

**SUBMISSION FOR THE 1999 TILLEY AWARD
THE MULTI AGENCY APPROACH TO THE PREVENTION AND
MANAGEMENT OF BULLYING IN SCHOOLS
AND THE COMMUNITY**



**CLEVELAND
POLICE**

'BULLYPROOF'



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'BULLYPROOF'

THE MULTI-AGENCY APPROACH TO THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF BULLYING WITHIN SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY

'Bullyproof is a scheme established through a multi-agency approach to the prevention and **management** of bullying within schools and the community. The overriding aim of the scheme is to raise awareness of the problem within education establishments, thereby encouraging victims to come forward and to consider intervention programmes to assist offenders.

Initial scanning revealed that the problem of bullying did not just exist within schools but in some cases involved incidents out of school hours in the community. Information from the children's help line 'Childline' revealed the extent of the problem, where calls from children about bullying outnumbered those relating to child abuse.

Further information from the children's **organisation** 'Kidscape' revealed that 62% of the inmates of two Young Offender Institutes surveyed admitted that they had been bullies at school.

As a result, Woman Police Constable Watson **approached** the Local Education Authority with a view to launching a multi-agency Anti-Bullying Campaign in Hartlepool.

Information from victims, parents, Head Teachers and Police Officers was analysed to establish the extent of the problem and the underlying causes and effects on the victim. Parents formed a significant part of the analysis, with three definite groups whose views significantly impacted on how the problem was tackled from the victim's point of view. These are:

The "Hit 'em back brigade"

The "Hang 'em brigade"

The "Let's talk about this brigade"

The analysis helped identify a number of objectives which the response phase needed to address. In an effort to start solving the problem a steering group was set up to make plans for an anti-bullying project. To launch the campaign a conference was staged on the **Prevention** and **Management** of Bullying. Following on from the conference, each school in Hartlepool was to **have** a 'Bullying Policy' and Woman Police Constable Watson formulated a **presentation package** to be delivered by Police Officers within schools to raise awareness of the problem.

Other agencies, such as UNITE and Childline, became interested in the scheme and were able to make meaningful contributions.

Assessment of the scheme and its success can be seen by viewing crime figures from 1997, 1998 and 1999. These show that the assaults committed by children under 16 **on children of** the same age **group** initially **rose** as **awareness** grew, but then fell **as** the effects of this **approach** began to make an impact. Other data from the Local Education Authority, Childline and Childcall indicates that the scheme is having a positive impact.

Finally, Head Teachers and Police Officers alike now openly support the project and are reinforcing the 'anti-bullying' message.

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INTRODUCTION

Cleveland Police is the smallest Force in the United Kingdom, covering an area of 59,670 hectares in North East England. Within the Force area there are four Police Districts **whose boundaries are coterminous** with the four local Municipal Authorities.

The **Force employs** 1,500 officers, with **support** from 600 civilian staff.

Hartlepool is the most northerly town in the force area, situated on the North East coast, lying on the northern banks of the River Tees estuary. The town has a population of 90,000. The children of the town are **educated** in 30 primary schools, 6 **secondary schools and 3 special needs establishments.**

The last 20 years have seen a decline in the traditional heavy industries such as coal mining, iron and steel, and shipbuilding, which has contributed to a high unemployment rate. Added to this Cleveland, and Hartlepool in particular, is at the top of almost every poverty league table within the country.

This situation has contributed to significant crime levels but, more importantly for the purpose of this project, assaults and harassment by juveniles and their link with the problem of 'bullying', both within schools and the community.

It was against this **backdrop** in August 1997 that a local Community Police Officer in the Throston Community Police Team in **Hartlepool** became concerned about the increasing amount of complaints with regarding to 'bullying behaviour' and the severity of the complaints that were being reported to her and her colleagues.

With frequent reports in the media of some of the more extreme cases and its fatal consequences, the officer felt that a more positive approach to the problem by the Police in the management of the subject should be considered.

SCANNING

By talking to many of the victims and their parents, the officer discovered that the problem did not just exist within the schools but in some cases involved incidents out of **school hours, in the community.** The majority of the victims **spoken to** were within the age bracket of 10 and 13 years old and although many of the cases were dissimilar in severity and content, the actual fears and reactions were not.

Researching further, the officer contacted various organisations and experts on the subject known to carry relevant data.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The officer had already consulted with the Head Teachers of her allocated schools and found them to be fully supportive of any initiative that would help to address the **problem**.

