

Lancashire Constabulary

ASDA.

A Crime Prevention Strategy

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ASDA - A CRIME PREVENTION STRATEGY

The Asda Superstore located in the Heysham Geographic Policing area, near the boundaries of both Lancaster and Morecambe geographic areas had a significant number of crimes recorded on or in its premises. In the year ending 31 March 1999, there were 120 recorded crimes in the store. Although the vast majority were detected, it was felt that more should be done to prevent the actual commission of crime in the first instance. A strategy has been developed which aims to reduce the number of recorded crimes by 6% in this current year.

PS 36 Wilkinson, a Custody Officer in Morecambe, has developed a close liaison with the Asda management. The local Crime Prevention Officer has had discussions with them concerning 'Secured by Design' features to reduce the number of crimes committed in the public foyer. Crime prevention, rather than detection, is promoted, with staff encouraged to deter suspected offenders from committing offences.

A high profile police presence has been welcomed, with uniformed police officers taking breaks in the public cafe and walking through the store.

Police vehicles are refuelled at the store and officers park liveried vehicles at the public entrance, all with a view to deterring would be thieves.

A meeting between police and Asda management is held on a quarterly basis to review the success of the project and share information. As a result, several new ideas have been discussed and future strategies amended and developed. These include:

Major changes to the public car park to bring it within the 'Secured by Design' concept.

- Problems with the misuse of a bus lane, which the general public are using to avoid passing through the main entrance.

- Attempts to get fraudulent refunds on goods by regular known offenders.
- The introduction of a civil debt recovery programme against offenders. This idea had been successfully piloted in the south-east and is being introduced throughout by Asda.

A knock-on effect from the presence of police officers at the store during the night has been the development of better relationships with local taxi drivers who use the store as a meeting place.

Results to date indicate that the strategy is proving successful. In the first twelve months of the operation recorded crime at the store has been reduced by 34% compared with the previous year.

PS 36 WILKINSON
May 2000

INFORMATION

Asda, situated in the Morecambe Bay area, opened in July 1982 and has continued to operate on the site since that time. About eighteen months ago the store began twenty-four hour opening and now has over three hundred and seventy staff, the majority of whom are part-time and drawn from the local community.

The store is unique in that it is the only local supermarket that has been located outside the immediate city or town centres. Other major names in the area such as Sainsburys and Morrisons are sited in the centres. Asda is strategically placed between the urban sites of Lancaster and Morecambe, adjacent to a site that combines local authority landfill and leisure services complex, known locally as Salt Ayre. The store is just off the main road between the city of Lancaster and Morecambe and close to the inland end of the new Heysham by-pass which serves the port of Heysham, an operating centre that handles both container freight and passenger traffic.

The store is bracketed by the residential community of the Scale Farm estate, which is policed. by Lancaster section, and the White Lund industrial estate, policed by Morecambe Bay section. As such, there is a large proportion of local custom for the store, but aside from those within walking distance, the store also attracts shoppers from communities geographically removed. This necessitates close liaison between the geographical policing areas in order to ensure that corporacy and effectiveness are achieved.

As with many such stores, Asda operates a fuel station along with a large car park for customers and has historically been an attractive target for the criminally minded, especially those who gravitate toward the theft of or from motor vehicles. Without offering unfair criticism, Asda has understandably been more focused historically on sales, rather than the prevention of crime, therefore, a partnership and re-education was clearly necessary in order to redress the balance and set about reducing the crime at Asda, both inside the store and out.

SCANNING

The primary objective was to reduce, by at least 6%, recorded crime committed at the Asda Superstore, Heaton with Oxcliffe, Lancaster, from 1 April 1999 to 31 March 2000. There were two secondary objectives, to maintain or increase public confidence in the Lancashire Constabulary and to maintain or increase public satisfaction in the service we provide.

The store is situated within a newly formed geographic policing area, due to internal re-structuring, which is the mainly rural district of Heysham, near Lancaster. Police managers realised that this store, now in their area, was likely to increase the number of crimes being recorded in a 'quiet' area.

The problem was identified by crime pattern analysis, recorded inside the Asda store and outside in the car park during the previous 12 months. There had been 145 recorded crimes.

