

THE HOPWOOD TRIANGLE

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Hopwood Triangle – Summary

The 'Hopwood Triangle' is a Preston City Council owned development of 91 dwellings. Located close to the city centre and main arterial routes, the area has seen no capital investment whilst neighbouring areas have enjoyed a renaissance with the injection of millions of pounds of Government money from Single Regeneration Budgets.

The area had slipped into the spiral of decline with an increase in damage to properties, burglary, prostitution and anti-social behaviour. The council's work force were afraid to visit the area and gradually the estate became more run down, the grounds and hedgerows massively overgrown and the street furniture and lighting damaged beyond use. A homeless hostel on the area Millbank Court was increasingly blamed for the neighbourhood's problems.

Tenants, fearful of crime surrendered their tenancies, the number of damaged and unoccupied dwellings grew to such an extent that by the end of 2001 a third of all properties were unoccupied and it was proving impossible to let the vacated dwellings. Remaining tenants were increasingly apathetic to criminal and anti social behaviour.

Initiated in January 2002 'Hopwood Triangle' was a multi agency approach designed to deliver long term and sustainable changes and improvements. In partnership with Preston City Council Central Housing Dept., Millbank Court, Parks Dept. and the local community a range of responses were developed which included.

- Funding streams identified & bid submitted
- £130,000 funding secured from Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
- Actions identified from Crime Prevention/Safer by Design survey
 - External domestic lighting
 - Railings
 - CCTV – comprehensive coverage monitored @ Millbank Court
 - Ground maintenance and landscaping
 - Demolition of lockup garages
 - Restriction of access
- Identification & eviction of problem tenants
- Targeted enforcement of offenders
- Formation of Residents Association and Neighbourhood Forum
- Establishment of 'local lettings policy'
- Formation of 'Neighbourhood Watch'
- Improvement of relationship & working practices at Millbank Court
- 'Operation Kerb'-prostitution

Assessment against project objectives

Crime

- All crime down 52.5%
- Damage down 73.3%
- Burglary down 28.0%
- Vehicle crime down 80.0%

Police calls for service

- All calls down 38.5%
- Cost for police incidents, £82 saving per dwelling against total of £57 per dwelling.

Housing

- 100% occupancy
- Improved ground maintenance and natural surveillance
- Railings secure site & restrict access
- Secured access to blocks.

Public Reassurance

- Targeting of problem tenants
- Relationship with Millbank Court
- Resumption of Council services

SCANNING

The Problem

'The Hopwood Triangle' is a small development of 91 individual dwellings set over 5 streets. The dwellings are split between 2 blocks of low-rise flats set over 4 floors accounting for 32 dwellings on Hopwood Street and the remainder are 2 storey maisonettes throughout the rest of the development.

The properties are all owned by Preston City Council and let by their Central Housing Department.

The buildings are set in a triangular shaped parcel of land running between 2 busy arterial roads and bordered by a housing scheme for the homeless known as Millbank Court and is in close proximity to Preston Prison.

In time the buildings have fallen into a state of disrepair with the adjacent grounds, hedges and trees becoming overgrown. Many buildings have fallen victim to damage and at the beginning of 2002 over a third of the properties were unoccupied.

The housing was perceived as being so poor and the area so tarnished in reputation that it became impossible for the Central Housing Department to let the empty premises. Even the most needy of tenants refused to move into the area, one sadly declared, *"I might be desperate, but I'm not that desperate"*. To combat the threat of damage and squatters to empty properties all the windows and doors were covered with steel shutters to guarantee security. Although necessary, this added to the air of neglect and decline. The council's maintenance and ground staff were too intimidated to visit the area and stayed away.

The area had lost all sense of community with many remaining tenants surrendering their tenancies. Crime and the fear of crime increased with remaining tenants adopting a siege mentality, locking themselves in and turning a blind eye to problem neighbours, anti-social behaviour and criminal activity.

Street prostitutes were using the covered porches outside properties to conduct their business often leaving soiled condoms to be found the following morning. Women were approached by kerb crawlers and the male residents pestered by the prostitutes for 'business'.