With all of the information to hand, the officer, with the backing of senior management, **approached** the Local Education Authority with a view to launching a joint anti bullying campaign in Hartlepool.

ANALYSIS

Information to analyse the problem was **available** from a number of sources -

Victims
Parents
Head Teachers
Police Officers

In order to formulate a response to the problem, W.P.C. Watson **needed** to analyse and understand from victims -

- 1) Why they did not report the incidents of 'bullying' until they had escalated to the involvement of violence.
- 2) If they had **reported** incidents, who had they **been reported to** and **what support had they received?**
- 3) During the duration of the 'bullying' how had they felt and how had those feelings changed once the **problem** had been **addressed**.

The majority of the victims revealed that they had in fact reported the incidents of 'bullying' quite early onto both parents and teachers but had been let down. This had been done in various ways. Many of the victims claimed they were made to feel as if they were to blame as they were told "Well, don't go near them" and "stay indoors at playtime". The **age** old comment of "Hit them back then" only resulted in the victim feeling more isolated and insignificant than they had previously felt.

In the cases where the "bullies" had been warned, many had suffered from an escalation as the "bullies" punished them for revealing their identities to the teachers or parents, as the situation **had** not continued to be monitored by the relevant adults.

Not dissimilar to the feelings experienced by victims of prolonged domestic violence, some children had reached a point where their self esteem had been so reduced that they had come to believe they were in some way to blame, either because of the way they looked, talked or acted. Because of these and other factors, the victims had suffered the ordeals in silence until the outward appearances of bruising or stress had alerted their parents.

When spoken to the parents fell into three definite groups -

- 1) The "Hit 'em back brigade". These are the parents who are frequently heard to say "Are you a man or a mouse?" and "I told him to belt him back". What they fail to realise is that to a timid child faced with a gang of **abusers these** words of advice only compound the feelings of inadequacy.
- 2) The "Hang 'em brigade". These are the parents who will on discovery of the problem either attend the school or the Police Office and demand the immediate **expulsion/arrest** of the "bully" and refuse to **co-operate** with any constructive discussion.
- 3) The "Let's talk about this" parents are the most effective and their children are the luckier ones. They are **prepared** to be **reasonable** in their demands and **do no** lose sight **of the** fact

that the most important factor is **the well being of the children involved, including the "bully"**.

Regardless of their initial reaction, all of the **parents** at some point suffered from the feelings of frustration at what they saw as an inability to help their child.

One mother sat and cried as she **explained** that her 11 year old daughter's hair was falling out in clumps through the stress of being bullied. She stated that she had been to the school to complain on no fewer than 9 occasions and still the problem persisted. It was in desperation that she had turned to the Police.

On being interviewed by the officer the Headmaster was **co-operative** and readily admitted that he had done everything in his power to monitor the situation within the school, but was helpless to control what occurred outside the school premises. He confirmed the words of two other 'Heads of Schools' that they would welcome any assistance in dealing with the **problem**.

One of the **problems** that was highlighted was that the majority of the schools did not have an independent 'Bullying Policy' and in general any policy that they did have was incorporated in the school's '**Behaviour** Policy'. This added to the parents lack of understanding on the management of the problem in their individual school.

The Police School Liaison officer felt that something should be done to address the problem and was willing to become involved, but the package he provided for the schools during Police Week was already extensive and he felt that he could not include any further materials without an extended time allocation.

Discussions with the Children and Families Service Manager and a Behaviour Support Teacher revealed that an attempt had been made by themselves to hold an informative meeting with the **parents** of **one** of the schools in **Hartlepool** that had **reported** a large amount of 'bullying' incidents. The aim of the meeting was to discuss the 'No blame **approach**' and try to **give** constructive **advice on how to deal** effectively and fairly with both the "bully" and the "victim".

In analysing the event it was apparent it was not a success due to various factors. The Police Officer attending the presentation had not been an advocate of the 'No blame approach' and had voiced his intolerance in the minutes leading up to the commencement of the evening to many of the parents concerned. By the time the **presentation** commenced, many of the parents **were not prepared** to accept any solution that did not involve either expulsion or arrest and became abusive and unco-operative with the **speaker**. As the situation **became more** volatile the evening was abandoned.

