

Tilley Award 2005

Application form

The following form must be completed in full. Failure to do so will result in disqualification from the competition.

Please send completed application forms to Tricia Perkins at patricia.perkins@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

All entries must be received by noon on the 29 April 2005. Entries received after that date will not be accepted under any circumstances. Any queries on the application process should be directed to Tricia Perkins on 0207 035 0262.

1. Details of application

Title of the project :
Operation Easygoing

Name of force/agency/CDRP:
Lancashire Constabulary

Name of one contact person with position/rank (this should be one of the authors):
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Name of endorsing senior representatives(s) :
Julia Hodson

Position and rank of endorsing senior representatives(s):
Acting Deputy Chief Constable

Full address of endorsing senior representatives(s):
**Lancashire Constabulary Headquarters
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2. Summary of application

Feuding neighbours on Glynn Street/Cornwall Place, manifested from the locality, problems centering on public footpaths, parking facilities, inappropriate use of CCTV, youths and certainly following a redevelopment on Cornwall Place providing purpose built bungalows, in turn causing animosity with particular households. Incivilities began with misuse of Police and Partner Agencies whereby counter allegations and malicious reports were received. The residents displayed interpersonal conflicts, including fights, assaults, name calling etc.

During the period of 1st March 2003 to 31st January 2005 there were 126 incidents reported, of which 24 were crimes (19%) these were captured on CRS, however numerous other incidents were reported directly to CBMs and Community Wardens. The residents at 1 Cornwall Place telephoned the Police 23 times and residents of 7 Glynn Street 19 times. Information from CRS shows officers have spent approximately 29 hours responding to incidents and crimes further investigation time, equating to £522.00 in wages and in the damage cost to the complainants, over a £1000.00. A measured increase in incidents were noted at 3, 5, 7 Glynn Street and 1 Cornwall Place peaking in March and May 2004. During the summer incidents died down rising again in September 2004. With information provided by Police and partners it became apparent a thorough understanding of the root cause was essential to implementing a long-term solution.

A JAG meeting was arranged whereby information was shared and progression of actions agreed i.e. check tenancy agreements; provide improvements to the area, mediation, and legal implications. Police Officers, Community Wardens and Community Beat Managers were deployed for reassurance. The residents were invited to individual meetings with the JAG and given the opportunity to sign an ABC, precursory to any ASBO proceedings.

Over a period of time feedback from all agencies shows that the overall problems have ceased, harmony has been restored; improvements have been made to residents' properties and the use of additional resources stood down. The use of mediation in the early stages proved to be ineffective as residents refused to cooperate and communicate with each other. The tactics of issuing ABCs was effective in that the residents, even though some refused to sign were under no illusion that ongoing incidents would not be tolerated and the fear of an ASBO served the intended purpose. Accrington JAG has now been implemented as best practise and a similar approach will definitely be used on other problem neighbourhoods in the area.

3. Description of project

Accrington JAG was implemented in July 2004 as a result of residents on two streets in Church causing major problems. The streets involved are adjacent to each other, one side Glynn Street, mainly Local Authority Housing and some privately owned, all of which have been in situ for several years.

Cornwall Place opposite relatively new bungalows, built on land formally used as parking for Glynn Street residents. The local children prior to the bungalows used this land for recreational purposes.

What began as complaints of juvenile nuisance, and parking issues in January 2004, escalated to a feud between six households within the area up until (lastcall) 2004.

This resulted in residents being assaulted, harassed, numerous reports of criminal damage, bullying at school, malicious telephone calls and public order offences.

During a twelve-month period, problems escalated, and every avenue was sought by Police as how to resolve the disputes. Following consultation with other agencies it came to light that they too were experiencing major problems with some residents. Accrington JAG was formed in July 2004, led by the CBM; whereby all agencies were invited to a case conference enabling them to become one power and together work towards the same objective of restoring community harmony.

At the meeting it became clear that some residents had been playing one agency against another, and some were not aware of the full facts. Accrington JAG agreed that all information should be collated, held centrally with the CBM, and should anything new come to light be updated. JAG Members shared information and decided on actions to progress, deadlines were set for the next meeting whereby it had been agreed that residents involved and their families would be invited.

During a twelve-month period with a multi-agency approach the problems at Glynn Street and Cornwall Place have reduced by (%), complaints from residents to other JAG members have stopped.

Following the initiative other residents in the area who were not directly involved have benefited from a much more tranquil neighbourhood, improvements to their properties i.e. gates and fencing as well as a reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour.

Feedback from all members of Accrington JAG has proved that a multi agency approach has worked with what was a long-term neighbourhood dispute that had soared, staff working hours increased, extra police resources had to be implemented and a lesson learned that this approach could be adopted as 'best practise'.

Accrington is a small industrial town in the Borough of Hyndburn, East Lancashire with a population of around 35,000.

The Borough of Hyndburn is divided into up into eight Ward Areas, Oswaldtwistle, Church, Spring Hill, Peel, Huncoat, Altham, Woodnook, Barnfield and Baxenden. Out of the wards mentioned four have been granted a Neighbourhood Renewal Fund as they have been described as being in the top 10% of the most deprived areas in the country.

