

Title of the project: **Mr T, Problem Tenant**

Name of force/agency/CDRP/CSP: **Cleveland Police STWB Neighbourhood Police Team**

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Summary of application

Mr T, problem tenant, Stockton-on-Tees

This summary outlines an initiative by Stockton Neighbourhood Police Team Ward Officers to address problems resulting from the move of a problem tenant into their area.

Mr T, aged 44 years, is a tenant of Tristar Homes and was housed in Norton South ward in March 2005 following an unsustainable tenancy in Billingham where he had lived since July 2000 causing considerable problems for local residents and concierge staff.

Whilst he was living in Billingham, Tristar had begun eviction proceedings against him but decided that moving him was preferable due to his social needs. It is now felt that this move was made without proper regard to his vulnerability and needs.

He served in the first Gulf War in 1991 and, since returning, had been under the care of consultant psychiatrists claiming to be suffering from post traumatic stress disorder as a consequence of his military service and there were also issues with his alcohol dependence and behaviour resulting from it.

He soon came to the attention of Stockton Police following numerous complaints by neighbours and other members of the public. The man himself became a persistent caller claiming he was a victim of anti social behaviour and crime. The resulting negative impact on the community in terms of criminal activity and anti social behaviour was substantial.

Research into the problem checking Intergraph messages, crimes recording and liaison with officers and members of the community showed the magnitude of the problem.

It was decided that a solution could not be found working in isolation so a "Problem Oriented Partnership" working approach was adopted, engaging with other agencies and the matter was registered as a POP in July 2006.

Partner agencies involved were

- Stockton Borough Council.
- Tristar Housing
- NHS Trust Mental Health
- Consultant psychiatrists
- Addictive Behaviour Services
- STONHAM Housing

Results have been dramatic with a significant reduction in complaints, the man is engaging with support workers and he and the community are happier.

Unanimous agreement was reached in March 2007 that his best interests lay with a move back to Billingham with support measures in place to this time give him a chance of being able to fulfil his tenancy obligations.

Work is ongoing to ensure he does not fail in these obligations once his move back to Billingham is completed.

Description of project

To protect the identity of persons involved in this operation, the tenant will be referred to as Mr T

Mr T - Problem Tenant, Stockton-on-Tees

Introduction / Background

Mr T, aged 44 years became a tenant of Tristar Homes in July 2000. Tristar is a company that manages Stockton-Borough Council's housing stock.

He was housed in a flat situated in Billingham, the neighbouring sub-district, in a multi storey block which was supervised on a 24 hour basis by Concierge Security Staff.

His behaviour towards concierge staff and residents gave cause for concern from the outset. He exhibited aggressive behaviour, used foul and abusive language and was regularly extremely drunk, playing loud music through the night and prowling the corridors in the block.

Numerous complaints and incidents were logged with Tristar through the concierge service, police became involved with Mr T being arrested and charged on more than one occasion.

He was creating similar problems for staff and tenants in an adjacent block of flats and was prohibited from entering the block in September 2003. He failed to comply with the prohibition, continuing to harass security staff both at work and at their home addresses. Following an assault on a member of staff in November 2004 he was given a 3 year restraining order in February 2005.

He received several warnings from Tristar in respect of his behaviour which he ignored. A Notice of Seeking Possession was issued in July 2004 in respect of breach of his tenancy obligations. This too had no impact with Mr T continuing in the same vein.

After due consideration Tristar decided that it would be preferable to move him as opposed to evicting him. This decision was based on his mental state and social needs; accordingly he began his tenancy in Stockton on 7th March 2005. There appears to be no specific reason why this location was chosen.

SCANNING

He was rehoused in Stockton on 7th March 2005 in an area that was already registered as a POP between 1st January 2004 and 2nd February 2006. This other POP area comprised 5 streets containing approximately 170 houses/flats, with Mr T's new address being in one of those five streets.

In the 5 street POP area during the 14 month period prior to Mr T taking up residence in Street 2, there were 414 calls to police that included 67 calls to his street as shown in Figure 1.

Location	Total
Street 1	15
Street 2	67
Street 3	39
Street 4	16
Street 5	277
Grand Total	414

Fig 1

In the 11 months after he moved in until the 5 street POP was closed there were 789 calls with 210 to his street as shown in Fig 2.

Location	Total
Street 1	28
Street 2	210
Street 3	102
Street 4	16
Street 5	433
Grand Total	789

Fig 2

Street 2 contains 30 flats in comprising 17.5% of the housing in the 5 street estate. Of the 210 calls to Street 2, 50 calls were made by people reporting matters relating to Mr T and a further 84 made by Mr T himself. Calls to Street 2 accounted for 27% of all calls to the estate (210) and Mr T himself accounted for 17% of all calls to the estate (134).