As a result of the analysis phase the following objectives were identified:

- 1) To raise the awareness of the **problem** thereby ensuring that victims will come forward.
- 2) That any project undertaken had to be with the full support of the Local Education Authority.
- 3) That the multi-agency **approach** had to be **considered** if there was to be any success.
- 4) Any project undertaken had to be financially viable and sit comfortably with any policies already in use in the schools, to avoid confusion.
- 5) All Head Teachers and Community Police Officers should play an active role in the project.
- 6) It must **be done in such a way that it was** discussed openly by the **authorities involved, so that the victims, the bullies and their respective parents were aware that the problem was being taken seriously by the authorities, who acknowledged that it did in fact exist.**

RESPONSE

A number of responses were **considered**.

The first stage was to discuss the various options with a representative of the Local Education Authority. On 21st October, 1997 the first meeting was held at Hartlepool Police Office. Present at the meeting were Inspector John Elstob, **Hartlepool** Police, W.P.C. Watson, Throston Community Police Team, Police Constable Philip Wilson, Hartlepool School Liaison Officer, and Ann Hutson, the children and Families Service Manager for Hartlepool Education Authority.

During this meeting various factors were agreed upon, one of which was a need for a steering group to monitor and co-ordinate the project. The steering group was to include W.P.C. Watson, Ann Hutson, Barbara Towler, an Educational Behavioural Support Teacher, and Chris Smythe, an Educational Psychologist.

The decision was made to approach the Mediation Service UNIT with a view to including them on input relating to Peer Mediation. This was done and although in theory their projects were agreed upon, it was felt that due to their financial requests they could not be included in the initial stages.

After several meetings the progress of the project received a major blow. At a meeting at senior level, the Head of Education for **Hartlepool** informed the Senior Police Officers present that he was concerned the project would "Create adverse publicity for the education in Hartlepool". He then requested that the Senior Officers present instruct the officer concerned to cease work on the project.

This message was relayed to W.P.C. Watson who, although naturally disappointed, could not help but come to the conclusion that persons in a position to address the **problem were** yet **again** 'sweeping it under the carper.

Undaunted, W.P.C. Watson continued to work with her schools and due to her previous involvement found that her Head Teachers began informing her of any incidents in relation to bullying that occurred in her schools.

It seemed to be having a positive effect. As a result of her having discussed the issue with some Y6 children, a call was received by one of the **Hartlepool** Police Shift Inspectors. The call was an unprecedented one from a member of the Children's organisation Kidscape. The caller explained that although their information was **confidential**, they had received a call from a young girl at Hartlepool who had attempted to choke herself with tape from a **cassette**. During the conversation she had stated that she felt that the only **one who** may **be able to help** her **was** her local 'Beat Bobby'.

The **case** was **immediately referred** to W.P.C. Watson, who on investigation discovered the situation had **escalated** in such a way that the families of the children involved had taken the law into their own hands and in doing so had become involved in a private war which had lost sight of the main issue, the children".

Negotiations with the Local Education Authority, the Head Teacher of the school, the child psychologist concerned and the use of the Police Technical Support Unit, evidence **was gathered** with a **view to prosecution** under the **Protection** from Harassment Act. The most rewarding **outcome of the process was not to be** the subsequent eviction of the "bully" and her family, but the referral of the bully for counselling and that the victim **showed immediate improvement** as not only was she finally being believed but she could see that positive action was being taken. (Pearson v. Sabine)

Then came a major breakthrough. As a result of a Home Office directive to Local Education Authorities on the Management of Bullying, it was **requested** that W.P.C. Watson attended the Education **Development** Centre in **Hartlepool** to meet with the original steering **group** and **re-commence** plans **for an anti-bullying project**.

The group decided that the best way to launch the campaign and to ensure the involvement of all the relevant authorities in the town was to stage a conference on the prevention and management of bullying.

The delegates were to include a member of every school in Hartlepool, Local Community Police **Sergeants**, the **Police School** Liaison Officer, **local** splinter groups such as F.A.B. (Families Against Bullying) **and the local media (Hartlepool Mail)**

● In the planning stages of the conference the steering group consulted with the internationally renowned Educational Psychologist Val Besag, who not only advised as to the content of the conference but **agreed** to attend as the keynote speaker.

