

# IMPROVING P.O.P. INITIATIVES IN LANCASHIRE

LANCASHIRE CONSTABULARY, NORTHERN DIVISION, ENGLAND, 2001

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## **SUMMARY:**

During 1998 the Chief Constable of Lancashire stated that all officers and support staff of the Lancashire Constabulary would embrace Problem Oriented Policing. The basic premise being that the police acting with partners within the community could tackle the underlying causes to crime, disorder and road casualty issues, leading to sustainable reductions in those areas. Considerable investment went into this strategy however the ultimate test was whether such partnerships led to sustainable solutions.

During 1999 an evaluation took place of all POP (partnership) initiatives that year within a Police Command Unit. The evaluation made four critical findings. First only 33% of initiatives resulted in a sustainable solution. Second when the partnerships implemented the good practice highlighted by such bodies as HMIC, Audit Commission and Crime Concern, they were more likely to be successful. Third that certain partner agencies were more likely to be associated with success, and fourthly that when the initiative relied on an intensive level of police resources they were negatively correlated with success.

It was clear from the analysis that officers needed guidance prior to submitting their initiative and that the good practice must be implemented. The response was to change the submission procedure from a paper system to an electronic system on the Force intranet. The new system forced officers involved with the initiative to do two things. First, prior to implementation, they had to submit an outline to their local POP co-ordinator (an individual with good knowledge on partnership matters). Then, after receiving guidance, the officer had to work through mandatory good practice guidelines, which were explicit fields on the new form.

After this response had been implemented an identical evaluation took place to assess whether the partnership initiatives had improved. It showed that the number of initiatives had reduced dramatically however the use of the good practice guidelines (ie having clear objectives, evaluation criteria, exit strategy as well as being community focused, based on crime prevention theory, and properly resourced), had increased significantly. As a result those initiatives resulting in a sustainable solution had risen from a 33% to an impressive 80% success rate. This has resulted in significant savings, both in time and money.

This submission shows how the Lancashire Constabulary identified that partnership working was critical to the success of POP; how it utilised research to gauge the effectiveness of its own partnership initiatives; and that it took these findings and integrated them into a cost effective IT solution which had a dramatic impact on operational policing.

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## SCANNING

Crime is reported as second only to unemployment as an issue that most worries the public (Hough,1995), and whilst recorded crime has recently reduced, the fear of crime has not (BCS). Crime levels remain high, especially when compared with other countries and the government now estimates crime to cost the economy £50 billion per year (HM Treasury, 1998). The criminal justice system itself costs over 10 billion per annum, supplemented by prisons who presently incarcerate 61,000 people, each costing £24,000 (est) per annum; a figure estimated to leap to 82,800 by the year 2005 if the current trend continues, (White & Power, 1998 as reported in Crawford, 1998).

However reducing crime and disorder is complex and strategies such as police enforcement and more prison places arguably have limited affect. The complexity arises because so many elements contribute to the causes of crime (Van Dijk, 1990:205). Indeed the British government has made it clear that crime and disorder reduction can only be sustained through partnerships, which can tackle the underlying causes of such offending (Hoey,1998), a common theme across Europe, North America, and Australasia,

During 1998 the Lancashire Constabulary turned to the POP approach as a more effective strategy and implemented a formal SARA (Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment) process to register and monitor the effectiveness of local initiatives. Although many such forms were submitted there was no information as to how effective these partnership initiatives had been. This was especially important; HMIC (1998) in a national review of Community Safety partnerships had previously found only 17 (5%) of 335 initiatives evaluated as successful. Indeed the phenomenon known as 'implementation failure' appears to be an enormous problem (see Tonry & Farrington, 1995b).

There appear a number of fundamental and historic explanations for the failure of the police to engage successfully in partnership initiatives. Perhaps the most fundamental is that the police have neither

the skills or inclination to do so. Although no studies in the USA and England found that evidence exists for a specific 'police personality' they do argue certain individuals are attracted to police work, and certain characteristics appertaining to these individuals are apparent. Clucas (in Colman & Gorman,1982) found a sample of officers from an English force to be extroverted, tough minded and conservative (i.e. steadfast, resistant to change, with a preference for safe, traditional, and conventional behaviour). These are not the attributes of individuals who will engage well in a partnership process.