The supply and misuse of drugs became commonplace and the whole area went into rapid and terminal decline. Many residents blamed Millbank Court and their visitors for the problems arising in the first place and the Council and Police for allowing it to happen. Other tenants, legitimate or otherwise, revelled in the opportunity to create nuisance, commit crime and behave in a lawless and anti-social manner with little concern that they would be subject to any enforcement measures.

ANALYSIS

Identification Of The Problem

The Hopwood Triangle is uniquely placed both geographically and financially. The housing borders on to Ringway, which is the main road running through the City and is at the junction with two other main arterial routes. This housing is perhaps the most conveniently located housing stock that the Council owns with good communication links and easy foot access to the city centre.

The area to the opposite, City Centre side of Ringway has been identified as an area which will form part of a multi million pound City centre expansion and redevelopment plan known as the Tithebarn Project funded by private investment from Grosvenor Estates.

Government grants totalling millions of pounds have been allocated to the neighbouring Callon and Avenham areas under the Single Regeneration Budgets (S.R.B) which border onto the 'Hopwood Triangle' terminating at Deepdale Rd to the east and Ringway to the south.

Other areas have seen massive investment and improvement in both housing stock and community projects through the S.R.B. funding. The fact that the 'Hopwood Triangle' sits directly between all these exciting projects and yet has not been allocated any funding only serves as a painful illustration to its residents who feel that their own housing had fallen into the spiral of decline whilst others enjoy something of a renaissance. Built in the 1960's the housing has seen only the most basic maintenance and no improvement. The housing stock remains without double-glazing or central heating and many other features which householders increasingly take for granted.

Figure 2.1 - Problem Analysis Triangle



Features of the Location

- Built in the 1960's the estate is made up of 91 individual dwellings. 2 blocks of low raise flats set over 4 floors account for 32 dwellings. The remaining 59 dwellings are made up of 2 storey maisonettes.
- Set in a small triangular parcel of land situated between 2 busy arterial roads.
- Over the years the buildings have fallen into a state of disrepair and been the victim of damage and arson resulting in many properties having windows and doors covered with steel shutters to guarantee their security.
- 33% of the dwellings are unoccupied.
- The design of the housing and the estate is outdated in terms of 'safer by design' resulting in numerous 'rat runs' and 'cubby holes' providing easy access and concealment.
- Used as a short cut from the City for non- residents offering concealment of movement.
- 2 blocks of lock up garages all of which have fallen into a state of disrepair, been damaged and used for rough sleeping.
- The estate is very poorly lit due to the original lighting being in a state of disrepair having not been maintained.
- The adjacent grounds, trees and hedges have become massively overgrown.
- The location suffers from fly tipping and litter is prevalent.
- Situated on the main access road into the estate is Millbank Court, a self-contained housing scheme for homeless people.
- Despite neighbouring areas receiving highly publicised multi-million pound funding for regeneration The 'Hopwood Triangle' fell outside the criteria.
- The area as a whole had gained a reputation for being an area of high crime.
- An empty sheltered accommodation property, Newton House, had recently been sold to private investors and was due for development into student accommodation.

Features of the Offender

- Council tenants living on the estate and their visitors and associates all involved in criminal activity and anti-social behaviour.
- Tenants of Millbank Court involved in criminal activity and problematic behaviour.
- Visitors and associates of Millbank Court tenants.
- Street prostitutes working in the area.
- Opportunist offenders using area as concealed 'rat runs'.

Features of the Victim

- Council tenants
- Millbank Court staff and tenants
- Members of the public living and working in and around the area.
- Repeat victims
- Visitors and associates of Council and Millbank Court tenants.
- Council grounds staff.

