DELIVERING P.O.P.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROBLEM ORIENTED POLICING IN LANCASHIRE

LANCASHIRE CONSTABULARY, NORTHGATE, ENGLAND, 2000

SUMMARY: During 1997 the Lancashire Constabulary looked for a policing style, which would deliver its aim of making the communities of Lancashire, feel safe involved and reassured. A subsequent presentation at Lancashire Police HQ by a representative of PRCU (then PRG), highlighted POP as potentially suitable. A formal project management methodology was used to set out the process to be followed. Although no 'implementation template existed, the project was able to highlight strategic issues which had consistently confronted other agencies. This led to a risk assessment identifying areas which could create the most difficulty to implementing POP within the Constabulary.

During the start of the 1998/9 year the Chief Constable of Lancashire stated that all officers and support staff of the Lancashire Constabulary would embrace Problem Oriented Policing. This led to each division and department developing both one year and three year plans showing how they would deliver POP. The result was a phenomenal range of co-coordinated interventions made at Force, Divisional, and geographic level, thereby creating the policing environment in which community based initiatives could thrive. The result has been a reversal in level of performance in terms of Crime Reduction from lagging behind the national average during 1992-7, to being the country's top performer during 1998/9. More qualitative assessment was provided in the form of an independent evaluation by the District Audit Office, which established the level of implementation of POP on each Division and Department. Second, a statistically reliable analysis was completed on all POP initiatives within one Division, to provide further information in order to enhance the partnership process.

The culmination of these assessments once more started the SARA process. A Force steering group, analysed progress and through consultation decided the way forward. In short, it is argued that the implementation of POP within the Lancashire Constabulary is unique for a number of reasons:

■   It explicitly articulated the benefits prior to implementation.
■   It affected all individuals within the Force as well as a significant number of systems.
■   Implementation was systematic, following a formal project management methodology.
■   Evaluation involved all Divisions and Departments being independently assessed by the District Audit office.
■   The process can be linked to enhanced performance
■   The submission provides a template for POP implementation, which may benefit other agencies.

SCANNING

During 1997, the new Chief Constable of Lancashire had set the direction and aims for the Lancashire Constabulary. The problem she now faced was in deciding the policing style that could deliver these aspirations. During this scanning period the Chief Constable invited PRG (Professor Tilley), to provide an overview of Problem Oriented Policing, to an open forum at Lancashire Police HQ. At the end of that presentation the Chief Constable concluded that the Constabulary would look at this philosophy of policing in greater detail.

Initially research focused on whether problem oriented policing was a viable operational style to introduce. As a result using formal project management methodology police forces, such as Leicestershire, Cleveland, Thames Valley, Surrey, and Strathclyde, were scrutinised. Consultation also took place with the Police Research Group (Home Office, England), as well as other academics active in this field. A wider review, via the Internet and PERF (USA), led to a 12 day visit to the San Diego Police Department, USA Although each agency had committed considerable resources to this philosophy the reason for doing so appeared mainly intuitive.

During 1997 a meeting of Chief Officers and Divisional Commanders decided that a business case had been sufficiently made out to implement POP. The evidence focused on 6 principal reasons:

- It was consistent with the style of policing the public of Lancashire wanted, in that it was community focused and involved a partnership approach.

- It was inevitable as it was in line with forthcoming legislation (Crime & Disorder Act), that statutorily required the police and local government to enter into community safety initiatives together.

- It provided a viable strategy for reducing public demand.

- It would provide a framework for more effective policing

- It would provide more cost effective policing

- It works - police forces who have effectively implemented this approach had reduced crime/disorder and overall demand

This group also made the significant decision that this philosophy would be implemented holistically. This meant it would utilise all officers rather than using a tiered approach which would separate problem solving officers (i.e. community beat officers) from other officers, deployed on response. Concerned that so many police agencies had tried and failed to implement this approach the second phase of the corporate project was to map out the changes that would be required, and then risk assess the impact such changes would have on the Constabulary.

ANALYSIS

The analysis found that all of the organisations reviewed appeared to confront consistent strategic issues. Successful implementation depended upon quality staff, who know their part within the organisation, who have the tools to deliver, who are allowed to deliver, who want to deliver, and who do deliver outputs and outcomes. From each of these strategic areas emanated considerable levels of change, as the following paragraphs indicate.

