

Tilley Award 2003



Operation Acer

**Drugs Problem, Albion Towers, St Mary's, Southampton.**

**Consideration for the category of Partnership.**

**Hampshire Constabulary.**

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## **OPERATION ACER – Drugs problem, Albion Towers - Summary**

**Force: Hampshire Constabulary**

**Contact: Sgt Dick Partridge 02380 674368**

### **Nature of the problem**

Albion Towers is a 15 storey block of flats, situated on the inner city council estate of Golden Grove within the St Marys area of Southampton. There has been a long history of drug related crime within the St Marys area, particularly linked to Albion Towers. At least three addresses were known to be dealing drugs and users came from both in and out of the city meaning that many 'shot up' in the vicinity, including the stair areas of the block and in bushes areas on the local estate. Thus the problem was not only of dealers but also of the drug related litter left behind, including needles.

### **Evidence of the problem**

There has always been drug related problems within Albion Towers and Golden Grove, however in the summer of 2002 the two wardens, who live and work in Albion Towers became increasingly concerned about the amount of drug litter in the stair areas. They were collecting up to 3 bucket fulls of rubbish each day, containing needles, blood swabs, tin foil, matches and of course the associated litter of sweet, crisp wrappers. They had also been intimidated by some of the users.

Several residents were also concerned and had complained to the council. Their concerns were from their children witnessing drug users 'shooting up' in the communal areas to the danger of discarded needles.

There was significant police intelligence of drug dealing within Albion Towers and the surrounding area.

### **Response to the problem**

Initially there was a meeting between the wardens, housing officers and community beat officers. It was decided the initial response should be to try to disrupt the users by using high visibility police patrols over long periods. Overtime was gained and on at least 3 occasions a week the duty beat officer would be supplemented by another and would patrol Albion Towers in high visibility patrols for 4-5 hours at a time.

The council agreed to regularly maintain the door entry system and in fact removed one entrance altogether. A covert camera was placed on the main dealing address and a RIPA was gained.

### **Project impact**

Almost immediately there was a significant reduction in drug related litter. Fewer needles were being found suggesting users were not injecting within the block. The wardens now consider it unusual to find drug litter and do not fill a bucket of rubbish in a week. Evidence from the operation has been used to assist in the eviction process of two of the three addresses identified and the third has gone quiet. The council are maintaining the door entry system and horticultural services are maintaining the hedges in the area. A neighbourhood watch scheme is being set up and the residents have purchased a mobile phone for the beat officers to keep in contact.

## **OPERATION ACER – Drugs problem, Albion Towers**

**Force: Hampshire Constabulary**

**Contact: Sgt Dick Partridge 02380 674368**

### **Background**

Albion Towers is a 15 storey block of flats of 150 residences, situated on the inner city council estate of Golden Grove within the St Marys area of Southampton. Over the last six years the area has been subject of an inner city renewal programme, Single Regeneration Budget 2 (SRB2), this centred on St Marys St, which was a run down shopping area and SRB2 had little impact on the residential estate of Golden Grove. The research for the scheme identified that St Marys is considered an area of deprivation, with a high percentage of single parent families and well below average car ownership. There is a higher than average percentage of families from various ethnic minority backgrounds. In fact the Bargate ward is in the highest 12% of the most deprived wards in Britain (Indices of deprivation 2000).

The area has a long association of drug related crime, particularly linked to Albion Towers. During the 1970's there was PIRA activity in Albion Towers which included a significant find of explosives.

There had been a significant long term drug operation in Hampshire, Operation Trojan, which included work within the area. In June 2002 this operation was downsized and now has very little or no further impact within St Marys. However, intelligence showed that there were still several well known drug dealers working within St Marys and at least three addresses in Albion Towers were identified as drugs premises.

### **Problem**

During the summer of 2002 there was an increase, not only in the reported drug dealing, but particularly the problem of drug litter. There are two housing wardens in Albion Towers, employed by the council who are responsible for the general cleaning of the block. They live in the block and therefore in a vulnerable position. Most mornings the wardens would find discarded needles, blood stained swabs and associated rubbish in the stairs. As drug users often gathered in the stairs, there was also the problem of associated litter, crisp packets, wrappers, etc and the wardens were collecting 2-3 buckets of rubbish daily. There were also reports from residents and the wardens that they had actually witnessed people openly dealing and 'shooting up' in the stairs and open areas of the block. This raised considerable concerns within the community, who historically were afraid to speak out against this sort of activity. The police were well aware of the drug related problems in the area. Operation Trojan had some impact and as a result of one warrant where drug dealing was confirmed, an eviction was in progress. There was a general consensus from residents that drug dealing happened and there was little the police could do.