Root Cause – Fear of Crime

As a result of the combination of the continued spiral of decline of the area and an increase in crime and anti-social behaviour there was a complete loss of any community and a very real fear of crime. Residents felt that the Council and police had failed to take action to remedy the problems resulting in many residents surrendering their tenancies and remaining tenants adopting a siege mentality locking themselves in and turning a blind eye to problem neighbours, anti-social behaviour and criminal activity for fear of reprisals. A majority of the residents had a deep-rooted fear and resentment towards Millbank Court and its tenants and blamed Millbank Court for the problems arising in the first place.

Police Data Recording Systems

A number of Police data recording systems were interrogated which gave some indication of the extent of the problems affecting the area. It was important to note what effect, if any, Millbank Court had on the area as a whole in terms of police calls to service.

Table 2.1 - Crime

YEAR	HOPWOOD						TOTAL
	BIAD	AUTO	VIOLENT	DAMAGE	THEFT	DRUGS	
2001	7	5	6	15	2	5	40

- 40 Reported crimes for the year 2001 excluding Millbank Court
- Compared against 33% unoccupancy this equates to a 66% chance of each dwelling being the victim of crime.
- Apathetic attitudes to crime and incident reporting suggest actual crime figures would be higher than indicated.

Table 2.2 - Police Calls to Service (CRS)

YEAR	HOPWOOD	MILLBANK	TOTAL	MILLBANK %
2001	429	162	591	27.2

- 591 total calls (49.25 calls per month)
- 162 calls from Millbank Court (27.4% of total calls).
- Provided specific information on problem locations and times.

Intelligence Reports (INTL)

- Provided evidence of considerable criminal activity.
- Assisted in identifying problem tenants.
- Assisted in identifying visitors and associates.
- Provided further information on locations and times.

Table 2.3 - Arrests (CUSTODY)

YEAR	HOPWOOD	MILLBANK	TOTAL	MILLBANK %
2001	19	6	25	24

- Assisted in identifying council and Millbank Court tenants involved in criminal activity.
- Assisted in identifying visitors/associates involved in criminal activity.
- Showed extent of police enforcement in area.

These figures are for the purposes of comparison. They include only arrests made in the location and exclude persons living in the area arrested elsewhere and arrests elsewhere for crimes committed at this location.

Table 2.4 - Repeat Victimisation

2001	BIAD	AUTO	VIOLENT	DAMAGE	THEFT	TOTALS
13 Newton St	2	1	0	0	0	3
12 Edmund St	0	0	4	0	0	4
1A Driscoll St	0	0	0	2	1	3
29A Hopwood St	1	0	0	1	0	2
33A Hopwood St	1	0	0	1	0	2
TOTALS	4	1	4	4	1	14

- 5 of the 60 occupied dwellings identified as repeat victims. 8.3% against occupancy levels.

Partners

- As a result of the number of complaints they were receiving and the number of tenancies being surrendered, Preston City Council felt they could not attempt to re-let the empty properties (at a cost of approximately £1300 per week) until the problems had been addressed. Repair and modernisation of unoccupied properties was seen as the only way in which they could hope to re let the empty properties. Similar properties in the city were undergoing renovation at a cost of between £30-£40,000 per dwelling (the cost being met by Single Regeneration Budget government funding). This level of funding was simply not available to the Hopwood Triangle.
- Preston city council hired a company, 'Professional Witnesses', to conduct surveillance work on the area and Millbank Court provided them with an empty flat to work out of.
- The outcome of the surveillance showed Millbank Court to be a focal point for offenders engaged in Anti-social behaviour.
- A telephone kiosk situated on Edmund Street, opposite Millbank Court, was identified as a focal point for drug dealing and damage offences.