Also there is strong evidence that the police as an organisation are enforcement rather than prevention led. The Harris Research Centre (1990), showed whereas 86% of the public saw crime prevention as important the police more generally felt that strong policing, arrest and prosecution were more effective than measures of a "community liaison" approach. Indeed Billingsley (1992) has questioned whether a partnership approach to community safety is a feasible strategy, as has Weatheritt (1986) who previously questioned the commitment of the police in crime prevention, saying that although official reports and mission statements were encouraging, this was often rhetoric.

The potential problems surrounding the success of partnerships cannot be put at the door of the police alone. Although there is considerable advice on how to structure partnerships any introductory text on psychology will show that the dynamics, which pervade groups, ultimately deliver or disrupt the process. In community safety partnerships these dynamics are magnified as parties come to the table from different backgrounds, with different perspectives and different priorities. Some of the issues highlighted involve the level of formality, hierarchy, the role of co-ordinator, trust and accountability. Crawford & Jones (1995) noticed that there was an avoidance of overt conflict in such groups resulting in multiple aims often being accommodated so as not to exclude any partner, a practice, which served to dilute and confuse. Other dynamics have resulted in 'group think' or the 'risky shift' phenomena, where

outlandish decisions have been made to protect the status of group members.

This scanning therefore highlighted a number of issues. Although the idea of partnerships works in theory, in practice they are much more difficult to implement effectively. Further HMIC had recently shown that many such partnership initiatives were failing nationally. The purpose of this project was therefore to see whether local Lancashire partnerships on which the POP strategy hinged were also failing and if so to look for practical ways to improve them.

## ANALYSIS

The analysis focused on local POP initiatives within Lancashire, implemented by front line operational officers, rather than the more formal statutory partnerships formed under the crime and disorder act.

The methodology of the analysis then took place in three parts. First a list was prepared of potential partners who could practically be used to impact upon community safety at a local level. Secondly a literature review took place to highlight the good practice, which was felt to be associated with successful partnerships. Finally the analysis looked at all POP initiatives which had been implemented in one Police Division over a year to see a) whether officers had exploited the full range of available partners b) how many initiatives had resulted in a successful (sustainable) solution, and c) if the good practice had been implemented did it result in a successful outcome.

### Step 1: Listing potential partners

Although there was a preponderance of literature on partnerships there was no specific advice found as to which partners could be used; neither had any police force spoken to mapped out the partners they were using. As a result a number of focus groups involving practitioners at Constable, Sergeant, Inspector and Superintendent level set out the potential partners who could practically be used. It must be noted that these focus groups were from areas that were covered by 2tier authorities

(rather than unitary authorities). The partners were grouped into 17 categories (see below), which were not felt to be an exhaustive list.

#### Potential partners

##### 1. From within the police

- HQ Departments
- HQ finance
- special constabulary
- other police forces

##### 2. Criminal Justice system establishments

- preventative legislation (inc. bye-laws).
- c.p.s
- magistrates courts
- probation
- prisons
- trading standards authority
- customs & excise.

##### 3. Drugs & Alcohol issues

- drug action teams
- licensing justices
- local authority
- breweries
- licensed victuallers
- door staff firms

##### 4. Youth

- youth and community services
- youth groups
- schools

##### 5. Education

- county council
- colleges
- university
- schools

## 6. Housing

- local authority
- housing associations
- residents groups

## 7. Elected members of the community

- M.P.'s
- Councillors

## 8. Local Authority Services

- licensing officers
- planning
- environmental health
- leisure services

## 9. County Council services

- health & safety executive
- benefits agency
- social services
- emergency planning department

## 10. Health

- ambulance
- accident and emergency
- local g.p.'s and health centres.

## 11. Victim groups

- victim support
- women's refuge
- domestic violence forums

## 12. Help associations

- citizen's advice
- crisis centre

## 13. Local business

- leisure
- local authority economic development department

- chamber of trade
- business forum
- major employers
- printing
- taxi's
- milk / post delivery
- town centre groups
- private security

## 14. Voluntary Sector

- neighbourhood watch

## 15. Minority groups

- CRE

## 16. Fire service

## 17. Environment Agency

### Step two: setting out the good practice that makes effective partnerships

As has been mentioned there has been considerable literature on the critical success factors of partnership. The majority of these could be argued to relate to good people (i.e. leadership) and good processes. Objectively assessing leadership ability was outside the skills of the author therefore the review looked predominantly at processes.