### First steps

In the summer of 2002 the wardens became so concerned that they almost resigned. The housing officer called an initial meeting with them and the community beat officers. There were several abstractions from the 3 Community Beat Officers for the area, at the time and it was decided that once the officers had all returned the problem would be subject of the problem solving process.

There followed meetings between the community beat officers, wardens, housing office, drug action team, Crime Concern and residents. A tenants and residents association had recently been formed. The SARA process was begun with analysis being completed by Crime Concern and adopted into the problem solving document which the Hampshire Constabulary call Prime – Problem Resolution in Multi-Agency Environments.

### Analysis of the problem

An analysis was completed by Crime Concern

#### Victim

- Transient proportion of economically inactive people
- Poor community cohesion
- Several generations have indulged in similar behaviour
- People do not realize the potential hazards of drugs unless they feel threatened
- People will not take responsibility/action unless they feel threatened
- Perception is that Albion Towers is a dumping ground for tenants
- Perception that local housing office do not take appropriate action
- Perception that there are few beat officers or other police, perception of poor liaison between police and community.
- Perception of poor response from police
- Perception of ineffective partnership working between agencies

#### Location

- Limited security at Albion Towers
- Stairs cut off from rest of block – little general use of stairs
- Scissor layout of block makes natural and police surveillance more difficult
- Lack of rubbish bins
- Inadequate horticultural up keep
- Drug litter, inadequate safe mechanism for disposal
- Reputation as Crack Towers
- Dry and sheltered lit areas away from many people
- High density living and high transience in the population allow relative anonymity to the dealer/user

## Offender

- Excellent networking/communication channels
- Grooming vulnerable young people as offenders – some link to prostitution, pimping
- Specific tenants who allow their premises to be used for drug dealing or using premises belonging to vulnerable people, who they intimidated.
- Often dealers/users from other towns/locations
- Little known about local users/dealers

## Identifying partners

The community beat office at Southampton Central Police Station became the lead partner the others being:

Southampton City Council - Local Housing Office, including the wardens, housing officer, neighbourhood warden.  
- Emergency Planning.  
- Community Safety Team.  
- Drug Action Team.

## Crime Concern

### Objectives

The ideal objective would be to stop drug dealing and drug litter in Albion Towers and the surrounding estate. However, considering the environment in which Golden Grove is situated, drug dealing and use will probably always be present. It was considered that preventing drug litter was achievable and also to reduce the visible signs of drug dealing. The aim was to make Albion Towers a better place for people to live. The main method of measurement would be from the feedback of residents and the wardens in particular.

### Response

The initial response was to begin high visibility patrols from the Community Beat Office to disrupt the drug activities. There were concerns that a single officer may at risk if approaching several people possibly high on drugs, so it was decided patrols would consist of 2 officers. There are 3 beat officers for St Marys and at least 1 is on duty every day. It was agreed that none of the beat officers would be abstracted for other duties. When their duties overlapped, days and lates, the officers would patrol Albion Towers together. When only one beat officer was on duty, they would be joined by another officer, on overtime to patrol Albion Towers. The patrols would last at least 4-5 hours. Beat officers on normal duties would probably only be seen in the vicinity of Albion Towers for 10-15 minutes at a time. Although this may deter dealers and users, it was merely an inconvenience for a short period before the officer would pass. It was hoped the longer, concentrated period of patrol would have more effect. This obviously meant that some of the normal work completed by the beat officers could not be done, and officers from adjoining beats assisted when required.

The wardens, residents and beat officers would begin daily contact to monitor the effects of the patrols. A mobile phone was temporarily gained from communications department so that key members of the community could contact the beat officers direct.

Patrol officers were also requested to visit the area of Golden Grove regularly. They were asked to leave their vehicles and check the stairs. Should they have pocket book entries etc to complete, that they could park up near Albion Towers to do this, again increasing the visibility of the police presence.

Crime Concern would continue to work with the community and consider the possibility of a Neighbourhood Watch scheme for Golden Grove.

Housing agreed to begin a more forceful eviction policy against drug offenders.

The Drug Action team agreed to liaise with residents, wardens and police to advise regarding drug litter and the possibility of leafleting and erection of appropriate signs.

There was also a linked Prime plan on an adjacent beat, relating to overgrown shrubbery at a series of underpasses, some 500m away from Golden Grove. Considerable drug litter, particularly needles, were being found. This was also subject of high visibility patrols and covert observations in partnership with the Neighbourhood Wardens. Most users found in this area were from out of the area and it is thought they 'scored' in Albion Towers and used this area to inject. Eventually the bushes were cleared by the Council and the problem was resolved.

There was also anecdotal evidence that beggars were obtaining drugs from Albion Towers. This led to another Prime, Operation Dautsey, to combat the nuisance of aggressive begging in Southampton city centre.