Glynn Street and Cornwall Place are in the Church Ward of the town. The resident population of Church is approximately 5,264.

46% of the residents in Church area are currently unemployed, compared to the rest of the country at 60% this is relatively high and adds to the deprivation in the area, which some parts are particularly run down.

The locality of Glynn Street and Cornwall Place is a combination of new purpose built bungalows and former local authority terraced properties, some of which are now privately owned. The streets are adjacent to each other, however there is no through road, and the area between the two streets is used for parking, which in turn causes congestion.

The bungalows on Cornwall Place have been built on the land of former council garages by a private investor called Space New Living and are all inhabited by elderly or disabled residents. These houses have large front gardens with driveways, which are partially fenced. In between

Prior to the development of the bungalows the land was used by residents of Glynn Street for parking, and recreational purposes.

The houses on Glynn Street are a block of four terraced, with small gardens to the front, and are in an elevated position over looking Cornwall Place. They do not have off road parking.

Ten Area Beat Officers on response, a Community Beat Manager and two Hyndburn Borough Council Community Wardens, police the area of Church encompassing Glynn Street and Cornwall Place.

Problems

In January 2004, Hyndburn Community Wardens received a complaint from one resident of Cornwall Place. This was in respect to youths playing football outside his address, and residents of Glynn Street parking on what he believed to be land belonging to Space New Living. At this point the Community Wardens pass information to myself as the Community Beat Manager.

In February 2004 the same resident subsequently erected a CCTV camera outside his property in order to attempt to evidence the juvenile nuisance for Space New Living, along with photographing the youths. This in turn antagonised the residents of Glynn Street some of whom were the parents of the alleged youths, resulting in verbal altercations between residents.

March 2004 following numerous calls to the Police, I carried out reassurance visits to the resident involved in order to gain more information. Following my visit counter allegation calls were received by the Police from residents of Glynn Street stating that the resident at Cornwall Place was using his CCTV and camera in an inappropriate manner and filming their children.

From what began as a relatively low level neighbourhood disputes had in a matter of months escalated to a series of events including residents fighting, children bullying one another at school, damage to property, invasion of privacy, harassment, malicious telephone calls, name calling, public order offences. The weekly number of logs and crimes reported were increasing, and valuable police resources were being exhausted.

Residents began to log their own incidents which could be seen as petty childish behaviour these incident although not on Police logs were numerous and collated as evidence. E.g. Name calling, Mr X stared at me when I walked passed, Mrs X followed me into a shop in the Town Centre etc...

In order to tackle the resident problems the following steps had been instigated however despite our efforts had not been 100% successful in calming the situation.

- ❖ Individual visits by Police, Community Wardens and Landlords the residents' homes
- ❖ Mediation by 'SMILE' an independent group
- ❖ Letter drop to all residents explaining that all incidents should be logged if experiencing anti-social behaviour
- ❖ Incident logging forms were distributed
- ❖ Statements obtained from residents experiencing anti-social behaviour
- ❖ Harassment Warnings issued to offending residents
- ❖ Walk rounds with Community Leaders to make them aware of the issues
- ❖ Arrests made following breach of harassment warnings and further offences having been committed
- ❖ One to one with resident following a complaint against police
- ❖ Anti-social behaviour posters placed in the area
- ❖ Covert surveillance
- ❖ Reassurance patrols
- ❖ Multi Agency meeting at Moorhead School
- ❖ Positive activities for children arrange
- ❖ No ball game signs erected
- ❖ Media coverage in local paper for reassurance

It was then I decided that a solution needed to be found and Accrington JAG was formed.

Response

Following the failure of previous interventions there was a steady and continued increase in the number and severity of incidents, so in July 2004 I organised a case conference and invited all agencies who had been involved with the residents disputes; included were Smile Mediation, Space New Living, Hyndburn Borough Council, Lancashire Constabulary Legal Department

At the case conference videos of evidence were shown that had been collated by residents and each agency was given the opportunity to update everyone with the facts that they were in possession of in various forms.

Each agency gave a brief overview of the problem residents and exchanged information. It was general consensus that each family would be addressed individually and sanctions imposed for their specific behaviour, this would determine the terms of the Acceptable Behaviour Contract. It was agreed that all members of the involved residents households would be included in the terms of the ABC, this way then all parties were fully aware that any type of anti social behaviour would not be tolerated even if by a third party.

It was discussed that the best way to serve the ABC and have the maximum impact would be to invite each family to a meeting where a no nonsense approach would be adopted. Evidence would not be discussed and it would be explained that the same approach was to be taken with everyone involved and that they were not being victimised. They would also be given the opportunity to sign the ABC, which was fully explained as not being a legally binding contract, but more of a good will gesture on their behalf, it did in no way implicate that they had in the past taken part in any of the conduct listed. However the terms of the ABC, would not be tolerated in the future, any breach of the ABC would contribute to evidence for an Anti-social Behaviour Order.

All residents were to be sent a letter recorded delivery to invite them to attend their meeting, which would be held on neutral ground at a local conference facility.

Following the JAG meeting the actions listed below were allocated to be progressed.