Quality staff

There is considerable research in the U.S. and England to say that those who are 'attracted' to work within police agencies, are more suited to enforcement than a community approach, which utilises partnerships to solve problems. This meant that prior to implementation issues such as recruitment, induction, selection, reward, and appraisal needed to be examined.

Who know their part in the organisation

Those who were employed to deliver problem-solving within the Constabulary had to have clarity of role and purpose. The Chief Constable therefore had to explicitly define the purpose for her staff, and define the competencies she expected from Constables, Sergeants, Inspectors, and Superintendents. For clarity all this had to be communicated and understood.

Who have the tools to deliver?

Many tools were identified. Most importantly staff needed to be empowered and be close to their community; as such resources were most effective when they were devolved to local control. Secondly ISIT systems needed to supply accurate and timely information; for the Constabulary this meant that crime and disorder records had to be merged. Further there was the critical issue of partnerships and the capability to implement them successfully at strategic and tactical levels. Finally, and overarching all of these, came the concept of knowledge management, in that the organisation needed to be able to harness and spread good practice.

Who are allowed to deliver?

Identifying and producing the tools was only effective if staff were able to use them, therefore leadership was identified as one of the most crucial aspects. There was also a need to manage the incoming demand from the public, only deploying to necessary incidents, thereby giving officers the space to pro-actively identify and solve community problems.

Who want to deliver?

This area includes organisational culture. A longitudinal study conducted of new recruits replicated other findings found nationally. It showed how police officers went from a service minded approach to a perspective that was internally focused, and biased towards enforcement. Clearly plans to reverse this cultural indoctrination were required.

And finally, who delivers outputs and outcomes?

How do police forces know that their inputs (their officers, their vehicles, and their policing strategies) are linked to their outputs and eventually outcomes? Another important issue here was that the service provided should be ethical, which led to methods of audit and evaluation being debated.

Once these implementation issues were completed a present position audit was completed at a Force level and a risk assessment was then made concerning the blockages that might be faced and the impact these would have in hindering implementation. Some of the risk was significant. The move to geographical policing for instance had been seen in many forces to dilute resources and create officer safety issues, which made many forces move away from this type of structure. Once each risk had been highlighted a contingency plan was put in place. For instance one activity to minimise difficulty was an informal weekly meeting between the staff associations and the Deputy Chief Constable to quickly dispel rumours. Finally the project also provided a checklist of success factors, which would enable everyone within the Constabulary to know what the successful implementation of POP would look like.

RESPONSE

Once the analysis had been completed implementation followed the same level of planning. Using the same strategic framework mentioned earlier, representative teams from each Division and Department (including commanders, constables and support staff) went through a 2-day workshop. This resulted in each providing both a one-year and a three year plan looking at the changes they would make to embed POP within their part of the organisation. This meant unprecedented change to systems and processes throughout the Constabulary (shown below), which moved forward in a coordinated fashion.

Quality staff

The work done within the Constabulary in relation to Human Resource systems involved the following:

■ Recruitment was reviewed to sustain the community problem solving philosophy.

■ External consultants developed a competency framework. This involved Constables, Sergeants, Inspectors and Superintendents together with support staff equivalents. The framework sets out the behaviours required by the organisation, to which POP is an explicit and significant part.

■ The POP philosophy was infused into all induction processes and selection processes. Recruitment for specialist posts, including detective posts and promotion to Sergeant, involved all staff being questioned about their involvement and understanding of problem solving.

■ Open learning centres were opened at HQ and on Divisions with CD ROM's provided covering problem solving expertise.

■ Probationary Constables have to complete a problem solving initiative in their training.

■ A reward system was initiated. Examples involved an annual competition whereby the winner went to the international conference at San Diego. Similarly Chief Officer commendations have changed to acknowledge work that is partnership as well as law enforcement based.

Who know their part in the organization?

Actions taken here involved:

■ Drawing up quantitative and qualitative objectives to focus the Constabulary into problem solving. The quantitative objectives included the reduction of crime, the reduction of disorder and nuisance, and the reduction of road casualties. The qualitative elements have evolved over the 3 years and relate to public satisfaction and confidence.