Although the author nominates some of the criteria in essence the initiatives were evaluated predominantly on variables previously highlighted by Crime Concern, HMIC (1998) and Audit Commission (1999). These were:

1. **Community focused:** initiatives which were locally based often had local commitment and enjoyed most success.
2. **Theory based:** those initiatives that were found to be based on some crime prevention theory had most chance of success.

3. **Specific purpose:** it was important that the initiative had clear objectives prior to it starting.
4. **Innovative:** those initiatives that were felt to be creative showed more chance of success.
5. **Evaluation criteria:** those initiatives which set out how success would be judged, prior to implementation, had the greatest chance of success.
6. **Evaluation:** many initiatives were not evaluated after implementation, therefore lessons could not be learnt and success could not be judged.
7. **Sufficient resources:** obviously if the initiative required a set level of resource, then it stood little chance if those resources were not provided.
8. **Exit:** having an exit strategy, prior to embarking upon the initiative was seen as important
9. **Sustainable:** a high level injection of short term resources could make an immediate impact, however this was not the aim of the POP initiative which was to provide a more long term affect after the resources had been withdrawn.
10. **More than 1 partner:** this was not a variable mentioned by others however it seemed that there appeared interesting dynamics between initiatives that relied on one partner to those that utilised a number of partners.
11. **Police intensive:** not mentioned in the literature was the level of police effort that went into the initiative when compared with other partners.
12. **Implementation:** if the initiative was not implemented according to the plan then it had little chance of success.
13. **Categorisation:** the initiatives were categorised as to whether they were focused on the reduction of crime, antisocial behaviour, or road casualties.

### Step3: Analysing the partnership initiatives

All POP initiatives for a Policing Division (BCU), were analysed as to the presence or absence of each of the variables mentioned above. Initially each of the 46 initiatives were analysed as to whether they involved a particular partner (these were the 17 categories of partners proposed earlier). Once this had been completed the initiatives were further then analysed as to whether they were community focused; based on crime prevention theory; had clear objectives; had evaluation criteria; had sufficient resources; had been evaluated; had provided sustainable solutions; and had an exit strategy. As mentioned earlier these variables were an amalgam that external bodies such as the Audit Commission, Crime Concern, and H.M. Inspectorate of Constabulary had emphasised as important.

First the data was analysed in terms of frequency (expressed in %), which can be seen in Appendix 1.

Second the data were interpreted using a statistical software package called Smallest Space Analysis (SSA). A more detailed account of this technique can be found in Canter, Hughes & Kirby (1999) however in brief terms the analysis looks at the relationship of each variable with every other variable. This provides a long list of correlations, which are plotted visually on a chart rather than shown as a list of numbers. In essence variables that are likely to co-occur together within the initiatives are shown close together on the visual plot. So for example, those initiatives that were properly resourced are more likely to show sustainable success than those that were not properly implemented. Although this finding is common sense some of the other relationships are more surprising.

The subsequent, statistically validated analyses highlighted a number of important issues.

They were:

- Although 33% were successful (a significant improvement on HMIC findings), this meant 67% of initiatives did not result in sustainable reductions of crime/disorder. When one thinks of the level of effort that has gone into implementation this appears a terrible waste of resources.
- Many potential partners such as the County Council, Health Authorities, victim groups, help groups, minority groups and the environment agency were poorly utilised. It appeared that those partners closest to the problem were the ones most likely to be used (i.e. local authority, schools, local business).
- The majority of initiatives (71%) had clear objectives and were community focused, a possible benefit from a structured problem solving approach the SARA model had provided.

Sustainability is positively correlated with those initiatives which are: innovative, properly resourced, having clear objectives, evaluation criteria, being theory based and having an exit strategy. This corroborated the findings of HMIC, Crime Concern and the Audit Commission. A simple checklist was therefore available which could assist officers in implementing initiatives.

