

**NAME OF PROJECT:**

**STRATHCLYDE POLICE  
DRUG SQUAD**

**STATEMENT OF OPINION UNIT**

**FORCE:**

**STRATHCLYDE POLICE**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Strathclyde Police Drug Squad identified an infrastructure project which would offer support, assistance and release funding to the front line policing objectives, in line with Force Goals and the Mission Statement. This resulted in the establishment of the Statement of Opinion Unit.**

**The need to identify a new system became apparent due to the overbearing and ultimately detrimental effect that court appearances involving 'expert evidence' were having on the efficiency of the Force Drug Squad. Officers could not concentrate on operational duties due to the high number of working hours that required to be spent on the preparation of statements of opinion, preparation for court and appearance at court for the purpose of giving evidence.**

**('Expert evidence' is fully explained within the project description)**

**The process used by the source to identify the requirement for change and ensure that the ongoing process continued to improve the service delivered was as follows:-**

- **Nature of work -- service provided**
- **Prioritisation**
- **Customers**
- **Indicators for improvement**
- **Implementation**
- **Re — designation of services**
- **Employee Involvement/Teamwork**
- **Development and improvement**

- **Measurement and success**
- **Results relative to objectives**

**These indicators explain the role played by the officers, how their role was identified and how the process of re — assessment was conducted to ensure continuous improvement.**

**In order to define the extent of the problem customers were `dip sampled'. The following areas were also examined to identify the full extent of the problem:-**

**Court attendance in relation to `expert witness' evidence**

**Staff records of work**

**Availability of personnel**

**Financial examination of court overtime costs**

**External consultation with the Procurator Fiscal Service (in relation to Statements and Evidence) and of the customer base (in relation to training/educational inputs) was conducted and their perception of the service delivery and service standard expected were recorded.**

**A review was undertaken which examined the volume of work in terms of previous court appearances and requests for training/educational inputs. Assessment of this demand identified the need for a staffing level of five to effectively deliver the service as a unit (one Detective Sergeant and four Detective Constables).**

**The result of this research was that the Statement of Opinion Unit (S.T.O.P Unit) was developed as a central point for liaison with both internal and external customers in relation to the judicial process as well as educational/training inputs. This allowed Drug Squad Officers to focus on operational duties by reducing the drain on resources which had previously existed.**

**The S.T.O.P Unit since its inception has continued to expand in line with the requirements of its customer base. A further need was identified within the Force for an officer to assist the Force Drug Co-Ordinator, the remit for this position was educational development and the collation and dissemination of facts relative to drug related deaths. This position provides a focal point for outside agencies such as Drug Action Teams, Health Boards and Education Services. An experienced member of the S.T.O.P Unit has filled this position.**

**The project aim was for the reduction of working hours spent by operational Drug Squad Officers in relation to preparation and delivery of statements of opinion. The viability of the project was measured by the release of funds that had been previously spent on court overtime payments made in relation to statements of opinion and supported by controlled drug recovery figures.**

## **PROJECT**

### **SCREENING**

**It was identified by departmental personnel through quality circles held within the department and with the external customer base that the Drug Squad was increasingly unable to fulfil its role as a Force resource i.e provide the quality of service rightly expected by its customers.**

**The customer base was identified as follows:-**

- **Strathclyde Police territorial divisions**
- **Strathclyde Police departments**
- **Strathclyde Police Force Training Centre**
- **National Crime Intelligence Service**
- **Scottish Crime Squad**
- **Royal Mail – Employment Health**
- **University of Glasgow**
- **Glasgow City Council**
- **South Lanarkshire Council**
- **12 Regional Procurators Fiscal**

**(This list will continue to expand as the services of the Unit are recognised as a useful tool in all aspects of work in relation to community needs, not just as they effect the police service.)**

**At this time Drug Squad personnel were responsible for the following duties:-**

- **Supply of expertise in the field of drugs enforcement;**
- **The supply of statements of opinion in relation to drug trafficking cases;**
- **Educational inputs to outside organisations;**
- **Training inputs to Strathclyde Police personnel;**
- **Training inputs to the Scottish Police College;**
- **Assistance to force personnel requiring their expertise; and**
- **Operational activities relative to drugs enforcement.**

**Court appearances involving 'expert evidence' and an increase in demand for lectures on an educational/training basis, to both internal and external customers required a concerted and unified approach and impacted financially on the resources of the Force Drug Squad. This decreased the efficiency relative to 'front line' policing, a major factor in the objectives and aims of the Drug Squad.**