This problem was prioritised over others because, in the Heysham geographic area, 145 crimes represents about 10% of all recorded crime.

The problem was identified by the Geographic Police Inspector and Sergeants responsible for policing the Heysham area when the local Policing Plan for the year 01-04-99 to 31-03-00 was being produced.

ANALYSIS

We defined the problem in two ways, first analysing all crimes committed over the last twelve months using the Lancashire Constabulary INDEPOL crime recording system and the Lancashire Constabulary INTELLIGENCE system. We also visited the store and had meetings with staff and management to discuss the problem. This analysis revealed two main problems, the first was stealing items from the store itself and the second was stealing cars, or property from cars, parked on the car park

outside. It was clear that local criminals felt 'at ease' when operating around the store and found little to put them off committing crimes.

The analysis also revealed failures in the police recording system, which had identified crimes as being committed at this location when in fact they had been committed nearby, but *in* another area.

The problem was analysed by the Custody Sergeant and his assistant during quiet periods in the Custody Office, and by arranging meetings with Asda staff when their shift pattern allowed. One Constable was given responsibility to visit Asda on a regular basis to initially analyse the problem *in* March and April 1999.

The analysis highlighted that the main problem, by far, was from persons stealing items inside the shop. We did not know why this was the case, but it became the main issue discussed during face to face meetings with Asda staff.

Our initial intent was to develop a strategy based on the Problem Oriented Policing triangle using the SARA process, victims and offenders were either inside the store or in its car park, which made it easier to focus on the problem. A strategy was devised that combined police objectives and targets with basic tactics and ideas. I decided to produce occasional progress reports to police managers and organise quarterly meetings with Asda staff.

I chose this response for being completely new, as far as I was aware nothing similar existed. It would enable the local geographic policing team, divisional police managers and Asda staff to all be aware of the problem and contribute to the solution.

An analysis showed that the two main areas of concern were stealing from inside the store and stealing cars, or property from cars, on the car park. A new approach to tackle these offences had to be found if the problem was to be reduced.

RESPONSE

The response was designed to achieve a situation whereby criminals were `frightened off from the Asda store area, thus reducing the number of crimes reported and increasing the confidence and satisfaction of the law-abiding public who used the store. Long term, Asda staff would be able to keep prices lower because less stock was being stolen, with savings passed on to the customer.

I gained ownership for this response because I had identified the problem and developed the strategy. I was the Custody Officer on the team that was responsible for Heysham Geographic area, so I felt I would be contributing towards the team's success. I also live in Heysham and shop at Asda, so I also felt a moral duty to assist as a local resident.

The response was planned with team meetings between all the police departments who might be able to assist, mainly local uniformed officers and the Crime Prevention Department assisted by Special Constables and Traffic Wardens. The meetings between police and Asda staff also influenced existing company policies.

There was no costed plan, I had decided from the start that this strategy would be achievable by using existing resources more effectively and changing some procedures.

A response plan was implemented, concentrating on what the police were going to do to combat the problem and how Asda were going to support it.

The police response was basically split into six areas

- 1) Crime Pattern Analysis would be used to constantly monitor crimes being committed so that our response was flexible and up to date.
- 2) I would promote the strategy over the next twelve months to all police staff to help them focus on the problem and to maintain morale on a task that could be perceived as lacking excitement.

- 3) I had to encourage more police staff to attend Asda, its location, right on the edge of our beat, meant that very few staff went there as a matter of routine. I organised the police use of Asda facilities, such as the petrol station, public cafe and staff canteen. The store was now open twenty-four hours so I told staff to go in there at night to have their refreshments.
- 4) When available, uniformed officers wearing high visibility jackets patrolled the car park and inside the store. When none were available, a marked police car (if spare) was parked at the front entrance to act as a deterrent.
- 5) I encouraged police staff to get to know the Asda security staff personally so that we could influence their behaviour, whilst I liaised with the management in an attempt to change policy from the top.
- 6) We all agreed to share intelligence about suspects and offenders, as it was known that the same people were often responsible again and again. The police would show photographs of known offenders to Asda staff and they would download images from their CCTV system to assist us.