Southampton City Council placed a covert camera covering one of the target addresses and agreed to maintain the door entry system, which had often been damaged and inoperative. In fact it was decided to close one entry door, CCTV and security was improved at the remaining entrances.

### **How did it work?**

There was an immediate and significant decrease in the amount of drug litter when the high visibility patrols began. The wardens reported that many of the regular 'visitors' either did not frequent the block or they were very wary. Visitors to the suspected drug dealing addresses reduced, again there were reports of these people being more wary. Within a few weeks the drug litter had reduced from 2-3 buckets per day to less than a bucket a day and after 6 months the rubbish is negligible.

There were numerous stop checks of people considered to be acting in a suspicious manner. As a result of the drug searches six people were arrested for drug offences. Although this may seem a low figure considering the time spent patrolling, we must remember that the officers were in high visibility clothing, and therefore, the offenders could see the police before the police saw them.

A warrant was gained for the address subject of the covert camera where several people were arrested for possession of Class A drugs.

One particularly successful part of the operation was the use of the covert camera. On several occasions this was monitored by 1 officer while 2 officers were on the target floor. When a deal was seen to take place the offender was stopped as they left the floor. This tended to be an intelligence gathering operation as the small wrap of drugs purchased was seldom found, being thrown away or well hidden. However on 1 occasion a wrap was found, significant intelligence was gained and the offender was charged. A housing officer was actually present with the officer monitoring the CCTV on this occasion and also witnessed the deal. An excellent example of joint working. Another target address was subject of a warrant and a small amount of drugs was seized, the tenant was charged.

The beat officers have also visited the local primary school in Golden Grove to pass on drugs advice to the school children at assemblies.

The residents association have purchased a mobile phone for the use of the beat officers.

The improvements to the door entry system and the sealing of one door has kept better security within the block, all comings and goings are now covered by the CCTV system. The cost to the council of these improvements was £3,500.00. This has helped in the general tidiness of the block and residents feel safer. The hedges were tended, again improving the presentation of the area there is now planned maintenance for the horticulture of the estate.

A neighbourhood watch group has formed for the Golden Grove area which has had several meetings, attended by residents, police, Crime Concern and the council.

During this time there was a scaling down of the countywide drug initiative, Operation Trojan. However, as a result of continued drugs intelligence citywide, a Southampton drug initiative, Operation Towngate was created. This supported Operation Acer and resulted in warrants on 2 of the target addresses being executed, which resulted in drugs being seized.

The council's more positive eviction policy has collated evidence and used statements from the police and council officers, together with any standard breaches of tenancy. Eviction notices have been served on 2 of the 3 target addresses.

### **Lessons learnt**

In this, and several other problem solving initiatives, it has been apparent that the police are often in the position to be 'doers' from an early stage and seem able to adapt to various situations. Other partners, particularly the council, are complex organisations with many departments, with different priorities. Although the council partner may wish to proceed with some action, this may be thwarted by the departments which actually have to do the work, which leads to frustrations.

Consideration had been given to the police mounting an operation where, using the covert camera, everyone who visited the target address would be detained for a full drug search. This was good in theory, however would have been very labour intensive. Unfortunately it would have meant excessive overtime, particularly if there had been few visitors, which could not be funded.

The Drug Action team were unable to be fully involved but are offering ongoing support action for users in the area.

It was found difficult at times to disclose to all partners such things as dates, address of warrants and other concerns over data protection.

On top of this the main resource was the community beat office itself. The normal work was still coming in for the beat officers to deal with and at times resilience was tested.

The beat office managed, by officers on bordering beats assisting with the work on the St Marys beat, but it may have been better if several officers could have been 'found' to act as a prime team to deal with the problem.

### **Conclusions**

The operation has been a resounding success, surpassing the expectations of all those involved. Partnership working has been successful between most agencies and foundations laid for the future. Albion Towers is as drug free as it ever has been. The police, council and community work very closely now and trust each other. The structure is in place should the problem return and there is a neighbourhood watch scheme. This is truly partnership working at its best and it is planned to use this format as a blueprint for similar problems in Southampton.