The immediate area encompassing the 5 streets is the most deprived part of this area and the ward generally. The majority of houses and flats are local authority owned and the area suffers from above average levels of unemployment.

National Index of Multiple Deprivation figures produced in 2004 placed the Ward 610th out of 7932 wards in terms of deprivation, (1 being the most deprived).

The National Asylum Support Service houses roughly 50% of Stockton Borough's total of approximately 350 asylum seekers in the 5 streets area. The people placed in these houses form a vulnerable mixed group that have, in the past, been the victims of racially motivated incidents (RMI's). It was the number of RMI's, unacceptable levels of antisocial behaviour and criminal activity in this area that was the reason for the 5 Streets POP being activated.

There were a number of intelligence reports referring to Mr T's mental health and alcohol related issues and also indicated that he approached females, staring at them and trying to engage them in conversation. He would frequent local business premises when drunk and display abusive behaviour to female staff. He was abusive to staff at his doctor's surgery on more than one occasion when he was refused prescriptions. He wandered around when drunk being abusive to women and asylum seekers, in the early hours trying door handles at other properties.

His neighbours were suffering with noise nuisance because he was playing loud music. He was aggressive and intimidating, banging on doors and displayed a threatening demeanour towards people when confronted by them in the community.

He had been assaulted on a number of occasions by groups of youths but although he did have visible injuries to support these claims, it was difficult to gather evidence of sufficient quality to follow up his complaints due to his elaborating on or creating his own version of events.

Enquiries in the community showed that local people were losing patience with him. Ward officers were of the opinion that some of the incidences of damage to his flat and assaults on him were in retaliation to his behaviour. He was reported as allowing youths into his flat who then because of his abusive behaviour assaulted him and caused damage.

In July 2005 Mr T had been arrested under section 136 of the Mental Health Act following going into a shop shouting about "God" and "Thor". The following month he was walking up and down the estate shouting to people that he was the nephew of "Helen of Troy" at which time he was also abusive to a woman with her two children.

ANALYSIS

Mr T, patently a problem himself, had been moved into an area already suffering major problems.

With his mental and alcohol related problems allied to his past conduct in Billingham, he was going to find it extremely difficult to integrate into the community without robust support measures which were not in place at the beginning of his tenancy.

On speaking to him on numerous occasions, police officers felt that he did have serious mental health issues, was an alcoholic and was causing some of the damage himself as he wished to return to live in Billingham. Mr T had made several requests for a housing transfer, Tristar were reluctant to grant this and face the same scenario in a third location. His parents lived in Billingham but would not consider him living at their address.

The conclusion was that he was responsible for most of his problems and as such was in need of help, a proactive as well as reactive approach was needed.

Police were of the opinion that he was now a target irrespective of whether or not he had done anything to provoke a situation; he had become a natural target.

He was a vulnerable person living in a neighbourhood with a high degree of intolerance. It was felt that, if he were to remain at his address, the situation would deteriorate and a move to more appropriate supported housing was considered preferable by police.

Tristar became increasingly concerned as history was repeating itself. Mr T, as in Billingham, was clearly failing to sustain his tenancy in Stockton. They felt that tenancy enforcement action should be a consideration given the state of his flat, his unacceptable behaviour and aggressiveness towards staff. However as there were issues of vulnerability it was felt that this would be a difficult option, indeed pointless as he would no doubt be picked up as homeless if proceedings were ever implemented.

Officers who were aware of his activities, and who had gotten to know him well realised that they were dealing with a difficult to reach individual struggling to cope in an environment unsuitable for him.

Without prompt action matters could only worsen, the fear was that he would either cause someone harm or suffer serious harm himself.

RESPONSE

The situation could only be dealt with if approached by a number of partner agencies and a several actions were undertaken.

- Enlist the help of other departments within Stockton Police.
- Try to identify those responsible for causing damage to Mr T's flat. CCTV would be requested to monitor the front and back of his flat whenever possible.
- Try to identify those responsible for assaulting him.
- Intensively monitor Mr T, making regular visits in an attempt to engage with him, influence his behaviour and to encourage improvement.
- Increased patrols/presence in the area.
- Liaise with his parents to see if they could have any influence on his behaviour.

During July 2006 police began visiting him on a regular basis. It was explained that they wanted to work with him to try and get him moved. He was advised that they would be working with other agencies to try and achieve this and informed him that it would only be possible if he came on board and cooperated fully. It was also stressed that if things did not improve that he could face eviction proceedings.

He agreed and signed an authorisation permitting Stockton Borough Council and Tristar Homes Limited to contact other agencies to obtain any information relevant to his housing application, namely Police, Social Services, Doctor and Drug and Alcohol Service.

His parents were contacted and spoken to at his flat. They began regular visits checking on his welfare, ensuring he had food and assisting with housekeeping. His mother was more supportive than his father who blamed his son's problems on alcohol abuse.