■ Roles were re-evaluated to make sure they added value to community problem solving

■ Priority posts were filled to support POP, vacancies were held in support departments.

■ A Constabulary video was produced to explain the POP philosophy.

■ Each division and department provided training so that all their staff understood their part in this philosophy.

■ A monthly internal newspaper continually dedicates space to highlight the POP approach

■ Presentations were made to all stakeholder groups and the general community to make them aware of the philosophy the Force was following.

Who have the tools to deliver?

In these areas the Constabulary took the following action:

■ The Constabulary changed to a structure, which divided the Force into geographical areas, under the direction of a geographic Inspector to promote ownership and local identity. Each Division was assessed as to whether it had placed as much of its resources as possible under the control of geographical areas.

■ Budgets were devolved to Division and departmental control. Recent financial cuts have fallen on support departments rather than Divisions.

■ Training, such as financial management, was given so that staff in geographical areas had the skills to manage their areas.

- Discreet communities were identified and profiled to facilitate local problem solving.

- Consultation groups were identified and systems put in place to gather their views

- There was considerable work done to put the systems in place to effectively identify/analyse/ respond to community problems as well as analysing the response to community problems.

- Each geographic area and support department set individual plans and targets. Two analysts on each Division provide, relevant and timely information concerning reoccurring incidents and trends. Areas also have on daily basis information concerning reported crime and disorder.

- An intranet database has been put in place to share good practice. At present there are 180 initiatives on this database.

- Three problem-solving conferences have been held at Force HQ, and have had guests from the USA.

Who are allowed to deliver?

Actions in this area include:

- A force project was initiated to look at call handling centres and deployment issues. Communication rooms will move, later this year from 14 to 6 centres. Whilst this process is taking place there is a push to only deploy officers to those incidents they need to attend. Processes are being developed which resolve demand at the earliest opportunity (a one stop shop).

- There are a considerable number of recruitment initiatives looking at volunteers to assist with community problems.

- A SARA form was introduced across the Force to structure problem solving.

- Presentations were made to all stakeholder groups and the general community to make them aware of the POP philosophy.

- Suitable partners at strategic and tactical level have been identified at a divisional level and directories of useful contacts have been produced

- Local officers are acknowledged for getting involved in partnerships at a tactical level.

- Joint training has taken place with partners, albeit not on a systematic basis.

- The Lancashire Partnership Against Crime (LANPAC), a registered charity provides funding for community problem solving initiatives (i.e. youth shelters). Since April 1999 they have provided £91,000 to fully or part fund bids which have taken a problem solving approach to reducing crime and disorder.

Who want to deliver?

Actions in this area include:

- Interventions have taken place to move the organisational culture of the Force from the present state to one, which facilitates problem solving.

- Leaders were selected and put in place in respect of their understanding and commitment to the philosophy.

- Chief Officers regularly state their commitment to the philosophy.

- There has been a clear commitment that staff should be empowered and there are considerable examples to show this is happening.

And finally, who delivers outputs and outcomes?

Actions in this area include:

- The importance of ethics and values has been articulated in the strategy of the force. An ethics working group has been established.

- Checks and balances have been put in place to audit such issues as crime reporting.

- A rigorous performance management structure has been put in place which holds people accountable for community problem solving. This structure starts with ACPO and follows a tiered approach to Divisions, Departments, geographic areas and individuals (through the PDR process).

ASSESSMENT

Thorough and honest evaluation has been critical to the implementation process. During 1998/9 many lower level assessments were made, for instance the views of 200 operational officers were assessed at the Force POP conference to establish whether they had increased awareness (which they had). Similarly the POP training project which was also formally managed also had an evaluation written into the process.

It was felt however that formal evaluation had to be at 3 levels, and also had to have some independence. The most important criteria was outcome. It was felt POP implementation was not an end in itself; it must make a difference to the communities of Lancashire. In the two full years since implementation Lancashire has seen a reduction in crime, disorder and casualties. Similarly customer satisfaction is reported at high levels. However it is specifically in respect of crime that we see a difference in performance. Between 1992/3 & 1997/8 the Lancashire Constabulary displayed a -10.7% reduction in crime, which was considerably behind the national average of -17.9%. During 1998/9 the Constabulary area showed the largest reduction of crime in the country (-10.1% against national average - 1.4%). It continues to show this trend.

