



SUMMARY

Project title: 'Operation A.B.C.'

In the year 2000/01 anti-social behaviour reports in the Langbaugh Police District rose by over 12% and was nearly a quarter of all the calls received. Some 84% of those calls related to problems with youths. The problem was greatest in the most deprived areas and the community and local politicians were demanding a better response. We were being challenged as to why there had not been any anti-social behaviour orders obtained.

Traditionally the police response to 'complaints of youths' and sub-criminal behaviour has been limited due to call prioritisation. Police intelligence systems were set up to address recorded crime and there was virtually no input into anti-social behaviour. The process of obtaining an anti-social behaviour order required identifying and evidencing the behaviour, consulting partners and attempting to address the behaviour before moving onto seeking an order if the early interventions did not work. The police and partner agencies did not have the systems in place to easily identify offenders and they seriously lacked the ability to evidence the behaviour over time.

Operation ABC was set up to deliver an intelligence-led approach to address anti-social behaviour. To work with partner agencies to deliver early interventions to stop young persons progressing into more serious offending and evidence applications for anti-social behaviour orders if the earlier interventions failed.

Patrolling police were provided with a simple multi pack form to record the details of offenders committing anti-social behaviour and inform an intelligence database. Letters were sent to parents informing them of the problem and inviting their support to address the problem. Persistent offenders were referred to a partnership problem-solving group to exchange information and agree interventions. The interventions included formal warnings, additional family support services, mental health services, notices of seeking possession of homes, acceptable behaviour agreements, criminal prosecutions and anti-social behaviour orders.

The project has gained increasing momentum and support over the two years it has been running. The interventions have proved highly effective at preventing further offending with the 39 identified persistent offenders. Only 8 offenders progressed to acceptable behaviour agreements and only two of them to anti-social behaviour orders. There has been a fall in anti-social behaviour reports across the district, whilst across the force area, it is still rising.



J Kelly

Chief Superintendent, Director of Crime
(Former District Commander, Langbaugh)

OPERATION 'ABC'

Project Objectives

The objective of 'Operation A.B.C' was to co-ordinate a multi-agency 'drive' against anti-social behaviour utilising intelligence from partners to proactively identify and confront the small hard-core group of young offenders who were responsible for causing a disproportionate level of anti-social/nuisance and sub-criminal behaviour. To establish intelligence data base to identify core offenders and hot spot areas to target partner response.

Scan

Langbaugh Police were receiving many complaints of anti-social or nuisance behaviour particularly by young persons. South Bank was identified as having a particular problem. Due to the previous close working relationship between housing and the local Community Police, officers resolved to address this behaviour by means of joint warning visits with the local housing officers already being used for criminal matters.

The experience at South Bank was replicated in community consultation across the District. The most common complaint was the inability to resolve problems, which required repeated police attendance. The incidents were rarely recorded 'crimes' and were not subject to the 'key performance indicator', which 'drove' the police and other agencies to improve their performance. The overwhelming complaint raised by councillors, on behalf of their residents, was anti-social behaviour by young people.

Analysis

Police officers, in particular the Community Police Team, were aware of the identity of the young persons causing the most problems in the community, as were the community itself, however the evidence was almost entirely anecdotal and seriously lacking in evidential value. This lack of information was consistent with the findings of the PAT 8 report.

If an offender was identified they were often dealt with by a verbal warning. In some cases the offender was taken home and warned in front of their parents. Unless the offence was serious enough to warrant arrest, generally no entry would be made on the Police Intelligence system. Rarely was any consideration given to the other sides of the problem, analysis triangle of location and victim, to address the problem. An informed judgement on location and time could be made, no other information was available.

The police rarely informed the housing providers or schools of the anti-social behaviour of their tenant or pupil. Similar behaviour, which came to the attention of the housing provider or school, unless very serious, would not be brought to the attention of the Police. There was no common or shared recording process for identifying or mapping anti-social behaviour problems.