**Due to these identified problems it became a priority to find a solution to enable efficiency and cost effectiveness.**

## **ANALYSIS**

**The project aimed for a reduction in court overtime costs, permitting operational increases in working hours, benefiting detection and recovery rates. It was identified that the Drug Squad could not efficiently and effectively carry out the numerous tasks that were required of them.**

**This was seen as a welfare issue in relation to the pressures the numerous tasks placed upon officers and an operational issue due to the lack of manpower available for the enforcement of drug legislation.**

**In line with the Force Mission Statement – 'the delivery of the highest possible standards of policing, addressing community needs, expectations and concerns in a professional, caring and sensitive manner' by providing specialist expertise in both the educational/training and court forum, and to continue to enhance the multi-agency approach to challenge trafficking, distribution and abuse of controlled drugs, the Statement of Opinion Unit was developed.**

**Priority areas for improvement were identified as:-**

- To streamline service delivery to customers**
- Improve consistency and quality of service**
- Remove the administrative burden from the operational wing of the Force Drug Squad, permitting concentration on enforcement**
- Integrate with the multi-agency approach counteracting drug related problems at 'grass roots' level**
- Improve training delivery to police officers in terms of quality and individual needs**
- Identify specific drug awareness needs of external customers, and provide a service reflecting same**
- Drastically reduce financial expenditure on court appearances relative to 'expert witness evidence', transferring savings to operational duties**
- Provide Procurators. Fiscal and the Judiciary with the highest standard of evidence and expert knowledge**

## RESPONSE

Having ascertained indicators for improvement the 'way forward' was identified under the following criteria:-

- **Formalise the system for delivery of service through a smaller dedicated team.(Statement of Opinion Unit – S.T.O.P Unit)**
- **Carry out additional research into subjects in question, and hold quality forums on a daily basis**
- **Delegate the Unit with full responsibility for all aspects identified for improvement**
- **Create a closer working relationship with drug action teams and other agencies active in the drug field**
- **Implement a continuous system of evaluation through questionnaires, completed by the customer base receiving educational/training inputs, with reconsideration and improvement given to points drawing adverse comment**
- **Approach external customers, ascertain their particular needs and provide an appropriate service in respect of same**
- **Have officers within the unit working on a dayshift basis, with a limited number of lateshift duties in order to assist the operational wing of the Drug Squad, and maintain their expertise in a practical scenario**
- **Provide a direct point of contact for other law enforcement agencies, and external customers, counteracting time-consuming procedures, expediting enquiries, to the satisfaction of both the recipient and provider**
- **Ensure that the 'speed of delivery' was not at the expense of accuracy, and the maintenance of integrity was of paramount importance**



**Provide a solid foundation of knowledge to service not only the Strathclyde area, but also on a national basis**

- **Provide one of the foremost authority in the United Kingdom on cannabis cultivation**

**Consultation with the customer base was solicited with consideration given to expanding the role of the department specifically in line with customer requirement and in conjunction with corporate objectives.**

**A role requirement for the post was thereafter created.**

**A list of personnel suitably qualified for the post was compiled on the basis of experience, expertise, ability, temperament and flexibility.**

**Personnel selected were thereafter approached to establish interest, and subsequently the Statement of Opinion Unit was formed.**

## **FUNCTIONS**

**The instigation of the Statement of Opinion Unit was designed to provide a wide variety of services to both internal and external customers. The main functions were to include:-**

**The preparation of 'Statements of Expert Opinion' from case related papers and the Forensic Science Laboratory Report relative thereto. This encompassed each case involving a trafficking offence, within the Strathclyde Force area. All case papers received are scrutinised and the statements provided give full particulars of the effects, means of abuse and prices of the various controlled drugs.**

- **The purpose of such statements is to provide the Procurators Fiscal service with the necessary expertise in order to assist them in decision making with regard to whether the quantity of controlled drugs recovered are indicative of personal use or trafficking in controlled drugs.**
- **The provision of `expert evidence' in courts of law allows guidance, based on direct experience to be given when Sheriffs, Magistrates and Juries are considering the facts relative to cases involving controlled drugs.**
- + **Providing assistance to other police officers involved in recoveries of controlled drugs who thereafter require advice regarding values of the drugs, quantities involved and appropriate charges; handling of productions, and any other enquiries pertinent to the case in question.**
- + **Carry out research, utilising various avenues, into new drugs and drug trends featuring on the drug scene. In addition keeping other officers apprised regarding such matters.**
- **Provision of lectures, liaison with and assistance to professional bodies involved in the field of drug abuse.**
- **Acting in an educational role to police officers in training, and to more experienced officers with an interest in drug related work.**
- + **Provide drug related inputs to external customers on an educational basis.**
- **Liaison with other Scottish Police Forces, establishing best practice, knowledge and expertise.**
- **Involvement with the Strathclyde Police Heroin Strategy Group examining additional methods of approaching the drug problem within the Force area.**