However, this level of performance did not tell the Constabulary it was in any part due to the POP approach. The second level therefore looked at whether the critical POP success factors outlined in the original project had been delivered (such issues as levels of awareness, senior officer commitment, local structures, rewards etc.). In the methodology that followed the team from the District Audit department had formal meetings with Chief Officers. They also circulated 350 questionnaires (received a 50% response rate), and conducted focus groups comprising operational officers from all Divisions and HQ. The results provided an overview of progress across all Divisions and HQ, and highlighted the themes were significant progress (or otherwise) had been made. It showed that the Constabulary had come a long way in embedding POP within the workforce however there was still progress to be made. One significant factor was that the Division were it had been most accepted had experienced the most success in terms of crime reduction (-9.3% in the 1st year and -12.5% in the second year).

The assessment so far had shown that the performance of the Lancashire Constabulary was improving and that POP systems had been implemented. However what of the quality of the POP initiatives themselves, could they be shown to make a difference within the community? Anecdotally there were many success stories. Problems that had existed for many years had been tackled. Similarly the Constabulary had entered more examples than any other Force (16 entries) for the first Tilley award, and had been awarded a runners up place. The Force had also presented 3 papers at the 2nd British POP conference and 3 operational officers were sent to the 1998 international POP conference after the first Force competition was held. Lancashire also assisted the national development of POP through numerous presentations to other Forces, and its presence on the National POP working group. However because previously HMIC (1998) in a national review of Community Safety partnerships had found only 5% described as ultimately successful. It was decided a more detailed evaluation should take place. As such all problem solving initiatives over a period of one year, within one Division were reviewed.

The analysis commenced with a simple coding matrix. Each of the 46 initiatives were initially analysed as to whether they involved a particular partner (59 potential partnerships were proposed, later amalgamated into 17 categories). These initiatives were then analysed as to whether they were community focused; based on crime prevention theory; had clear objectives; had evaluation criteria; had sufficient resources; had been evaluated; had been successful; provided sustainable solutions; and had an exit strategy. These variables were an amalgam which external bodies such as the Audit Commission, Crime Concern, and H.M.Inspectorate of Constabulary had emphasised as important.

The subsequent, statistically validated analysis highlighted a number of important issues.

They were:

■ Although 33% were successful (a significant improvement on HMIC findings), this meant 67% of initiatives did not result in sustainable reductions of crime/disorder. This was a terrible waste of resources.

■ Many potential partners such as the County Council, Health Authorities, victim groups, help groups, minority groups and the environment agency were poorly utilised. It appeared that those partners closest to the problem were the ones most likely to be used (i.e. local authority, schools, local business).

■ The majority of initiatives (71%) had clear objectives and were community focused, a possible benefit from a structured problem solving approach the SARA model had provided.

■ Sustainability is positively correlated with those initiatives which are: innovative, properly resourced, having clear objectives, evaluation criteria, being theory based and having the involvement of more than one partner. This corroborated the findings of HMIC, Crime Concern and most recently the Audit Commission (1999). A simple checklist

was therefore available which could assist officers in implementing initiatives.

■ Sustainability was negatively correlated with partnerships which are intensive in police resources.

GOING AROUND THE LOOP AGAIN - SCANNING

The three levels of assessment showed that the Constabulary had done a significant amount of work in implementing POP however it was recognised that the SARA process was dynamic and that it should start again. The desired outcome remained the same, that all staff would implement problem oriented policing to help achieve the objectives of the Force, notably to reduce crime, disorder, road casualties and improve public satisfaction and public confidence.

The scanning process had remained constant; there were representatives of the Force on a national working group which liased with other Forces and the 2nd National POP conference had provided information which had not been fully analysed. The District Audit department report had also been extremely useful. It showed the level of commitment to POP across the Force area within individual divisions and at HQ. This coincided with a new Deputy Chief Constable who had moved from another Police Force committed to POP, and who had fresh ideas. As a result a Force wide steering group, comprising Divisional representatives and operational HQ departments, chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable, met to discuss the way forward.

ANALYSIS

This initiated further analysis of how POP could be improved. The main issues that were discussed related to: increased visibility and commitment from senior managers; enhanced intelligence systems to support the process; and the effective spread of good practice. Each representative of the group was asked to separately analyse their part of

the organisation, consult with staff on their Division and produce an action plan.