The schools were reluctant to involve the police in problems within schools as they felt they were expected to tolerate and manage this behaviour. Serious bullying and violent behaviour to other pupils and staff were rarely reported to the police or effectively confronted. Exclusion was the main intervention; there was a pressure to reduce this to avoid transferring the problem from the playground to the street. Information such as exclusion, bullying or general bad behaviour from the 82 schools in the Borough was often not recorded or analysed.

Langbaugh District Police during 2000/01 received 11,436 reports of anti-social behaviour, nuisance or other disorder, which represented over 18% of all incidents reported to the police in the district.

The average number of anti-social behaviour incidents per council ward over the year was 520 incidents. The South Bank ward (1220 incidents) and Grangetown ward (1325 incidents), are the two wards with the highest levels of social deprivation as identified on the social deprivation index. (Appendix 1).

In 2001 a survey (Appendix 2) which was distributed to 200 members of Neighbourhood Watch in the South Bank ward identified the following:

- 45 respondents (80%) believed anti-social behaviour was increasing.
- 54 respondents (96%) believed parents should be more accountable for their children's actions.
- 38 respondents (68%) felt the police could do more to combat anti-social behaviour.
- 49 respondents (88%) felt the housing providers could do more to combat anti-social behaviour.

The Cleveland Police annual quality of life postal survey conducted in July 2000 had 2,059 respondents.

The survey identified the following:

- Overall satisfaction with the police in the Langbaugh District has fallen steadily from 54% in 1997 to 20% in 2000.
- 53% of respondents considered teenagers hanging around street corners to be a problem in the area in which they lived.
- 37% believed vandalism or graffiti to be a major problem.
- Disorder, nuisance and minor criminal damage were grossly under-reported (too trivial 28%, the Police could do nothing 27%, Police were not interested 26%, fear of reprisals 12%, other 7%).
- The four policing functions that the respondents felt the Police performed least well were: Dealing with rowdyism and noisy behaviour, dealing with general annoyance to residents, dealing with vandalism and damage and patrolling on foot/cycle patrol.

The analysis identified the following:

Anti-social behaviour placed a high level of demand on the key agencies, however, there was increasing dissatisfaction from the public in our ability to deal with it.

Growing acknowledgement that small groups or individuals within groups, were committing serious and continued anti-social behaviour that was having a significant and adverse effect on the quality of life within deprived and vulnerable communities.

Existing responses to the problem were not effective and the key agencies were acting in isolation to address what were clearly shared problems.

Existing recording and measurement of the problem was woefully inadequate, even by the police. Mapping of 'hot spots' and targeting individuals was virtually non-existent.

Response:

Sergeant Lister, the Local Authority Liaison Officer, resolved to adopt a problem solving approach working with PC Bryan Tams (now Sergeant), Helen Nicholson, the newly appointed incident researcher, PC Chris Gunnell (South Bank Community Policing Team) and [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Other agencies that were involved at the outset and formed the partnership board chaired by Sgt. Lister were [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Later the formation of the Local Authority Community Safety Unit placed ABC as the main method of tackling anti-social behaviour. No funding was available and the board had to work within their normal mainstream budgets.

At this early stage it was realised with the help of partners, such as Justice Support, that prosecution and threats were not the only answer. Intervention at an early stage, the correct mentoring and diversion would play a major role in improving the behaviour of some of these young people.

Additional partners were invited from the schools, educational social work service, community safety wardens, the Youth Offending Service, the Youth Inclusion Programme and Justice Support Service. The partnership would become the problem-solving group in accordance with the Home Office Guidelines on bringing anti-social behaviour orders and would be required to identify the appropriate interventions to confront the behaviour of the hard core group of offenders.

A multi-pack referral form was produced and issued to all patrol police officers in the District (Appendix 3). Officers who identified and warned young persons committing low-level anti-social behaviour completed the form and forwarded it to the incident researcher. This was the beginning of the data collection and intelligence gathering and the understanding of the problem.

