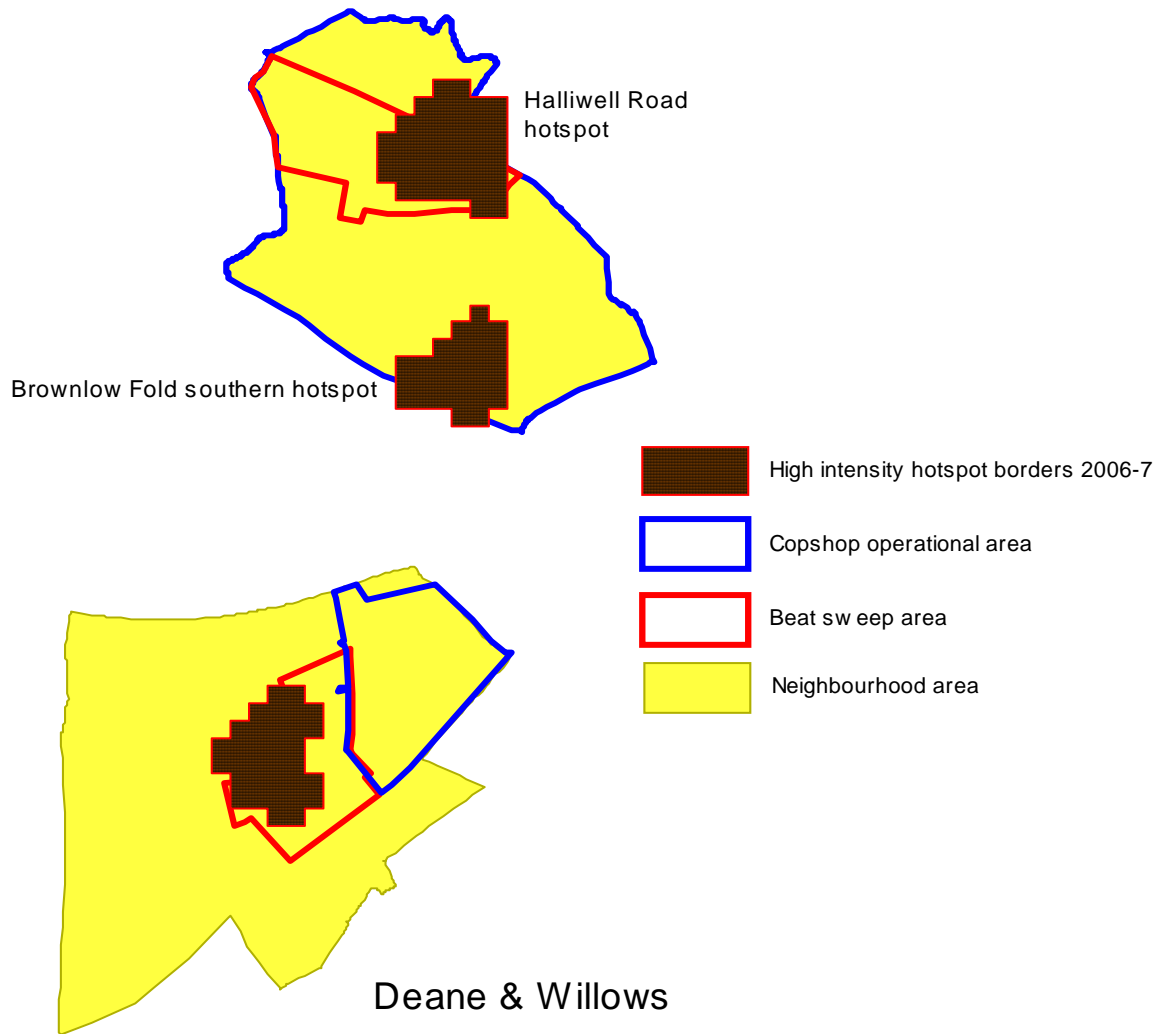


Map 2: KDE Thematic



Map 3: Brownlow Fold, Dean & Willows – Copshop deployment, Beat Sweep and High intensity Hotspots

### Brownlow Fold



## APPENDIX 3

### TABLES

Table 1: Estimated Savings (£)

	Apr 06 - Mar 07	Apr 07 - Mar 08	Change
No. of recorded criminal damage crimes against individuals and households	5682	4910	-772
<b>Cost</b>	<b>£4,920,612</b>	<b>£4,252,060</b>	<b>-£668,552</b>
No. of recorded criminal damage crimes against commercial and public sector	1593	1393	-200
<b>Cost</b>	<b>£1,417,770</b>	<b>£1,239,770</b>	<b>-£178,000</b>
Total	7275	6303	-972
<b>Cost</b>	<b>£6,338,382</b>	<b>£5,491,830</b>	<b>-£846,552</b>

Table 2: Damage at a repeat location (within 12 months)

Year	No. of repeat locations		% of repeat locations	
	06-07	07-08	06-07	07-08
<b>Arson</b>	54	55	24.1%	23.8%
<b>Dwelling</b>	386	430	18.6%	23.6%
<b>Other Building</b>	393	329	40.1%	40.7%
<b>Other</b>	286	292	33.1%	38.6%
<b>Vehicle</b>	198	192	19.1%	23.4%

30<sup>th</sup> May 2008



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To whom it may concern

**Goldstein Application 2008-2009**

I can confirm that this application for the 2008/9 Goldstein Award is factually correct and has the full backing of the Be Safe Bolton Strategic Partnership. It represents a good example of how Be Safe has used the SARA process effectively as part of its strategy to reduce crime and disorder.

Yours sincerely,

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