Project Objectives

From the analysis undertaken a number of project objectives were formulated:

- Reduction in crime - With particular emphasis on property crime.
 - Criminal damage.
 - Domestic Burglary.
- Reduction in police calls for service.
- Eradication of street prostitution from the area.
- Securing and reducing points of access to the area
 - Lighting – Repair of existing street lighting, provision of additional external domestic lighting.
 - CCTV – Full area coverage and recording facility.
 - Fencing/Railings
 - Demolition of lock up garages
 - Ground maintenance/Clean up/Fly tipping
 - Landscaping. Tree and undergrowth removal and hedge reduction.
 - Improved natural surveillance
- Housing – 100% occupancy of available housing.
 - Identification and eviction and/or arrest of problem tenants.
 - Ensure vetting of potential tenants
- Public Reassurance
 - Tackling fear of crime
 - Tackling Repeat Victimization
 - Improved relations with Millbank Court and understanding of their role and responsibilities
 - Neighbourhood Watch
 - Residents Association and Focus Group
 - Reinstatement of council services

RESPONSE

Dealing With The Problem

It was identified that it would be vital to the success of the project for the residents to be engaged at an early stage and to ensure that they feel involved and empowered in tackling the issues that were identified. It was also identified that a number of the responses would need to be Partner led as opposed to police led in order to ensure sustainability and to afford the police an exit strategy. Following an initial survey by the Police and discussions with Preston City Council there were three distinct options discussed.

Option 1

- Stock transfer to Housing Association
- Demolition of existing housing stock
- Safer by Design re-build

Option 2

- Implementation of a multi-agency problem solving approach
- The 'Hopwood Triangle'

Option 3

- Council under pressure from growing waiting list
- 'Quick-fix' to void properties only
 - Alienate existing loyal tenants
 - Insufficient funding to carry out the necessary work
 - Tackles a symptom and not the causes
- Whole area would continue in a spiral of decline