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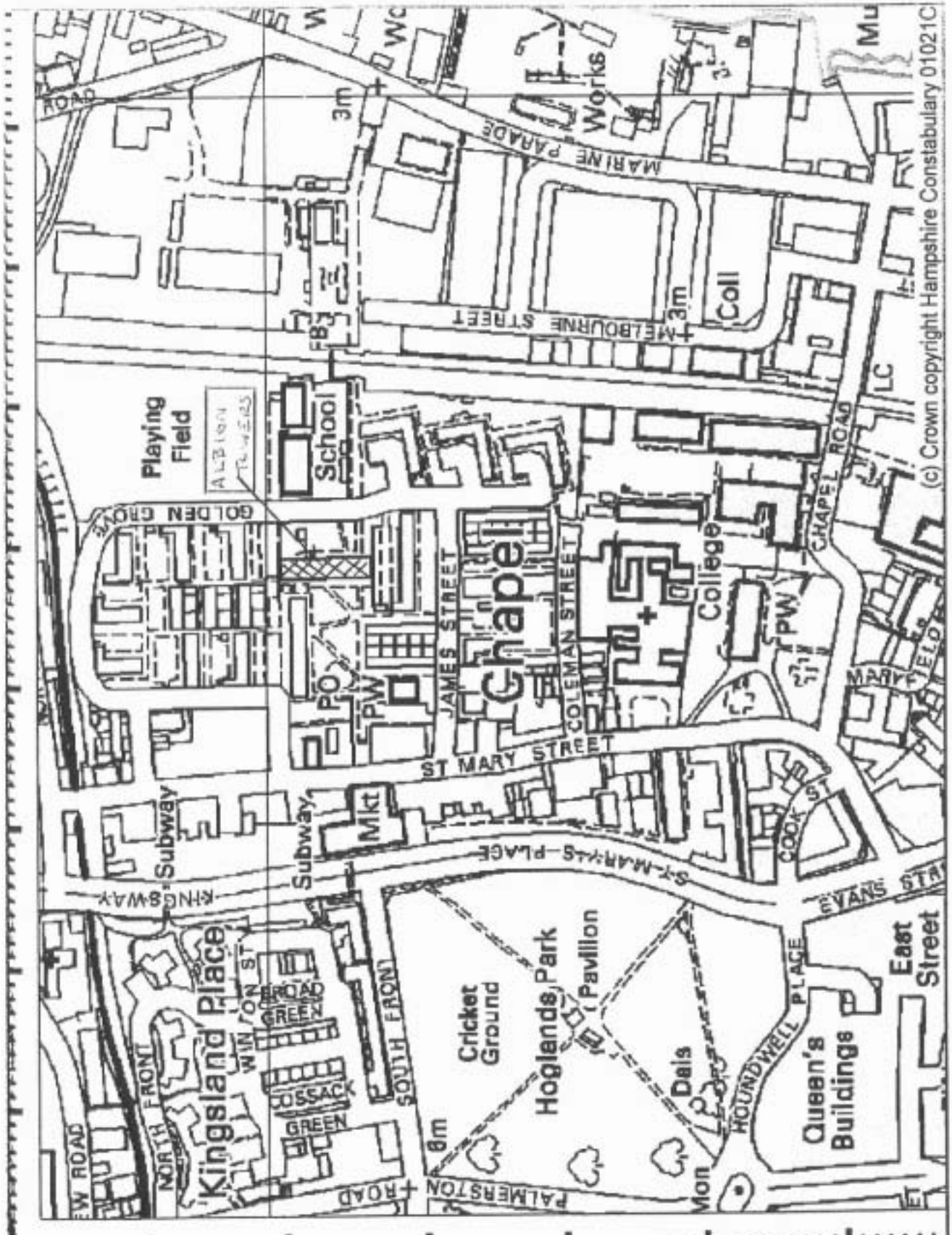


## **Appendices**

- 1: Map of St Marys.
- 2: Report from Keith May, Emergency Planning, Southampton City Council.
- 3: Report from Eddie Sawford, Housing Manger, Central Southampton.
- 4: News report in Southern Daily Echo 4 October 2002.
- 5: News reports in Southern Daily Echo 12 February 2003.
- 6: News report in Southern Daily Echo, crime page, 12 February 2003.
- 7: Item in Hampshire Constabulary magazine Frontline March 2003.
- 8: Item in Southampton City Council Newsletter, Tenants Link, March 2003.
- 9: Report from Chris Morris, Chairperson, Residents Association.
- 10: Report from Lindsay Caplen, Crime Concern.

Appendix 1

Map of St Marys.



## Appendix 2

### Report from Keith May, Emergency Planning, Southampton City Council.

Co-operation between agencies such as police and local authorities has obviously existed for some time and in the Southampton area has been developing well.

The operation concerning the Albion Towers project was the first "prime" we had been involved with.

As a background Albion Towers is a 15 storey block of flats with 150 flats in the inner city of Southampton. There had been previous problems within this block and housing, had been assisting Operation Trojan with a major dealer. It had been hoped that the successful apprehension of this dealer would reduce or even eradicate the problem, however, the reality was that others within the block took up the trade in a more chaotic fashion once he was removed.

In August 2002 the local community police unit and housing, met to consider a concerted way ahead, clearly there was a sizeable problem with the block which was causing great distress to the residents and local wardens.