The incident researcher created a database, which recorded personal details of the young person, which school they attend, their housing status, brief details of the incident, what action was taken and whether drugs or alcohol were an aggravating

factor. The information was then checked to see if the young person had come to notice before. In the event of the young person not already being subject to Police action and, where the behaviour warranted it, a letter (Appendix 4) was sent to parents informing them of the behaviour and inviting their co-operation in reducing future problems. The letter also informed the parents that repeated anti-social behaviour would result in the other partners to the scheme being informed.

A further referral within 6 months resulted in a second letter being sent (see Appendix 5) outlining the possible consequences should the behaviour continue. A Community Police Team officer and the appropriate partner officer personally delivered this letter. The purpose of the joint visit being to reinforce the message that the behaviour would not be tolerated and to offer the services of Justice Support (see leaflet Appendix 6) who perform a befriending and support service for young persons at risk of entering the judicial system. The whole process was co-ordinated within the Community safety department of the Police and Local Authority. This department is a joint venture in Police property aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour.

The intention of the letters was to engage offenders and their families in a positive manner to deter future offending similar to the ethos behind reprimand and final warning. Copies of the second letter are sent to all the partner agencies and acts as the trigger for information exchange. (Exchanging information about juveniles would have to comply with Human Rights, Data Protection and Crime and Disorder Act legislation). Identified people within each organisation were informed of the behaviour and this early trigger mechanism meant that they were in a position to identify problems they may have been experiencing from the same young people. The offer of Justice Support was also offered to the young person and parents when the letter was hand delivered by a Police Officer and partner.

Should the other partners or the Police become aware of a further incident of anti-social behaviour involving the same young person, the problem solving group would hold a 'case conference'. The 'evidence' from all the agencies would be collated and interventions agreed. The interventions, dependant on the behaviour being considered, could include reprimands, final warnings, criminal prosecution, service of Notice Seeking Possession, evictions, youth offender services, mentoring by Justice Support Services, referral to Youth Inclusion Programmes, acceptable behaviour agreements, parenting agreements, anti-social behaviour orders and parenting orders. The partners would then undertake a further joint visit with the young person and their parents to discuss and agree or impose the interventions. The intention of the meeting would be to engage both the parent and the child in the proposed intervention. Failure to enter into agreement or failure to comply with the agreed intervention should result in enforcement of an intervention.

It was made clear to all parties involved that this process is not a soft option and that at any time where the behaviour becomes sufficiently serious or fully criminal then the normal police processes of arrest/summons and appropriate disposal would take place.

The scheme was launched as a trial on the 2nd of April 2001 in the South Bank Police sub-district where the highest levels of anti-social behaviour were experienced.

From the outset many of the forms submitted identified young people being present at a 'hot spot' location where alcoholic drink was recovered or anti-social behaviour had taken place but it was impossible to 'prove' which individuals were responsible. An additional letter was produced to inform parents of the presence of their child at these 'hot spot' locations. These letters were designated as 'general letters' (See Appendix 7). By the end of June 2001 67 'general' letters and 46 letter 1 warnings had been delivered. An early decision to role the campaign out to the entire district was made in July 2001 following publicity and pressure from police Officers outside South Bank.

By the 31st March 2002 the following had been generated:

- 1665 referral forms had been submitted.
- 605 'general' letters were delivered and
- 880 'letter 1 warnings' were delivered.
- 40 joint '2nd letter warning visits' were made. (This figure indicates repeat offenders)
- 20 families had accepted the services of Justice Support.
- 13 young persons had been referred to the problem solving group.

Between the 1st April and the 31st March 2003:

- 2495 referral forms had been submitted.
- 880 'general' letters were delivered.
- 1209 'letter 1 warnings' were delivered.
- 42 joint '2nd letter warning visits' were made.
- 35 families had accepted the services of Justice Support.
- 26 young persons (and two adults) had been referred to the problem-solving group.