Police Driven Responses

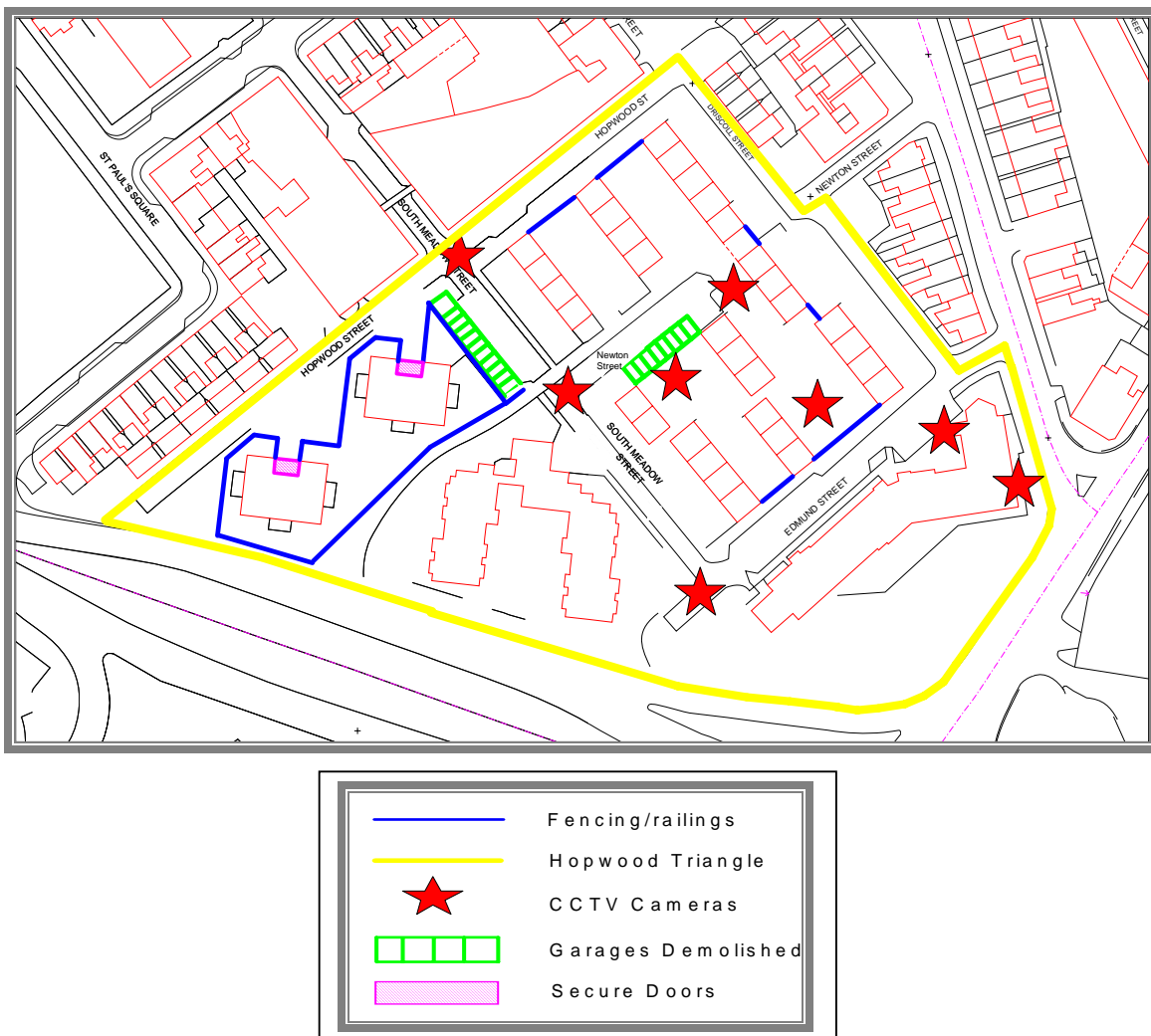
Best Practice

- Other projects that have tackled similar problems were looked at in order to select responses that have worked elsewhere or to tailor them for the issues identified in the analysis phase.
- To fully understand the problem it was necessary to research the detailed analysis undertaken. To that end certain resources were examined to enable a greater understanding. These included:
 - COPS guide – Using Analysis for Problem Solving
 - Crime Reduction and Problem Oriented Policing – Willan Publishing
 - Home office website – www.crimereduction.gov.uk/toolkits
 - POPS center website – www.popcenter.org

Crime Reduction & Safer by Design Survey

- The location was a major issue identified in analysis that had impacted on the problem.
- A crime reduction and Safer by Design survey was conducted by PS Steve Hobin from the Community Safety Department of Preston Police, in company with Preston City Council Housing staff, residents and the local Community Beat Managers.
- The results of the survey led to the development of the 'Masterplan' a proposed action plan for the improvement of the location in terms of:
 - Improved Lighting.
 - Closure of certain footpaths leading into the estate.
 - Fencing/Railings for improved security.
 - Ground maintenance, landscaping and clean up.
 - CCTV coverage.
 - Demolition of lock-up garages.

Figure 3.1 – The 'Master Plan'



Evidence Gathering for Problem tenants

- Using police data recording systems problem tenants would be identified and evidence of criminal activity gathered.
- Community Beat Managers for the area would conduct high visibility patrol in the area engaging with the residents to assist with the evidence gathering.
- Close liaison with Preston City Council. Identification of problem tenants from complaints to Central housing dept.

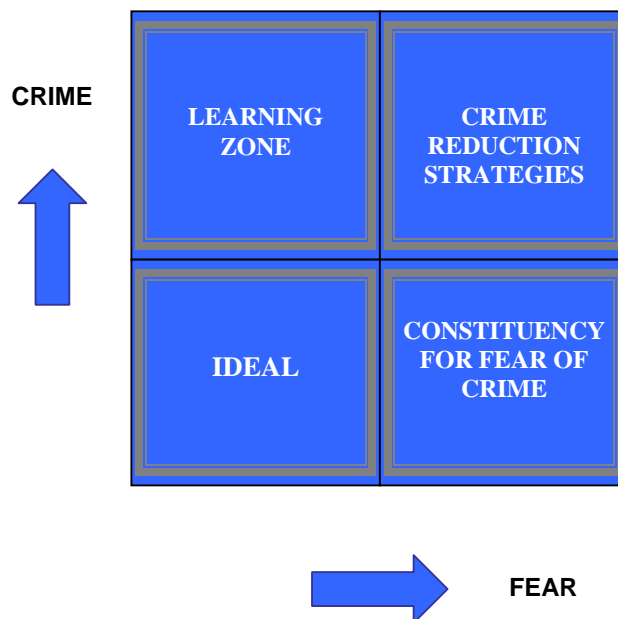
Neighbourhood Watch

- Identify residents interested in forming a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme and encourage the formation through discussion on potential benefits.
- Liaison with Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator from the Community Safety Department of Preston Police.