A meeting was held within the block involving the tenants association, housing, staff, community police officers, Drug Action Team and crime concern. As a result of this meeting several measures to physically increase the security of the block were instigated including additional CCTV and improved security door entrances. The police introduced a high visibility presence in the block both in the entrance, stairwell and indeed, on the actual landings of suspected dealers. Special joint operations were mounted and a number of successful raids were carried out on premises and a number of drug users were arrested inside the block having purchased therein.

From the housing perspective the high visibility operation had an immediate effect in slowing down the dealing and making it less obvious to tenants. The special operations targeted the main culprits and we are actively pursuing the eviction of 3 tenants using police witnesses in our evidence.

Since the initial meeting crime concern have worked with the tenants association to establish a Neighbourhood Watch scheme.

Problems with the block have drastically reduced to an almost negligible level and life has returned to normal.

### Appendix 3

Report from Eddie Sawford, Housing Manager, Central Southampton.  
Albion Towers Drug Litter & Nuisance

Early in the summer of 2002, Southampton City Council identified a rising problem with both the use and dealing in illegal drugs and it's associated activities within a prominent Tower Block, Albion Towers, Golden Grove, Southampton.

There are two residential wardens employed to manage and maintain the block, which includes cleaning, nuisance rubbish and supporting the Local Housing Office in enforcing tenancy conditions. The wardens were finding a rise in the number of people visiting particular flats in the block coincided with a rise in the amount of drug litter (e.g. needles and silver foil) and evidence of defecating or urinating within communal areas in the block. On occasions the wardens even discovered people actively taking drugs on stairwells or corridors.

Details of these incidents and the properties believed to be involved in the illegal activities were passed onto the Local Housing Office, Police and the Council's City Safety team. It was felt two properties in particular were involved in the sale of illegal drugs and this was contributing to the drug litter, and nuisance but also to a general feeling of unease and fear of safety of persons living, working or genuinely visiting friends or family at Albion Towers.

A plan of action was agreed with the Police and the City Safety Team that would mean increased police presence within Albion Towers and covert CCTV installation to monitor the flats. Problems were reduced when a successful prosecution for illegal drugs was achieved against one of the tenants and the Council recovered possession of the property, one of the bail conditions being not to return to Albion Towers. The presence of the Police officers on a daily basis also dissuaded visitors to the block, further reducing the incidents of drug litter and nuisance.

In targeting the second property, again the Police obtained a successful prosecution against the tenant. The Local Housing Office and City Safety have also worked together to take possession proceedings against the tenant for illegal and immoral use of the premises. The Court date is imminent and the Council is very confident of obtaining possession due to the quality and quantity of the evidence obtained in cooperation with the Police.

This has been a very successful period for the City Council in tackling a genuinely serious problem that was causing serious nuisance to local residents. The general unease and fear has been alleviated at Albion Towers and this has been endorsed by the Wardens and the Tenants Association and the reduction in drug litter figures. This is a good example of how inter-agency working can be successful in tackling serious local problems as well as building stronger links with the Council, Police and local residents.

Eddie Sawford, Acting Local Housing Manager, Central LHO

# Together we'll get rid of drug dealers

**EXCLUSIVE**

By Sarah Cole

DRUG dealers have been given their marching orders from a Southampton tower block through teamwork by police and residents.

Local beat bobbies and tenants have joined forces to declare war on dealers who plague Albion Towers in St Mary's.

The move follows an alarming rise in drug misuse in the building in recent months.

Residents contacted Southampton police after heroin addicts began openly injecting themselves in the building, which is home to dozens of young families.

Literally hundreds of potentially lethal dirty needles were left strewn along the corridors and stairwell areas.

Extra police officers have been drafted in to carry out high-visibility patrols from top to bottom of the 15-storey tower block in a bid to deter drug dealers and users.

Meanwhile Albion Towers residents are busy logging drug-related incidents as well as the car registration numbers of anyone suspected of involvement.

Chris Morris, chairman of Albion Towers Tenants' and Residents' Association (Attrax), said: "People had been moaning about drug



**UNITED STAND:** PC Mike Florit with Chris Morris at Albion Towers, below.

Echo picture by John Luthwaite. Order no: H35barf4

use and people selling drugs from certain premises. I came face-to-face with it when I returned from a meeting to see two men standing by a lift, one of them keeping a look-out and the other injecting.

"We decided it was time to stand up as a group and get our opinions voiced.

"I have heard of boys under ten being offered ecstasy, and if that is what the drugs dealers are doing we need to wipe it out."

Miss Morris, who has lived in Albion Towers for five years, added: "The police have already got a hard enough job to do and can't be here all the time, so we are keeping notes about everything we see.

"People have been coming up to me and saying they feel much safer with the police patrolling.