In the two-year period the overwhelming majority of these young people dramatically improved their behaviour. Only 8 of the 39 young people progressed to voluntary acceptable behaviour agreements and only two of them breached the agreements. Two youths received anti-social behaviour orders. One youth has successfully complied with his order for over 18 months, returned to education and subsequently obtained a full-time job. The second youth progressed very quickly through the process and, once an anti-social behaviour order was obtained, breached it immediately. Within two months of the order being granted he was serving a 4-month sentence for the breach. The reduction and frequency of repeat offending was identified by the relatively low numbers of young people actually being discussed at the Problem Solving Group and the drop off experienced at every intervention.

Assessment

One of the first results of the operation was the ready acceptance and use of the referral forms by patrol officers, particularly the community police team officers. The officers felt that, at last, they were trying to do something positive about anti-social behaviour. The forms were so well accepted that within a short space of time they had been 'smuggled' to the other two police sub districts and officers began submitting them before being instructed to do so. This showed a great amount of willingness from officers and as a result the trial period was cut short and the whole district became involved from July 2001.

The problem-solving group very quickly became an effective and successful partnership and the interventions provided were dramatically effective in reducing the offending behaviour. Charts have been prepared (See Appendix 9) outlining the interventions and their achievements.

Between 01/08/02 and 31/3/03 1800 referral forms were submitted and 621 of them related to public under-age drinking. The majority of the forms referred to large gangs congregating in parks or other public areas and being loud and abusive. A small proportion of the forms identified more serious behaviour such as minor damage, graffiti and stone throwing.

As part of the response a Neighbourhood Task Group was formed consisting of an additional Sergeant and four Constables. The team was deployed initially in the South Bank and Grangetown area for 6 months with a remit to work with a problem solving approach to address the key issues of the area. The team from the outset has focused on addressing the anti-social behaviour problems in the area and utilised the ABC referral forms heavily. The methods deployed include officers in plain clothes acting as spotters to identify the ring leaders in gangs causing anti-social behaviour and then using 'snatch squads' to effect arrests. The officers also have a community consultation policy where they inform the public of the operations they will be delivering and the results obtained. They deliver a strong message via the good citizen programme in schools. Having a dedicated resource looking at the problem allied to the intelligence and support systems of Operation ABC has resulted in anti-social behaviour falling by over 30% in those two wards. During the same time the District rate of anti-social behaviour fell by 1% and the force rate rose by 2%.

The team re-located to the wards of Eston and Normanby where over a two month period they achieved a similar fall of 30% in the reports of anti-social behaviour. In the first three month of 2003 they targeted the wards of Newcomen and Kirkleatham where they achieved a remarkable fall of 65% in the reports of anti-social behaviour.

The key objectives of the scheme have been met. The intelligence database has been established and is becoming increasingly effective at identifying the small group of core offenders and hot spot areas, which are then included in the weekly intelligence tasking to patrol officers, community support officers and community safety wardens. The interventions have proved dramatically effective at reducing the offending rate of this core group and reintegrating them into society. Also with the identification of Hot Spot areas the problem solving group uses the services of the Design Out Crime

officer to examine long term problem solving such as CCTV, lighting and other interventions.

Anti-social behaviour reports, which had risen from 10,260 incidents to 11,436, a rise of 12% in 2000/02, only rose to 11,899 incidents, a 4% increase in 2001.02 and fell in 2002/03 to 11,778 incidents, a fall of 1%.

Certain key themes have come to light through this process.

- Targeting the key offenders in a gang or group has an immediate deterrent effect on the rest of the group.
- Information exchange at the problem-solving group invariably provides supporting evidence i.e. if a young person is causing trouble on the street they are invariably causing trouble at school.
- Both the housing and education providers often felt isolated and powerless to deal with anti-social behaviour and this process has been seen as a hugely positive step forward.
- The joint warning process delivers a strong message to offenders that their behaviour has been recorded and that it will not be tolerated.
- Interventions short of prosecution can be highly effective in addressing anti-social behaviour. In particular the independent work of Justice Support has been very successful in mentoring these young persons and accessing the other support services they may have required.
- Without exception the victims have been empowered by the process and have a restored confidence in the determination and the ability of the police and partners to deal with this type of problem.