Tackling Fear of Crime

Tackling the fear of crime cannot be done in isolation. In order for any approach to be successful it needs to take in to account the many and varied social, environmental and personal factors that may be contributing to the fear of crime.

- **Figure 3.2 - Fear of Crime Matrix**



- **High Crime, High Fear**

- Crime reduction strategies – Targeting of individuals.
- Community Crime Prevention – Crime Prevention initiatives delivered to all dwellings.
- Regeneration of Neighbourhood – Crime Prevention/Safer by design survey to develop the ‘Masterplan’
- Repeat Victims – Adhere to repeat victimisation policy of Preston Police in terms of Gold, Silver and Bronze response once a repeat victim has been identified.
- Community Engagement/Reassurance – Community Beat Managers to provide a regular Police presence and maintain consultation with the community on all issues.

- Facilitate Empowerment – Support formation of a Residents Association and Focus Group to encourage a shared ownership of the problem and increased social cohesion.

Street Prostitution

- Operation Kerb and its successor 'Safer Sex Works' were multi agency problem solving P.O.P.s initiatives created to tackle street prostitution in Preston.
- The problems identified in the 'Hopwood Triangle' were specifically addressed as part of these initiatives.

Partner Driven Responses

Following liaison with the Police the following responses were developed with responsibility for delivery falling with the partners.

Preston City Council – Housing Department

In order to deliver the 'Masterplan', certain funding would be necessary to deliver what are essentially capital projects. With no existing funding available from the Council the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund was identified as the most suitable funding stream and a bid was submitted. An initial bid for £120000 was successful with a further £10000 pledged in recognition of the project potential. This funding was then used to deliver certain actions outlined in the 'Masterplan':

- Provision of external domestic lighting for all properties.
- Comprehensive CCTV system of 7 cameras.
- Demolition of lock-up garages.
- Secured access to low-rise flats on Hopwood Street – Intercom and passkey.
- Fencing/Railings throughout area restricting access to reduce use as a thoroughfare.

The central housing department were also responsible for the following responses:

- Facilitation of residents meetings leading to the formation of a Neighbourhood Forum and the 'Hopwood Residents Association'.
- Training and guidance for the Chairperson of the association.
- Following close liaison with residents, development and adoption of a local lettings policy to safeguard the selection process of potential tenants.
- Identification and eviction of problem tenants.

Preston City Council – Parks Department

Despite an absence of many years the Parks Department carried out a survey of the area to identify landscaping requirements to complement actions identified in the 'Masterplan'. These included:

- Tree Removal – Clearing obstructions and line of sight for provision of CCTV.
- Hedge Pruning – Reduction in height of hedges to facilitate improved natural surveillance.
- Landscaping – Removal of overgrown and neglected borders and hedgerow. Turfing of cleared areas and pruning of specimen trees.

Millbank Court

This is a 36 flat housing scheme for homeless persons and families, with a short-stay tenure of 6 months. Given the size of the scheme, the potentially problematic tenants, their families and associates and the quick turnover of tenants it is inevitable the problem behaviour will be evident. Working in partnership with New Leaf Housing (the scheme's operators) a number of improvements to working practices have been developed to minimise the impact of the scheme on the wider community. These include:

- 24-hour staffing of reception.
- Closure of external access to self-contained flat (No 36) and provision of internal door access via the scheme.
- Vetting of tenant visitors at first visit.
- Visitors to show recognised form of identification.
- No visitors allowed after 11pm.
- Overnight visitors to be registered.
- No concealment of face upon entry (e.g. hats, hooded tops).
- Residents access via intercom after 11.30pm.
- Facilitation of drugs awareness package developed by police to all staff.
- Regular grounds maintenance.
- Improvements to internal phone – Allowing more privacy so tenants will use this phone as opposed to kiosk outside on Edmund Street

The scheme has offered the hand of friendship by providing the hard drive for the CCTV recording system on the 'Hopwood Triangle' and is now the venue for all Hopwood Resident Association meetings.