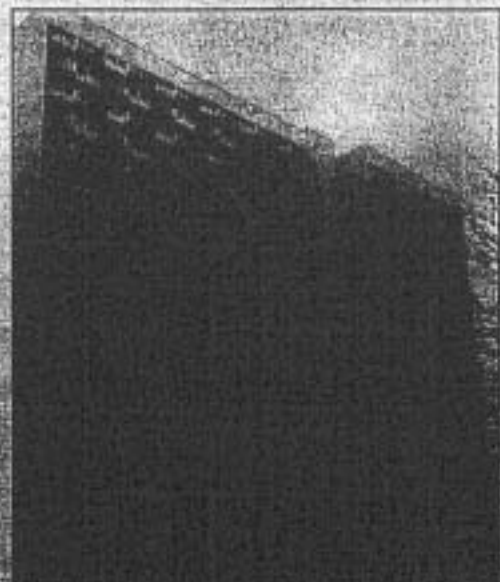
"Hopefully this could encourage other estates to follow our lead as this is a citywide problem and does not just affect Albion Towers."

St Mary's beat officer PC Mike Florit said: "There has traditionally been a drug problem in this area but it has increased considerably recently.

"As a result of the residents' association approaching us, funding was found for extra police patrols, which started three weeks ago.

"But, because we can't be here 24 hours a day we don't see everything they do so we rely on them to let us know what is going on.

"Word seems to have got around since we stepped up the patrols, and



we have been drafted in for the high profile operation, which is being coordinated by PC Mike Partridge based at Southampton Central police station.

As well as patrolling all 15 floors in pairs, officers are regularly studying CCTV footage from the flats.

The high-profile operation, also involving the Southampton Drug Action Team and Crime Concern, is part of a longer term initiative to rid drug dealers from Southampton's inner city area.

● Any information on drug dealing at Albion

# Drug abuse blitz hailed a success

By **Jamie Thompson** ♦  
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**AN ONGOING** battle to rid an inner-city area in Southampton of drug abuse has been hailed a success.

The blitz on users and pushers was launched in the autumn by residents, police and council officers.

It has concentrated on Albion Towers in Golden Grove, where needles and drug paraphernalia were dumped in stairwells, and in the Six Dials region.

Beat officers launched high-visibility policing operations in response, with each patrol lasting four to five hours.

Sgt Dick Partridge said: "The results of this have been a dramatic drop in drug use and the problem of drug litter in the area.

"We also undertake covert work in that area, which is helping us to target those dealing the drugs. Whereas in



**CAMPAIGNING:** Resident Chris Morris and Councillor Sue Blatchford. Echo picture by Gordon Agg-Jones.

the past officers would have walked through the estate on a patrol lasting 15 minutes or so, we concentrated teams of officers in the area for four or five hours, which has acted as a great deterrent.

"We have received a tremendous amount of very positive feedback from residents, saying that it is now a lot safer and less intimidating for them and, without the risk of finding

needles, it's safer for children to play on the estate."

The patrols aimed to deter addicts from entering the block to shoot up and six people have so far been arrested for drugs offences.

Chris Morris, chairman of Albion Towers Tenants' and Residents' Association, said: "It's been very positive and something that the community here has wanted and needed."

Graeme Kemp, city council head of housing services, said: "We are pleased with the results of the operation, which is making daily life better for the vast majority of law-abiding residents on the estate."

Extra patrols were also launched by beat constables Paul Ground and Clive Brook around the Trinity Road car park area, which led to 20 arrests.

Neighbourhood wardens were collecting up to 15 needles every morning around it and shrubs and bushes were cut back to blow users' cover.

Sgt Partridge said: "It is now a much safer place for the whole community"

Wednesday, February 12, 2003

*with*

**Sarah Cole**

*chief crime reporter*

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## Police plea for for feedback

POLICE are following up a high profile operation, which cut drug dealing on a Southampton housing estate, by appealing for feedback from residents.

Operation Acer was launched last September following complaints from residents about people targeting a council estate in St Mary's specifically to use drugs.

Tenants at Albion Towers and the surrounding area voiced concerns about needles, drug paraphernalia and litter being left in the stairwells - causing a hazard both to residents and council staff who had to remove the debris on a daily basis.

During the past four months, PCs Alan Deakin, Mike Florit and Leeds Reynolds have patrolled the area on foot to deter people from entering the flats to buy or use drugs.

Six people have been arrested on suspicion of drug offences throughout the operation.

The following beat surgeries are currently being held: Derby Road neighbourhood advice centre, Newbold between 6pm and 7pm Wednesdays; Bevois Flats, James Street, between 3pm and 4pm Tuesdays; Northam housing office between 3pm and 4pm Thursdays; and Challs Court, Orchard Lane, Holyrood, between 3pm and 4pm Fridays.