Operation ABC has contributed to the improvement in public satisfaction with Langbaugh Police following steady decline up to 2000. The following years have seen a satisfaction increase, in 2001 it rose to 29.5% of people who were very satisfied or satisfied with performance and 2002 saw a 8% rise to 37.4% of people that were satisfied or very satisfied.

A qualitative questionnaire telephone survey was conducted with 81 randomly selected parents (a 96% return) who had received 1st warning letters. All but three of the parents agreed that the scheme was appropriate and effective. All of the parents said they had challenged their child's behavior, often grounding them for a period of time. Many unsolicited calls have also been received from concerned parents. The common thread has been how the letter from the Police gave the parent the evidence to confront the child's behaviour and apply discipline.

The Work Continues.

Operation ABC has been included in the 2002-2005 Community Safety Strategy for the borough. The 4 largest Registered Social Landlords have adopted the approach when addressing complaints about anti social behaviour of tenants, their children and visitors. The process involves similar 1st and 2nd warning letters; joint warning visits, support and mediation services. Continued anti-social behaviour results in referrals to the problem solving group to discuss interventions such as formal warnings, injunctions, eviction proceedings and anti-social behaviour agreements or orders. Following a trial in three schools all secondary schools in the borough have also adopted Operation ABC. Once again the process involves warning letters, joint visits with nominated officers or Community Safety Officers with a referral to the problem-solving group if those measures fail.

The intelligence database is being developed further and the district has introduced target boards and profiling for anti-social behaviour in the same way as those used for targeting 'crime' offenders. The submission of anti-social behaviour referral forms has been included in the performance indicators.

A Police weekly intelligence briefing pack for anti-social behaviour 'Hot Spots' is being provided to the local authority community safety wardens. They are also encouraged to take a more active involvement in Operation ABC.

A successful growth bid was made to the Police Authority and a 2nd Neighbourhood Task Group of a sergeant and four constables will be in place from April 2003 and they also will focus on the delivery of Operation ABC and the good citizenship programme in schools. The district will also have 23 Police Community support Officers by the end of 2003 who will be focusing on reducing anti-social behaviour and delivering ABC.

The district is in an excellent position to deliver the new guidelines on anti-social behaviour orders introduced in October 2002 and likewise to deliver the measures proposed in the Anti-Social Behaviour Bill.

We are identifying resources and activities for young people in the community itself, involving the local authority youth and leisure services and voluntary sector organisations. A recent development involves a local public house now opening two nights a week solely as an alcohol free venue for young people. Research is underway at present to develop a reward scheme for young people who act in a positive manner within the community.

In conclusion Operation ABC is an effective, intelligence lead, partnership approach to deal with persistent anti-social behaviour. It is highly effective at dealing with the hard core of persistent offenders. It will increasingly direct future Policing Operations, however, at present no effective legal sanction is available to the police, or local authorities, to deal with the problem of under age drinking. Changes to the law are probably required. The majority of the youths complained about are of good character doing little more than 'hanging out' and much of the time the situation requires managing rather than enforcing. The experience with the Neighbourhood Task Group has shown that it can impact on the large numbers of complaints received regarding

under age drinking and the gangs of youths on street corners and shopping parades but only if the resources are made available and properly directed.

Sgt 260 Bryan Tams

Appendix.

1. Chart showing levels of anti-social behaviour by ward.
2. Neighbourhood Watch Survey Results.
3. Multi-Pack Referral Form.
4. Letter 1.
5. Letter 2.
6. Justice Support Referral.
7. General Letter.
8. 3 Case Summaries.
9. Problem Solving Group Referrals.(Year 1)
10. Problem Solving Group Referrals to date.