- ❖ Hyndburn Borough Council to check the tenancy agreements for their clients
- ❖ Lancashire Constabulary to coordinate responses from partner agencies for the input of their requirements to be included in the resident letter prior to individual meetings.
- ❖ Lancashire Constabulary to liaise with Hyndburn Borough Council and Data Protection regarding the current legislation for CCTV systems.
- ❖ PC Evans to collate evidence, which will stand scrutiny for ASBO applications
- ❖ PC Evans to liaise with CPS to get advice in relation to offences that had been committed and the strength of evidence.
- ❖ PC Evans to visit Sue McLane regarding wording of ABC and ASBO contracts to ensure they are legal, proportionate and ethical.
- ❖ Space New Living to arrange for gates to be installed on driveways of residents on Cornwall Place.
- ❖ Space New Living to confirm arrangements for parking area and use by resident of Glynn Street and to address the issue of gates being erected on their tenants' driveways.

Outcome

On 12th August 2004 all residents involved in the dispute were sent a letter explaining that the case conference had taken place and that they all were to be invited to individual meetings.

On 23rd August all invitations were sent out to residents inviting them to their meetings.

Each family was placed in front of the joint agency group where I explained why the meeting had been called and the process and future actions that were to be imposed.

The residents were encouraged to sign Acceptable Behaviour Contracts that would also formally document their support for the process and aid towards end of this neighbourhood dispute.

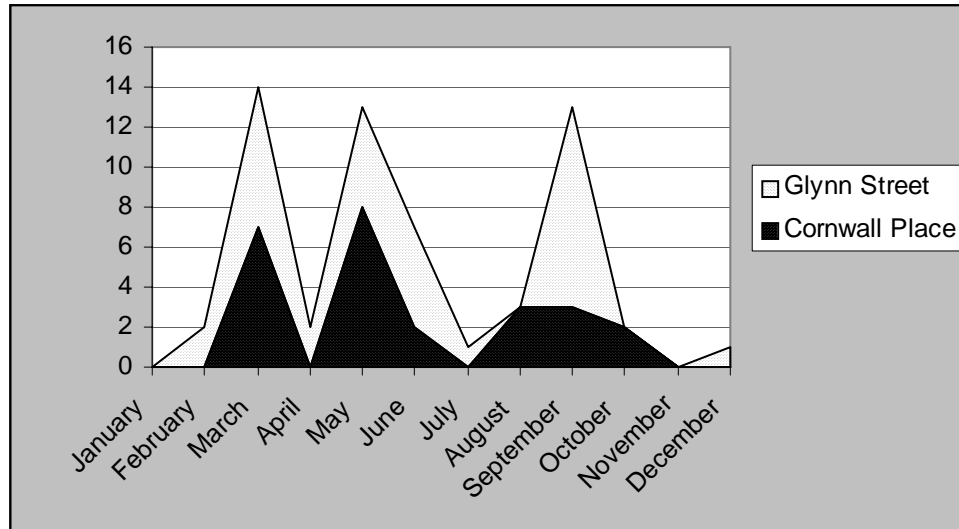
A number of residents were in agreement that the behaviour in these contracts was unacceptable and others did not feel they were in a position to agree to the actions without seeking legal advice, which we explain was understandable.

Some of the residents were happy that all agencies had become involved and glad that they were beginning to see a conclusion. Most of them wanted to live in unison and they did not see themselves as part of the problem, and could not admit to their own failings or involvement.

Summary Analysis

The warning of an Anti-Social behaviour order to all members of the households had the desired effect of calming the situation, and the fact that the residents knew that all the agencies were working together and sharing information just confirmed to them that we meant business!

January 2005 there have been no complaints from the residents of Glynn Street and Cornwall Place relating to the original neighbourhood disputes. The last recorded call was in November 2004 and to present date there have been none since.



Number of calls received by Communications from January 04 to January 05

Although it appears from the above graph that the calls increased during August and September the majority of calls escalated following the individual meetings as residents felt that they needed to clear their own names and report the alleged wrong doings of their neighbours.

The Multi Agency Approach.

The multi agency approach proved to be a formidable force of working together enabling the sharing of information. The JAG enabled us to break the reactive cycle and get a much clearer picture of the individuals involved and the nature of the problems.

It was an excellent safeguard against critical incidents in which all agencies had done everything possible, all of which was documented.

The Way Forward

Now that the network of contacts has been established a further Hyndburn JAG can be brought together with representation by agencies who have a stakehold. The approach adopted has been put forward as best practice for similar incidents that have occurred.

Key Statements

Kim Smith, Neighbourhood Housing Manager - During the course of this nuisance case nine officers from the Housing Department in various capacities were involved in the dispute, spending an estimated fifty hours of time, interviewing, dealing with correspondence, meetings and consultations. During this period twenty letters were received and forty-nine telephone calls logged....

Maria Quinn, Community Warden – what is clear is that the scale of this dispute could only be tackled effectively using multi-agency approach...The Wardens have calculated they have spent in excess of ninety-six hours dealing with these individuals.

In terms of time, stress, manpower and sheer volume and frequency of complaints this is the worst case of nuisance,/neighbour dispute that we have had to deal with...