# PRIME time work to make estates safer

by Lucy Dibdin

A HIGH visibility policing operation on a Southampton housing estate has brought about a dramatic reduction in drug abuse and has been welcomed by residents.

In September last year, police in partnership with Southampton City Council's Housing Department, Drug Action Team and Crime Concern, began work on Operation Acer following complaints about people entering one of the council's housing estates in the St Mary's area of the city specifically to use drugs.

Residents had voiced concerns that needles, drug paraphernalia and associated litter was being left in the stairwells of tower blocks, causing a hazard to both the people who lived there and the council staff who had to remove the drug debris on a daily basis.

As a direct response to these concerns, police, the local authority and residents formed a problem-solving panel, and police Community Beat Officers began high visibility patrols of the area – each patrol lasting four to five hours.

During the past four months, PCs Alan Deakin, Mike Florit and Leeds Reynolds have patrolled the area on foot to deter people from entering one of the blocks of flats to use drugs. So far, six people have been arrested for drugs offences.

"Whereas in the past, officers would have walked through the estate on a patrol lasting 15 minutes or so, we concentrated teams of officers in the area for four or five hours which has acted as a great deterrent," said Sergeant Dick Partridge.

"We have established a strong working relationship with local council staff who have played a large part in targeting crime in this area.

"The results of this have been a dramatic drop in drug use and the problem of drug litter in the area. We also undertake covert work in that area which is helping us to target those dealing the drugs.

"We have received a tremendous amount of very positive feedback from residents saying that it is now a lot safer and less intimidating for them, and without the risk of finding needles, it's safer for children to play on the estate."

Graeme Kemp, the Council's Head of Housing

Services said: "We have worked very closely with the police to try and combat the problem of people entering the estate to use drugs, and are pleased with the results of the operation which is making daily life better for the vast majority of law abiding residents on the estate".

This is the latest in a series of successful PRIME – Problem Resolution In Multi-agency Environments – projects.

PRIME is Hampshire Constabulary's beat policing initiative, where problem areas are identified and a solution engineered through a multi-agency approach.

## Huge reduction

Another PRIME project by officers from Southampton Central's Community Beat Office has brought about a huge reduction in drug abuse in the Six Dials region of the Newtown/Nicholstown area.

Beat constables Paul Ground and Clive Brook have been concentrating high visibility patrols in the subways and surrounding car parks, and the local authority has removed shrubs and bushes – commonly used by drug users to conceal their presence.

"Before patrols began, local Neighbourhood Wardens were picking up ten to 15 needles every morning, just feet away from a route regularly used by school kids and people going to work," said Sgt Partridge.

"This has now almost ceased completely. Without the shrubs, the users have nowhere to hide. The subways are now clean and clear, and it is now a much safer place for the whole community."

During the patrols, nearly 20 people have been arrested for a variety of offences, including three who were wanted on warrant for an armed robbery.

Incidents of vehicle crime in the Trinity Road car park have also reduced dramatically.

A new CCTV camera is due to be installed near the Trinity Road car park later this year, which will monitor the area and be able to view down the subway.

High visibility police patrols of the areas will continue and it is hoped will cut crime and drug use even further.



## Appendix 8

Item in Southampton City Council Newsletter, Tenants Link, March 2003.

8 - Tenants Link, MARCH 2003

# Operation Acer: a success story

IN SEPTEMBER 2002 Housing Services and Hampshire Police jointly launched Operation Acer following complaints about high levels of drug use by people entering a council estates in the central area of the city. Six months on, the operation has been declared a success, with six people arrested and a marked reduction in drug abuse in that area.

Drug Action Team Co-ordinator, Julie Hender stressed that this was the result of a strong local partnership and a determined community: "It is important to note that, by the nature of the work, a lot goes on that remains unseen by the wider public. This should not discourage residents from continuing to champion local causes."

The initiative was launched following repeated concerns from local residents about drug use in the area and, as a direct response, the police began high visibility foot patrols to deter people from entering the neighbourhood in order to 'shoot up'.

"We have established a strong working relationship with local council staff, who have played a large part in targeting drug crime, and we undertake covert work which is helping us to target those dealing the drugs," commented Police Sergeant Dick Partridge.

"We have received a tremendous amount of very positive feedback from residents saying that it is now a lot safer and less intimidating for them and, without the risk of finding needles, its also safer for children to play on the estate."

- If you suspect someone of dealing drugs or are worried about drug-related crime, you should report this to the police. Alternatively, talk to your Neighbourhood Wardens or staff in Local Housing Offices, who can pass information on to the police.



Albion Towers Tenants and Residents Association

Albion Towers  
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26th April 2003

**Re: Albion Towers Initiative.**

Albion Towers is a 15 storey council tower block, 150 flats altogether, that means 150 families all living under one roof. There used to be serious drug problem, as a drug dealer lived here. This caused a drug litter problem too. There were a lot of people coming into the block to buy their drugs, they injected in the staircase areas and left their drugs litter behind. Thankfully we have 2 wonderful wardens living here and they cleared up the litter (they shouldn't have to).