On the 6th October, 1998 the conference was opened jointly by the Head of Education for Hartlepool. Mr. J. Fitt, and Chief Superintendent J. Burke from Hartlepool Police. The conference was funded by the Local Education Authority and held at the Education Development Centre, **Hartlepool**.

a The conference included Val Besag as the Keynote speaker and various organisations and workshops (**Appendix 12**). The **end of the conference Plenary and Evaluation** was **able to address** issues that were raised by **delegates** and it was **clear** that it had been a great success, as many of the delegates left determined to tackle the problem in their individual areas/schools in a positive manner. (Appendix 3)

After the **conference** Woman Police Constable Watson received calls from the Head Teachers of three schools requesting that she attend with a view to talking to the children about 'bullying'. This she did under her formulated project title 'Bullyproof. This presentation can **be adapted** and used for any **age group** and is designed to stimulate discussion and awareness of bullying. It can include -

- 1) A whole school assembly.
- 2) **More informal workshops with younger children which involves role playing and discussions where children openly act out all aspects of bullying in their own way and discuss the reason for bullying and the effects on both the bully and the victim. (See Appendix 4)**
- 3) **A more comprehensive** discussion **pack** with set scenarios (agreed and borrowed by Val Besag at **conference**) which includes criminal harassment and assault for senior school students.

i All of the material used is in line with Local **Education Authority advisory literature**.

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In March 1999, Superintendent Sugden and Inspector Richards held a meeting with Police Officers **appointed** to the newly restructured Community Police Teams in **Hartlepool**. At this meeting and at their request, W.P.C. Watson addressed the officers present and informed them of the work already carried out in relation to bullying within Hartlepool. She requested that the **new** teams **took an even bigger** interest in their school liaison obligations and **participate** in **presentational** work with regard to bullying.

Although UNITE have not directly been involved in the project so far, Hartlepool Police in conjunction with the Local Authority are presently running a course on the understanding and **implementation** of mediation. This course is being attended by all Community Police Officers in Hartlepool.

In May 1999, Woman Police **Constable** Watson was invited and attended the regional **headquarters** of Childline in Leeds. The invitation was extended to include Ann Hutson and on arrival the staff were interested to discuss the format of the conference and the work being carried out in **Hartlepool**. By discussing the screening methods used by Childline, various ways **are** now being **considered** by **Hartlepool** Police on the collating of bullying and its link with crime, (Appendix 4)

As more and more officers become involved in the **prevention** and management of bullying the work continues in Hartlepool.

It is not realistic to believe that we can ever eradicate the problem of bullying from society, but surely as **Police** Officers we **owe** it to ourselves and the children to try to reduce the cases by adopting the multi-agency **approach** and working together in the effort to empower the victims with the knowledge that they are not alone and should be free from fear to talk about a problem which for so long has been a 'Taboo' subject.

ASSESSMENT

This project was never going to be easy to evaluate. However, there were various organisations identified in the initial scanning phase that would be of assistance. As the main purpose of the project was to raise awareness of 'bullying', it was to be hoped that figures reported to the Police or other organisations would have risen in volume but not in severity.

Evaluation of the project was determined by the various **organisations** used and their criteria for recording data. As it is intended to be an ongoing project, the figures will be constantly monitored, some on a six monthly basis and others on a yearly time scale.

It was decided that the following criteria would be used.

1)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

a

2) **Data Supplied by the Local Education Authority**

In comparing the information and data supplied by the Local Education Authority it became clear that the number of complaints registered had followed the same pattern as those of the crime figures.

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■ **Calls made to Child Call (Cleveland)**

The help line for the Cleveland area 'Child Call' supplied figures that were not dissimilar. In the year of 1996 they had received a total of 122 calls. To 1997 this figure had dropped slightly to 97, but like other statistics the figures rose again slightly in 1998 to 102. (Appendix 5)

● **Calls made to Childline**

Like the other organisations surveyed, 'Childline' **also** recorded a rise in the number of calls nationally in 1998. However the percentage of calls in relation to those of physical/sexual abuse had **dropped. (Appendix 6)**

5) **Presentations made by Police Officers**

Prior to the conference the only presentations made by Police Officers in schools were generally by the School Liaison Officer during Police Week, where the **subjects addressed were** those of Road Safety, Stranger Danger and discussions on the various departments within the Police Service.

Since the conference this has altered. Presentations on 'Bullying' made by Police Officers are becoming more and more regular as schools seek to address the problem in a positive manner. The majority of the Community Officers use the information supplied in the package 'Bullyproof. (Appendix 4)

Each officer is aware that when they give any **presentation** they make sure that it is in line with any school policy in order to ensure the continuance of advice to the children.