Litter-Pick Days

A number of litter-picking days to maintain the grounds maintenance have been undertaken bringing together all the partner agencies and the residents. This showed a true community spirit developing in the area.

ASSESSMENT

Assessing Our Approach

This assessment is based on a project life of 2 years with all figures and outcomes having been calculated up to the end of 2003 and set against the initial project objectives.

The situation on the ground has not been static throughout the life of this project as certain responses were delivered at different times. Therefore, we have not been concerned with interim figures and have waited until the responses have been delivered and properties re-occupied.

Table 4.1 - Crime

YEAR	HOPWOOD						TOTAL
	BIAD	AUTO	VIOLENT	DAMAGE	THEFT	DRUGS	
2001	7	5	6	15	2	5	40
2003	5	1	7	4	0	2	19

- All reported crime - **53% reduction.**
- Damage offences - **73% reduction.**
- Drugs offences - **60% reduction.**
- Burglary offences - **28% reduction.**
- Auto crime offences - **80% reduction.**
- Robbery offences - too small to make comparisons (2 offences in 2003).

Figure 4.1

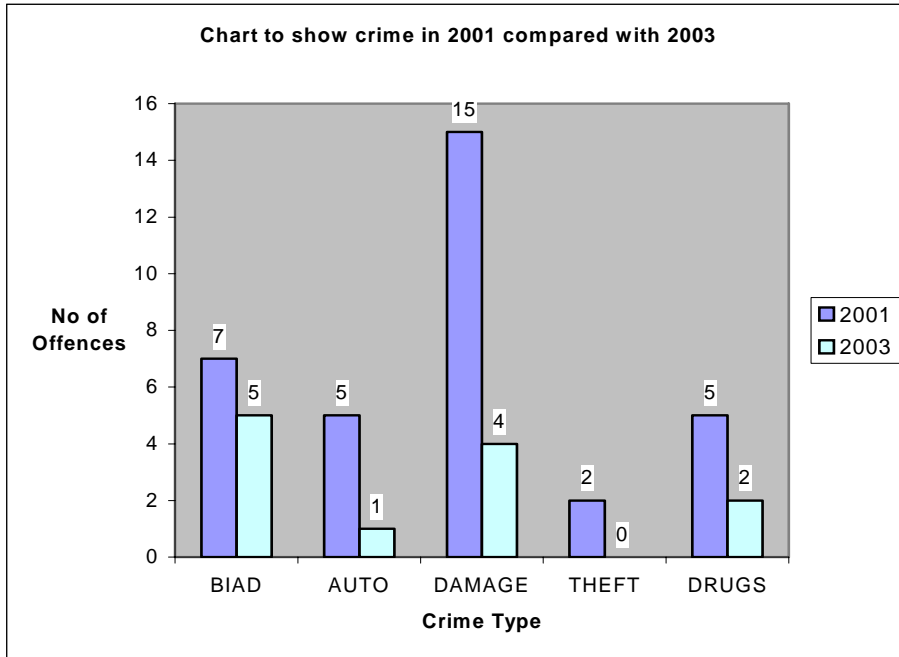


Table 4.2 - Police Calls to Service

YEAR	HOPWOOD	MILLBANK	TOTAL	MILLBANK %
2001	429	162	591	27.4
2003	264	209	473	44.1

- All calls to the 'Hopwood Triangle' area **down 38%**.
- Total calls to the area including Millbank Court **down 19.96%**.
- Cost saving to police of £3193 per annum against a total cost of £5200 per annum (*based on minimum cost calculation of £38.70 per officer per hour assuming on average half hour per incident and one officer attending*).