## ASSESSMENT

Since the S.T.O.P Unit was implemented on 21 February 1996, a total of 4458 statements of opinion have been prepared and transmitted to the Procurator Fiscal. In addition verbal advice regarding cases is provided on a daily basis. The five officers are currently dealing with approximately 100 requests per month, and receive an average of 250 citations to appear at various courts on a monthly basis. In addition an average of 35 educational/training inputs are provided per month.

In line with the prioritised objectives, to relieve budget restrictions caused by court attendance and increase availability for front line policing, examination with regard to financial implications was undertaken, the results harboured the following figures:

### A) Financial Implications (Hours Overtime re Court)

<u>Prior to S.T.O.P Unit</u>		<u>Post S.T.O.P Unit</u>		<u>Difference</u>
Feb 1995	425hrs	Feb 1999	140.5hrs	-284.5hrs
April 1995	418 hrs	April 1999	114.5hrs	-303.5hrs
July 1995	273hrs	July 1999	87.5hrs	-185.5hrs
Percentage decrease in court overtime hours =				69.3%
Cash saving to Strathclyde Police per year =				£68,068.00

These figures were obtained from analysis of previous and present overtime claims in respect of court attendance in relation to evidence of opinion.

### B) Working Hour Implications

Number of extra working hours available to operational officers between 1995 and 1999 (Dayshift per month —Aver) = 257

**This represent an additional 3084 hours, per year, devoted to enforcement duties at no additional cost.**

**C) Enforcement**

Street value of drug seizure figures for the year 1994	=	£2,000,000
Street value of drug seizure figures for the year 1999	=	£4,213,387
Increase in street value of drug seizure figures	=	110%

**As a direct result of the procedures implemented in 1999 relative to drug related deaths, the number of persons reported in respect of supplying controlled drugs to persons who subsequently succumb are shown as follows:-**

	<b>No. of cases Reported</b>	<b>No. of persons reported</b>
1998	4	5
1999	14	15

**This shows an increased detection rate of 66%**

**Strathclyde Police have benefited from the increased value for money and financial savings provided by the S.T.O.P Unit and the efficiency of the drug squad has been improved with the decreased burden on their shoulders, leaving them more able to concentrate on enforcement duties. The figures for drug seizures reflect this.**

**In addition excellent 'feedback' has been received from a customer survey identifying improved training inputs tailored to suit the needs and requirements of the audience and improved service to the judicial process.**

**The department as well as its customers, both internally and externally, has benefited from a more efficient, professional and streamlined service.**

**The Procurator Fiscal Service relies daily on advice from the Unit in relation to proceeding with drug related cases. Divisional personnel utilise the service provided on a daily basis saving time and working hours at divisional level throughout the Force.**

**The Police Service has also seen the benefit of an increase in the number of educational inputs. These inputs supply the service with a two way flow of knowledge allowing officers to build on their expertise.**

**Educationally a `need' to disseminate to a broad band of police personnel was identified, culminating in a Force Drugs Seminar, held on 15 July 1999, run by the S.T.O.P Unit for officers from all areas and aspects of police work. The feedback from this seminar identified that it would be helpful if the information that they had received was put into a written format for reference during operational tours of duty.**

**This request was responded to and `Best Practice — A Guide to Drugs Legislation and Enforcement' was compiled and issued to all operational Divisions and Departments.**

**The professionalism and expertise gained in respect of drug related matters has led to forces outwith Strathclyde, both in Scotland and England, requesting officers attendance to provide `expert witness evidence' in courts within their jurisdiction.**

## **MEASUREMENT**

**The departmental customer base was identified and a consultation process was conducted to ensure that the aims of the Statement of Opinion Unit and Force Drugs Co-Ordinator were meeting the requirements of the customers and supplying a continuous high level of service.**

**The customer base was asked the following questions:-**

**What are your service expectations from the Unit?**

- Are these expectations realised?
- How can we improve the service you receive?

Replies were received from the majority of the customers and confirmed that not only was the department:-

1. releasing budgetary expenditure; and
2. releasing officers for 'front line policing; it was also
3. supplying a high standard of service to its customers

A copy of the customer service matrix in relation to this study is attached.