On 9th August a strategy meeting was held with partners, in attendance:

- Cleveland Police - Ward and Mental Health Liaison Officers
- Tristar Homes - Housing Services Team Leader and Allocations Officer
- NHS Trust - Consultant Psychiatrist and Specialist Mental Health Nurse

Tristar reaffirmed their reluctance to rehouse him as it would merely move the problem and the Allocations Officer stated that there was nowhere suitable for him. Tristar said they needed to know whether he had a specific mental illness or if his problems were in fact all drink related.

His consultant psychiatrist informed the group that he did have a mental health problem and had been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The question was the severity of his mental state and whether any action could be taken.

Mr T himself was happy to support his application for re-housing, on medical grounds, believing that more suitable accommodation would benefit his mental state and reduce the risk of a serious relapse.

Police advised the meeting that when he was sober, Mr T was fully coherent, was able to enter into intelligent conversation and was fully aware of the problems he caused when drunk. He claimed to hide in the bottle as he was desperate to move and understood that his medication for depression taken alongside alcohol was not helping.

The Strategy Meeting made the following recommendations.

Police and mental health nurse to visit Mr T the following day and try to persuade him to attend North Tees General Hospital as a voluntary in-patient for assessment and rehabilitation. undertake this. If he would not attend voluntarily then consider making him attend for an assessment under the Mental Health Act due to risk to himself and others.

- Ensure that Tristar allocations be kept up to date with progress following his admission.
- Arrange a further strategy meeting prior to his discharge
- Identify a care coordinator for him.

He agreed to attend as a voluntarily in-patient for a stay of two weeks. This was set by the hospital as a minimum time required for him to dry out so he could be properly assessed whilst sober. He was released at the end of this period and was deemed not to be suffering with any mental health issues although he did become paranoid under the influence of alcohol.

Whilst he was in hospital, no damage was reported to his flat and the area was generally quiet. Police officers visited him at home after he was discharged from hospital and advised of the need for him to stay on board as it appeared his dependence on alcohol was the cause of his problems. He was also told that both police and Tristar would be taking a firmer stance in future. He agreed to comply with all requirements regarding his conduct.

Over the next few weeks both he and his home were targeted on several occasions without provocation, strengthening police belief that he was now a target simply because he was there. Stockton Security Centre was asked to monitor the property with CCTV whenever possible.

The area was given extra attention by police on foot and mobile patrol and local youths suspected to be involved in causing damage were spoken to and warned that firm action would be taken against anyone caught committing offences.

Police continued their dialogue with Tristar attempting to persuade them to have him rehoused, calling for a further review meeting scheduled for 17th October 2006.

Multi Agency Meeting 17th October 2006

Partners attending

- Cleveland Police - Ward Officers
- Stockton Borough Council - Housing Options Officers
- Tristar Homes - Team Leaders and Allocations Officer
- Addictive Behaviour Services - ABS Support Worker

The Housing Options Officers told the meeting that they had accepted a duty to rehouse Mr T on the grounds of homelessness. They wished to discuss client support needs and suitable areas within the Borough. They had been informed by the Mental Health Team that he had been discharged from their services after a recent assessment (two weeks in August) in which he was found to have no mental issues when abstaining from alcohol.

Tristar expressed concern as Mr T had previously been diagnosed with mental health issues, which was the reason that legal proceedings had not been taken against him in his current tenancy. A suggestion that Tristar's Anti Social Behaviour Officer could provide support was turned down as their role was of an enforcement nature. Tristar were still reluctant to give their backing to a move and would be happier if he were moved into a floating support property prior to being offered another introductory tenancy. This would necessitate bringing a housing support company on board; STONHAM was suggested being the largest provider of housing care in England and Wales.

Police expressed their surprise that nobody from the Mental Health Team had attended, suggested another assessment and advised that a move without robust support measures in place was destined to fail. It was further stated that the longer he remained in his present address there was more risk of further disruption. Police officers were concerned that Mr T would become disillusioned the longer affairs dragged on and might stop engaging with them and said they would speak with STONHAM if it would assist.

ABS who had previous contact with Mr T advised that they would take on the case but would recommend a male support worker. They also stated that they disagreed with the Mental Health Team's decision.

The following recommendations were made:

- A further mental health assessment would be requested

- The case was to be referred to STONHAM for support in a floating support property.
- The Tristar Team Leader would visit Mr T at his home with police in attendance.
- A further meeting would be scheduled on 14th November 2006 to review progress.

Following from the recommendations of that meeting a mental health assessment was arranged for 3rd January 2007.

STONHAM were approached and agreed in principle to support the case when a place became available, as they only had funding for four alcohol abuse cases.