Cost adjusted per dwelling shows a saving of £82 per dwelling

- **2001 per dwelling £139**
- **2003 per dwelling £57**

It is important to note occupancy levels have increased over this period with the 30 void properties now occupied.

Viewed against occupancy levels:

- **All Crime Down 68%**
- **2001 66% chance per dwelling of being victim of crime**
- **2003 21% chance per dwelling of being victim of crime**
- **Calls to Service Down 59%**

Table 4.3 - Arrests

YEAR	HOPWOOD	MILLBANK	TOTAL	MILLBANK %
2001	19	6	25	24
2002	27	21	48	43.7
2003	24	28	52	53.8

- As a result of the targeting of problem tenants and visitors to the area there naturally followed an increase in police enforcement in this location.
- The targeting of problem tenants and visitors to the area assisted in tackling the problem of drug dealing. Working in close liaison with the Nimrod department ensured any intelligence in relation to drug dealing was rigorously investigated and enforced.
- Increased police enforcement activity can be viewed as a positive result following on from a greater willingness from the community to report crime and criminal activity. Furthermore the evidence of positive action by the police coupled with crime reduction reassures communities their concerns are taken seriously.

Table 4.4 - Repeat Victimization

2003	BIAD	AUTO	VIOLENT	DAMAGE	THEFT	TOTALS
13 Newton St	1	0	0	1	0	2
16 Newton St	1	0	0	1	0	2
TOTALS	2	0	0	2	0	4

- 2 of the 91 dwellings identified as repeat victims. 2% against occupancy levels.

Street Prostitution

There have been no complaints from the Hopwood community about the activities of street prostitutes during 2003. Officers are confident that at this time street prostitution has been eradicated from this residential area. Measures to monitor and preserve this situation are in place. 'Safer Sex Works' has seen significant progress made to reduce the problem of street prostitution throughout the city.

- Reduction of active street prostitutes from a high of 70 in 2001 to 20 at the present time.
- Reduction of complaints involving street prostitutes from 249 in 2001 to 20 in 2003.

Housing – Tenancy Issues

- 100% occupancy of available housing. (Occupation of voids generating approximately £1300 per week as opposed to costing that amount unoccupied).
- Local lettings policy in place to select suitable tenants.
- Modest repairs to damaged properties prior to re-letting funded by housing department.
- Identification and eviction of all original problem tenants.
- Reporting procedures in place to identify any future problem tenants and ensure prompt action to remedy problem or pursue eviction.
- Probationary period for all new tenants.

Environmental Improvements

- All dwellings fitted with external lighting.
- Damaged lighting repaired
- Lock-up garages demolished.
- Improved natural surveillance.
- CCTV – Area fully covered and recorded with 7 new cameras and existing network at Millbank Court.

- Landscaping, hedge trimming and tree removal carried out.
- Installation of intercom and pass key security door system on low-rise flats.
- Installation of high quality 6-foot tall galvanised iron railings.
 - Complete securing of garden space around low-rise flats on Hopwood Street.
 - Reduction of number of points of access into the area.

Public Reassurance

- Establishment of Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.
- Creation of Hopwood Residents Association and Focus Group.
- Reinstatement of council services – Grounds maintenance and Caretaker.
- Improved relations with Millbank Court and greater understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
 - Monitoring and recording of CCTV system housed at Millbank Court.
 - All resident association meetings now held at Millbank Court.
 - Improvements in procedures and internal phone have meant Millbank Court is no longer a focal point for problematic behaviour.

Conclusion

Over a project life of 2 years the 'Hopwood Triangle' has exceeded all expectations and met all project objectives. For modest initial capital funding, savings in policing costs and the securing of Council rental income has been delivered.

The neighbourhood has a dramatically improved sense of community and a greater tolerance and understanding of its neighbours at Millbank Court.

Residents have seen significant reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour as well as physical improvements to their living environment. Through participation in the Residents Association and Neighbourhood Forums they are now empowered to preserve the cohesive and increasingly safe neighbourhood in which they live.