The Asda response was basically split into eight areas:-

- 1) The Asda management would agree a strategy and give it their wholehearted support.
- 2) A new strategy was developed called 'Shoplifters, how can I help you?'. This was in response to my observation that too many suspects were allowed to wander around the store with their suspicious behaviour remaining unchallenged. Asda staff would, therefore, challenge suspects prior to their committing an offence, this was to be known as a 'deter' and was to be viewed as good as an arrest.
- 3) CCTV monitoring was to be improved, a new system had been installed but security staff were often given other tasks that took them away from it. These

other tasks were reviewed, leaving more time for CCTV monitoring to identify suspects early.

- 4) Trolley staff became the 'eyes and ears' of the car park. They were briefed by Asda management to report suspicious activity, issued with police style notebooks and pens to record details, and instructed to ask shoppers to lock their cycles in the stands provided rather than leaving them insecure at the front door.
- 5) A photograph album was produced that was a compilation of police photographs and images downloaded from Asda CCTV system, this was used to brief police and Asda staff about suspects and known offenders.
- 6) Security was an issue at daily Asda meetings, with the management saying that all staff not just the security staff, had a corporate responsibility to reduce crime. They were all instructed to report suspicious activity immediately or, even better, challenge the activity themselves.
- 7) The car park layout was a subject of discussion at quarterly meetings and, as a result, improved lighting was introduced over the whole car park and several dark areas are now illuminated. Speed reduction ramps were introduced and a new layout, slowing down traffic, was constructed. A bus lane used by the general public to avoid the main entrance could be used as an escape route, this was modified by a bollard being positioned to restrict access and egress.
- 8) The petrol filling station was subject to a certain amount of 'drive off crime', and a new policy was devised with management taking more responsibility for dealing with offenders. This has reduced the instances of people 'trying it on' by saying that they will come back later and pay.

In dealing with the overall problem several others were exposed. The main difficulty encountered by police was the constant battle to maintain resources to deal with the problem. Police managers sometimes perceived other problems to be greater than this, and diverted resources away. This was only resolved by constantly raising the Asda problem in conversation, to persuade managers not to take resources away.

Several ideas, believed to be good by the police, were either rejected as being against company policy or not customer friendly. Issues of difficulty included the police wanting a CCTV monitor positioned in the public entrance and 'CCTV in Operation' posters displayed in the car park, wines and spirits and clothing areas. These were initially rejected, but a compromise was reached by two CCTV posters being displayed, one in the entrance foyer and one on the security office door. Two other police ideas, that uniformed security staff should be employed and that the trolley staff should wear yellow reflective jackets with the words 'CAR PARK SECURITY' on the back, were both completely rejected. The employment of our Traffic Wardens on the car park as a crime prevention initiative also met a lukewarm response and after a trial period was rejected.

The strategy was reviewed at meetings on a quarterly basis, or immediately if a trend emerged in criminal activity. Asda introduced a civil recovery scheme that had police support to deter offenders, with necessary details passed back to the store on a specially produced form. Asda noticed an increase in possible fraudulent refunds where offenders were trying to get cash or vouchers for previously stolen clothing. A strategy was introduced to combat this, with police officers helping to identify suspects and providing an occasional uniform presence at the Customer Services Desk. As a result of intelligence sharing, police officers occasionally performed covert observations which resulted in two arrests as a car was being broken into on the car park.

ASSESSMENT

The main criteria for success would be a reduction in overall reported crime for the twelve-month period, with secondary purposes of increasing public confidence and satisfaction in police performance.

The response achieved what the strategy had set out to do with the following results.

By using Crime Pattern Analysis the number of crimes found to have been actually committed at Asda, and in the car park, in the year 1998 to 1999 was found to be approximately 120 rather than the 145 as first thought. This was due to several errors

in the crime reporting and counting procedures. The target was, therefore, to reduce by at least 6% the 120 crimes. Over the period 1 April 1999 to 31 March 2000, a total of 82 crimes were reported with an approximate reduction of 34%.

The two main categories of crime were:-

Stealing from the shop, where the number of reported crimes was reduced from 68 to 43.

Stealing from cars on the car park, which was reduced from 16 to 5.