One day, the wardens showed me the large amount of litter that they pick up daily (used needles, blood stained cotton wool, and all the things associated with drugs), and I was horrified. I had seen people injecting themselves in the communal corridors and the staircase areas and decided that something had to be done to make things better for the decent people living in Albion Towers.

I contacted my local councillor, who was very helpful and put me in touch with local agencies that he felt could help.

As Chairperson of A.T.T.R.A., I held a committee meeting and asked the members if they felt the same way; they all agreed that there was a problem and if we all pulled together, perhaps something could be done to improve the situation. I agreed to follow the matter up on their behalf knowing that I had their full backing.

After having meetings with the Police, Crime Concern, Local Housing Office and the wardens, things began to happen. Patrols by police beat officers were increased, entry doors were made more secure and committee members agreed to report anything suspicious happening around the known drug dealers home.

Things are much better now at Albion Towers. The drug dealer was prosecuted and is now serving a prison sentence, the drug litter problem has gone, and residents tell me that they feel much safer going to and from their homes. This proves that ordinary people can turn things around, and make their community a safer place to live, by working together and using the resources available to them.

Chris Morris  
Chairperson, Albion Towers Tenants and Residents Association.

Golden Grove is a 1960's local authority owned housing estate consisting of low rise walk up blocks with a 15 floor high rise block known as Albion Towers at it's centre. Over the past couple of years, Southampton has experienced an increase in drug related crime and Albion Towers had become known along the South coast cities and towns as 'Crack Towers' because of the relative ease with which one could allegedly purchase crack and other class A drugs. Drug litter was highly visible in and around Albion Towers, Golden Grove area and the subways leading to and from the estate.

In early 2002, the Police had various initiatives going on in the area, the local housing department were working in the area and the residents had a fledgling residents association. However none of the work was being coordinated in a clear way, so the problem was not being solved.

Crime Concern also had a neighbourhood safety project in the area and had the staff time and remit to undertake the scanning and analysis needed to ensure that any problem solving group set up addressed the real underlying causes of the drug issues and not merely the perceived issues. The process involved meeting individually with numerous local residents, Housing Office, Drugs Advisory, Police, Neighbourhood Wardens, Health Service, Chemists, Rough Sleepers Unit and Education service amongst others.

After this in depth scanning process was completed, the underlying causes were analysed and grouped into underlying causes or 'drivers' of crime.

A multi-agency problem-solving group was then drawn together. Because the scanning and analysis had already been carried out, the group was able to be focussed on action at an early stage and avoided the common falling of becoming a 'talking shop'. This group included the Police, local councillor, local residents group chair, Drug Action Team, Parent Support Link (advisory service to parents of drug users), the Local Housing Manager, Housing Wardens, Southampton City Council Officer and Crime Concern.

The group then planned responses to the analysed information. These responses considered enforcement, support/rehab and education. As some of the agencies especially the Police were already undertaking initiatives in the area, the problem solving approach allowed the work to be coordinated giving it the 'multiplier effect'.

It was planned that the group would meet together on a 6 weekly basis to keep abreast of actions.

Police activities included high visibility patrols, in particular foot patrols that meant a regular presence within Albion Towers itself. Residents with whom I worked told me that the police presence increased the level of trust in the Police and meant that they were more prepared to pass on information/intelligence to the Police. As the Police were seen in and around the block so frequently, most residents would see or come into contact with the Police and information was shared quite naturally. Residents who wanted to get involved in changing the culture of crime and fear felt supported by named police officers and other agencies. This enabled them to become and to feel a vital part of the problem solving process.

Running in tandem with this work was the training by Crime Concern of several residents who were given support and training in coordinating a Neighbourhood Watch group. Crime Concern also paid for their attendance at a 6-week 'Drugs in the Community course'. This helped dispel some of the myths and fears around drugs and ensured that resident action taken was done from an informed perspective.

The high visibility police patrols alongside the multi-agency approach quickly saw a reduction in drug litter. Residents spoke of their reduced fear of crime. Through the group, work had been going on to improve site lines through horticultural upkeep and clear drug litter. Housing started working more closely with the Police to share information regarding dealers and tenancy enforcement matters. The City Council installed improved security and monitoring systems.

It is vital that the trust and support from the community is not lost. This means that the Police need to maintain at an appropriate level an approachable, visible presence. Police activity combined with support from other organisations to local residents should ensure that the level of police activity could reduce to a more sustainable level without compromising on the level and quality of information from residents.

Lindsay Caplen (Crime Concern)