Totally unexpectedly, Housing Options cancelled the meeting scheduled for 14th November and instructed Tristar to rehouse Mr T at a Tristar property in Stockton.

Tristar objected strongly as there had been no consultation and Housing Options had based their decision on property availability as opposed to suitability. Tristar were of the opinion that the property was not suitable as there was a high density of asylum seekers at Elm House and Mr T had caused problems for asylum seekers in the 5 streets area. They consulted with police and STONHAM who agreed with Tristar's conclusions.

On 20th November STONHAM confirmed that they were putting support in place for Mr T and would be undertaking sessions with him at his home. Based on this, Housing Options decided to ;

- Offer the Tristar property to another applicant
- Defer Mr T's application
- Allow STONHAM to work with Mr T for a few sessions and then review further
- The Mental Health Team confirmed that another assessment had been arranged for Mr T on 3rd January 2007
- The next partnership meeting was scheduled for February/March 2007

Police visited Mr T, explaining the progress that had been made stressing more than ever that he remain on board staying both sober and out of trouble. Several visits were made during December 2006 and Mr T was true to his word. There was only one call received during this period, he remained sober and kept his flat clean and tidy, and he was engaging fully with STONHAM and his ABS support worker.

Unfortunately he slipped back over the Christmas 2006 period. He was assaulted just prior to Christmas, receiving treatment at hospital for hand and jaw injuries but did not report the incident until early in the new year. His reaction to the assault was to revert back to heavy drinking as a result of which he was unable to give any credible version of events or description of suspects. To compound matters, his assessment scheduled for that day had been cancelled.

Officers visited him on 3rd January 2007 and expressed their disappointment at the state both he and the flat were in, advising that all the work and progress to date was in danger of being undone.

Contact was made with partner agencies during January 2007 expressing concern at the deteriorating situation and the lack of progress identifying a suitable property for Mr T and a meeting was requested at the earliest opportunity.

A Multi Agency Meeting was held on 9th March 2007 attended by:

- Cleveland Police

- Stockton Borough Council
- Tristar Homes
- STONHAM
- ABS

Much of the ground covered at previous meetings was gone over again. Police advised they were having difficulty with Mr T and his drinking and behaviour were giving cause for concern. They reaffirmed, as at previous meetings, that he should never have been placed in his present address in the first place and SBC Housing Options confirmed they agreed fully with this belief.

STONHAM and ABS both reported having difficulty engaging with Mr T in his current condition.

A unanimous decision was reached that he should be moved back to Billingham. Tristar would look at suitable properties as a matter of urgency, Mr T would be informed that conditions would apply that he must continue working with both STONHAM and ABS and cooperate with the Mental Health Team. Failure to do so would affect his tenancy. Essentially he was to be given one last chance.

Tristar were to keep partners up to date with progress on where and when he would be moved.

Police visited him on 10th March 2007, advising him of the outcome of the meeting and explaining the importance of his full cooperation. He understood the implications, realising that if he failed in his tenancy there would be very few options left.

ASSESSMENT

In the 15 month period after Mr T moved into Danby Court and before his POP became active, there were 79 calls to the street connected to him. He made 57 of the calls himself and a further 22 were made about him by his neighbours and other members of the public. Calls began during the second month of his tenancy. As shown in Fig 3.

CALENDER MONTH	2005							2006					Grand Total
	May	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	
Calls about Mr T while living in Stockton before the POP was introduced	2	1	6	0	2	1	3	2	1	2	1	1	22
Calls made by Mr T while living in Stockton before the POP was introduced	0	1	1	2	5	2	2	11	14	7	7	5	57
Total number of calls	2	2	7	2	7	3	5	13	15	9	8	6	79

Fig 3.

During the 8 months after the POP was activated there were a total of 55 calls with 28 being made by other people about Mr T and he made a further 27 calls himself as shown in Fig 4.

CALENDER MONTH	2006						2007		Grand Total
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	
Calls made about Mr T since the POP was activated	5	4	7	4	3	1	2	2	28
Calls made by Mr T since the POP was activated	8	4	10	0	1	0	0	4	27
Total number of calls	13	8	17	4	4	1	2	6	55

Fig 4

Since the POP was registered in July 2006 and the first multi agency meeting was held in August 2006, calls have significantly reduced as a direct result of intensive monitoring by ward officers and the partnership approach to the problem.

While the charts in Figs 3 and 4 show little change in the number of calls being made about Mr T, it should be noted that some of the later calls were expressions of concern rather than complaints. It should also be noted that Mr T himself is still trying to cooperate with the partners designs which is illustrated by the reduction in the number of calls he made. Mr T is still awaiting a move and while a number of properties have been identified and later deemed to be unsuitable, he continues to engage with police and other partner agencies and remains at the top of the priority housing list and a move is being actively sought.