Over the last twelve months only 82 crimes have been reported compared to 120 during the previous twelve months, that is 38 potential aggrieved parties from the local community who have not had a crime committed against them. Asda itself is now seen as less of a repeat victim. Combined with the fact that uniform officers are being complimented for being back on the beat around the store, this must have a positive impact on public satisfaction and confidence in the service we provide.

Another criteria for success was that, over the last twelve months, Asda has been open for twenty four hour trading, giving more opportunity for crime to be committed.

I did, an evaluation on the project during February and March 2000, during which period I stopped mentioning the Asda strategy to police officers and made less personal contact with Asda staff. This was an attempt to see if the strategy worked without being constantly driven by individuals.

During this period various crimes either rose or remained at the same level as the previous twelve months, which indicated to me that this level of success could not be sustained without personal ownership. The strategy was formally concluded after the success of the twelve-month project and was seen by the police as a great success. Feedback from Asda management also concludes that this kind of partnership is to be greatly encouraged.

Lancashire Constabulary

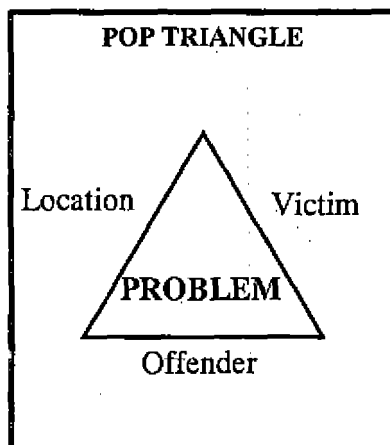


Crime Reduction In partnership with **ASDA**

Presented by David Wilkinson, Custody
Officer, Morecambe

Aiming to make the community of Lancashire feel safe, involved and reassured

Recommending a Strategy Problem Oriented Policing



SARA-Problem Solving Process

- Scanning
- Analysis
- Response
- Assessment

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Vision Statement

Lancashire Constabulary Statement Of Purpose

Northern Division Policing Plan

Heysham Geographical Area Local Plan

Goals and Objectives

- SMART Principle
 - Responsibility and Ownership
 - High Profile Policing
 - Liaise with other Departments
- Encourage ASDA Managers to change
Introduce Quarterly meetings
Provide evidence of results

How did we get here today ?

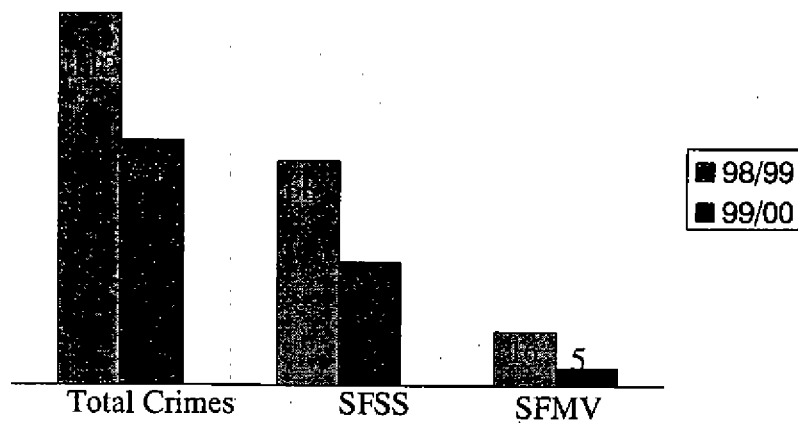
POLICE

- Crime Pattern Analysis
- Sell it to the Staff
- Use ASDA facilities
- High Visibility presence
Know the security staff
- Share intelligence

ASDA

- Management Support
- Deter rather than arrest
- CCTV monitoring
- Trolley staff
- Photo album
- Staff Training
- Car Park
Petrol Filling Station

Today's Situation Overall Crime down 34%



Other Available Options

- Traffic Wardens
Trolley Staff Clothing
- Ⓢ Television Screens
Uniformed Security Guards
CCTV in Operation Signs

Recommendations

Crime Hot Spot ? - Check your figures

Sell it to your Staff

Point Out Benefits to the Victim

What do you do next?