The main task serviced by the S.T.O.P Unit is to provide statements of opinion to be used as 'expert witness evidence'. Although individually prepared, consultation on a 'team basis' is required at all stages in order to ensure a 'universal approach' and consistency with regard to evidence provided by officers from the Unit.

Quality forums are held on a daily basis with regard to the following:-

- Updates/ Information received with regard to current trends on drug values and usage
- Any matters arising in relation to unusual cases or points of law
- General discussion regarding provision of evidence at court, and defence opinions in relation to controlled drugs
- Recoveries of controlled drugs within the Strathclyde area
- Intelligence, on a national basis, regarding recoveries and transportation of controlled drugs

**At all stages of any particular case, the five officers from the Unit are fully apprised, with continual discussion and awareness of all matters relative thereto.**

**This aspect is not limited to officers of the S.T.O.P Unit, it is also used to assist less experienced officers to develop their skills, under tutelage, with regard to evidence of opinion, and this also ensures continual staffing levels, on a rotational basis, within the Unit.**

**At the outset it was apparent that continual communication, both internally and externally with the customer base, was essential in order to maintain a high degree of efficiency and provide an appropriate service as required. As a result officers can be contacted on a 24 hour basis to assist with any relevant matters.**

**The new procedures were implemented ensuring continual improvement, in the long term, to the benefit of not only the S.T.O.P Unit and Police, Service, but also external customers.**

**The Unit was designed to be 'user friendly' to encourage both existing and new customers to utilise the facilities provided.**

**As a result of quality forums it was recognised that certain areas could be developed to best service the customer needs. The areas were compatible with the remit of the Unit and would result in an increase in demand for service. The areas included:-**

**The creation of a database for the collation of information, which would then be readily available for dissemination in relation to drug-related deaths. This provided a central point for internal and external customers and included the overseeing of robust investigation in relation to these matters**

- **The identification of a 'need' in respect of drug education, targeting not only teaching staff and parents, but also children of both primary and secondary age groups. Various seminars were organised and held in conjunction with Education Departments, Health Department, Scottish Football Association and many other youth organisations. Culminating in an increased awareness and understanding, directed at age groups most likely to encounter persons concerned in the illicit drugs market.**

**In order to ensure that the Force is being apprised on a regular basis in relation to new trends the S.T.O.P Unit publishes on a quarterly basis the 'S.T.O.P Unit Bulletin'.**

**The S.T.O.P Unit in addition chair the 'Statement of Opinion' seminar at the Scottish Police College twice yearly, which encompasses officers from all Forces in Scotland, who are providing 'evidence of opinion'/ this allows a sharing of 'best practice' and provides for a uniform approach to this type of evidence. This forum also provides an avenue for dissemination of information, in relation to controlled drugs, on a national basis. Guest speakers, involved in all aspects of drug related work, are invited, thereby increasing expertise, at various levels.**

**As a direct result of the continual improvements, in line with customer base requirements, the S.T.O.P Unit is now recognised as a 'centre of excellence' in relation to the field of controlled drugs.**



## **APPENDIX `A'**

This Appendix contains the following customer/service matrix:

Strathclyde Police

Procurators Fiscal

Law-enforcement / Educational Agencies

The symbols used within the matrix denote the following:

Denotes that no customer/service link exists

Denotes that no response was received

X Service Standards Set

Y Improvements suggested but outwith departmental control  
e.g. control of service provider in Private Sector, manpower shortage, governed by codes of practice etc.

Z Improvement to be implemented  
(no service standard set)

O No requirement for improvement identified by customer

All customers questioned in the survey will receive communication from the department giving detailed explanation for the actions taken in response to their comments.

STRATHCLYDE POLICE

Customer Department	'A' Division	'C' Division	'E' Division	'G' Division	'K' Division	'L' Division	'N' Division	'Q' Division	'U' Division	'T' Traffic Department	'V' Support Services	Force Training Centre	Spotlight Initiative	Media and Information Services	Community Involvement Branch	Policy Support Section	Nationally and Special Branch
Force Drugs Co- Ordinator	Z	Z	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Statement of Opinion Unit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Drug Squad	0	X	0	X	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		Z			

PROCURATORS FISCAL

Customer Department	Airdrie	Ayr	Campbelltown	Dumbarton	Dunoon	Glasgow	Greenock	Hamilton	Kilmarnock	Lanark	Paisley	Rothsay
Statement of Opinion Unit	0	X	-	X	-	0	-	0	X	0	0	-