6) **Observations by Local Police Officers**

Several observations have been made **about** the conference and the subsequent work by Police Officers.

Many of the officers who **had** not **been previously** involved in cases involving 'bullying' have shown a remarkable sensitivity when dealing not only with the victims but with the 'bullies' as well. They have come to realise that there are always other factors behind the bully's **behaviour** and that in some cases the behaviour can be a cry for help from a child who is being 'bullied' in the home and that it is a natural manifestation of their own frustrations and attention seeking.

One officer **who** had used the '**Bullyproof** scenarios **involving** assault was amazed but gratified when he was **approached** by **a parent** whose 16 years old son had been struck by the severity of the subject but had enjoyed the presentation, as it had been explained to him in a more mature and logical manner.

One major observation has been the number of parents who ring the Community Officers for advice. Many have heard about the work performed by various officers and frequently request Police involvement themselves at meetings with the relevant teachers.

As a direct result of his attending the conference, one Police Officer felt that he had to put his feelings into writing. 'After a lot of thought he circulated a letter to all delegates involved, which highlighted the **need** for adults to take the problem of 'bullying' seriously and to listen to the children. (See Appendix 7)

Over recent months W.P.C. Watson has received calls from anxious parents outside the Cleveland Police Force area who have been referred to her by various **organisations**. By liaising with the **local officers involved**, she has been able to offer support and advice and also explain the various options available to them in their local area authorities.

In May 1999, W.P.C. Watson was invited to attend the regional headquarters of Childline in Leeds. The invitation was extended to include Ann Hutson and on arrival the staff were interested to discuss the format of the conference and the work being carried out in Hartlepool. By discussing the screening methods used by Childline, various ways are now being considered by Hartlepool Police on collating information on bullying and its link with crime.

7) Perception of Local Schools

The whole project would never have begun to succeed without the support of the Head Teachers in **Hartlepool**. In their requests for officers to address the children they display their willingness to support any project that will help to alleviate the problem. The frequency with which they consult with their individual community officers is indicative of the **rapport** that has built up between the different agencies. After all, we are all working towards the same goal.

In April 1999 the Head Teacher of one of her local schools asked W.P.C. Watson to attend to discuss an ongoing problem with bullying in the school. All of the parties had been previously identified and work with the Behaviour Support Teacher **and the parents had already commenced**. However, one small 8 year **old boy was displaying** signs of distress. Normally **happy** and outgoing, he had withdrawn into himself and his parents confirmed that he had begun to wet the bed during the night. He had refused to speak to his parents or the **Head Teacher and was becoming more and more isolated from his peers.**

W.P.C. Watson offered to talk to him to **see** if he would communicate his fears. He needed no **encouragement**. On sitting down next to the officer he promptly told her everything that had happened and who was responsible. When asked why he, had not, told his mother or the Head Teacher, he said that he did not want to upset his mother and he liked his Head Teacher but was not sure what she could do.

So why had he opened up to the Police Officer? In his eyes it was simple. He knew the officer and that she believed that the bullying went on. He felt that she was the one who was in a position to both help and protect him by the nature of her occupation.

Financial Expenditure

[REDACTED]

The cost to the Police is minimal in that each community officer is expected to attend each of his designated schools at least once a week during term time. If he performs any presentational work it can be introduced into the normal liaison times and **depending** on the depth of the problems encountered the officers are free to spend more time in the school if required. One officer has been addressing the subject in his designated senior school and has allocated 30 minutes once a week to the various classes involved. The work is progressing well and the time allocated is not encroaching on any other of his community commitments.

One of the major successes of the conference has been that one of the splinter groups invited and who had initially refused to attend on the grounds that some of the methods discussed, such as 'No Blame Approach' contradicted their beliefs in the way that bullying should be handled, informed the steering group that they now had a revised outlook on the whole subject had had begun to encompass all of the factors involved and not just those appertaining to the victim.

AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION

This problem solving initiative was adopted at ground level by a Police Officer in the Throston Community Police Team in **Hartlepool**.

It was later adopted as a viable project by the Senior Management Team at Hartlepool Police Office who supported the officer and allowed her to retain control of its management and development at all levels.

It has now been adopted by the majority of Police Officers involved in the community policing teams in Hartlepool.

All the officers involved have received training in the principles of Problem Oriented Policing and although it is still a relatively new concept to some the members of the Throston Community Team have already **applied** the principles to other problems with successful results.

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