RESPONSE

Following on from the analysis, further responses were implemented:

- All items for management meetings (including Chief Officers, Divisional Commanders, Operations Managers etc.) are now submitted using the SARA format.

- At each monthly Operations Manager meeting there is a standing item on POP where each divisional representative shares a problem-solving example with his/her colleagues.

- All Divisions and the 2 main operational wings of HQ have submitted action plans on how to develop Problem Oriented Policing in their area. This has resulted in POP co-ordinators being identified at a Force, Division and geographic area.

- A corporate policy has been compiled and agreed, setting out responsibility in terms of implementing problem-oriented policing.

- Divisional Commanders were requested to proactively identify those officers who had implemented community problem solving initiatives which had made an impact in the community, for a Chief Constables commendation.

- There is now ownership for the central database which spreads POP good-practice, this has been audited and edited to improve quality.

- A briefing system which downloads a number of databases (i.e. intelligence, warrants, custody system, crime and incidents has now been developed which allows officers to obtain detailed briefings on a particular geographical area at the touch of a button (recently highlighted as good practice by HMIC).

- The Force POP steering group is now a regular meeting with established terms of reference.

ASSESSMENT

These more recent responses has invigorated the POP approach within Lancashire. The Force POP steering group continues to look for new opportunities and looks to bring other partner agencies on board. All meetings at a senior level are constantly reminded of the SARA approach due to those forms being used in the process. Similarly operational meetings constantly discuss problem solving initiatives due to the fact that they are a standing item.

For the first time officers are routinely getting Chief Constable commendations for partnership initiatives and the Force has set out a more co-ordinated approach to problem solving having distinguished different levels it can take place at i.e. individual, geographic team, divisional, force level.

Again this year the Constabulary continues to reduce crime and disorder, when this is a rising trend in many other areas across the Country.

CONCLUSION

It is hoped that this submission shows the considerable effort that is needed to transform good practice, in terms of problem solving, into common practice, across an organisation covering approximately 5000 people. This submission has probably failed in outlining the considerable difficulties in travelling this path; the debates over geographic policing, empowerment, and culture being particularly significant.

However it is argued that the implementation of POP within the Lancashire Constabulary is unique for a number of reasons. It explicitly articulated the benefits prior to implementation. It affected all individuals within the Force as well as a significant number of systems. Implementation was systematic, and followed a formal project management methodology.

Evaluation was wide ranging and involved all Divisions and Departments being independently assessed by the District Audit department. Further, and most importantly it showed that the successful implementation of POP can assist a Police Service make a significant difference to the communities it serves.

One final critical point is that the Constabulary has continued to move forward in POP and has gone through the SARA process on a Force wide basis a number of times. It now starts to co-ordinate regional, force, divisional, and geographic POP responses. This method of thinking coupled with the Crime & Disorder Act continues to open up new possibilities. It is hoped this submission gives other Forces a template, which will serve as a starting point, when they consider implementing the POP philosophy.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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NOTES

Not surprisingly this project has initiated a considerable amount of miscellaneous documentation. The following documents can be produced if necessary:

1. Project initiation document - problem oriented policing within Lancashire Constabulary.
2. The feasibility of implementing problem oriented policing within the Lancashire Constabulary - final project document.
3. Supporting documents for the Divisional and departmental strategic planning workshops resulting in POP implementation plans.
4. Competency framework for all staff within the Constabulary showing the priority of POP.
5. Problem oriented policing - a users handbook for officers within the Constabulary.
6. Problem oriented policing - a Constabulary produced video.

7. Programmes relating to the 3 Force POP conferences
8. Minutes from Operation Managers monthly meeting showing standing item outlining POP initiatives.
9. Issue report in SARA format for decision making forums (i.e. Chief Officer group, Commanders conference etc.).
10. District Auditors report showing evaluation of POP within Lancashire Constabulary.
11. Formal evaluation of partnerships in Southern Division of Lancashire Constabulary.
12. Minutes from Constabulary POP steering group.
13. Terms of reference Force working party on POP.
14. Lancashire Constabulary database of good practice.
15. Minutes from national POP working group showing Lancashire involvement in national development.
16. National/Force/Divisional performance statistics.