Sustainability was negatively correlated with partnerships that are intensive in police resources. Similarly sustainability is positively correlated when more than one partner is utilised. This could be interpreted as a warning for the police who continually take the lead in solutions that would more properly be addressed by partners who can deal with the underlying causes of crime and disorder.

## RESPONSE

The findings were presented to the Chief Officer team. There appeared considerable potential for POP initiatives to become more effective if this

analysis could be fed into the partnership process.

During this time an integrated briefing system was being developed. This system called SLEUTH, which is now live has been highlighted as good practice by HMIC (2000) and by a Best Value Review (Lancashire Constabulary 2001) allows a number of databases (i.e. intelligence, warrants, custody system, crime and incidents) to be warehoused into one system. This means that officers can at any time of day receive information tailored to their own need. Such briefings can be projected onto a large screen, which due to it being connected in real time to the Force intranet allows the briefing officer to click on names or locations, which provides deeper and deeper level of information, in word or photographs.

The Force POP user group, chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable, therefore asked that this system incorporated details of ongoing POP initiatives and the POP good practice database. Before the technical specification of this system was worked out a focus group of POP practitioners met to set out what was required. There were two main requests: First that the good practice criteria mentioned earlier such as: clear objectives: exit strategy etc were overt prompts in the POP fields. Second that there would be a 'pre-pop' form on the system, which meant that prior to the initiative being implemented a summary of its objectives, tactics and potential partners had to be submitted, which was quality assured by the POP co-ordinator for that geographic area. It was felt that the coordinators would be able to provide advice by differentiating the general policing initiatives from the POP initiatives (which utilised partners). Further the POP co-ordinator could provide general advice on good practice, and prevent duplication.

## ASSESSMENT

The aim of the assessment was to see if the response had improved the success rate of partnerships. Therefore all POP initiatives submitted and implemented by the Lancashire

Constabulary since the new system had been introduced were evaluated using the methodology outlined earlier. In this way there would be a clear benchmark on which to base any change in performance.

It was immediately found that far fewer POP initiatives were being submitted under the new process. Only 21 initiatives had been reported within the Constabulary area, compared to an estimate of 60 during the same period the previous year.

Further analysis found a similar pattern to the analysis of the POP initiatives the previous year. Therefore if the initiative was based on good practice, in that it was: a problem of local concern, was properly resourced, had clear objectives, evaluation criteria, an exit strategy and utilised more than one partner then it was more likely to result in a sustainable solution. Further, when looking as to which partners were used on the initiatives, similar patterns were seen, and it appears that there is a small nucleus of partners who are used on a reoccurring basis. This time although there was an increase in the frequency youth, local authority, county council, housing and education services were used there also appeared a reduction in the use of drug/alcohol, business sector and elected members. Again it appeared that a high level of police resources used on the initiative did little to ensure success.

In essence the assessment found the same pattern of behaviours occurring in the partnership initiatives. The critical question was whether the most recent initiatives had improved in effectiveness and efficiency. The simple answer is yes. Appendix 2 shows that the occurrence of all the good practice in the partnerships had increased significantly: community focused 95% (previously 70%); clear objectives 100% (previously 72%); based on crime prevention theory 80% (previously 59%); evaluation criteria 95% (previously 95%); properly resourced 90% (previously 59%); exit strategy 60% (previously 46%); evaluated after the initiative 100% (previously 54%); and utilising more than one partner 65% (previously 30%). Similarly the not so good practice had

been reduced: intensive level of police resources was now seen in only 30% of initiatives (previously 41%); initiatives which were not implemented according to the plan 0% (previously 11%). One would therefore expect the heightened level of good practice to result in a higher level of success, and this was the case. The evaluation showed that 80% of the initiatives had reported a sustainable solution to the problems they had tackled (quantifiable reduction in crime/disorder/casualties after police resources had been withdrawn) compared with a previous finding of 33%. This shows that in terms of POP initiatives utilising partnerships the current system provides a number of benefits. Firstly the quality assurance checks within the system reduce the level of poorly thought through initiatives being submitted.

Secondly that because the good practice guide must be addressed before the initiative is implemented then there is a much higher chance of the initiative leading to a sustainable solution to the problem. It therefore appeared that the initiatives had both reduced in quantity but had increased significantly in quality. As a result there are considerable savings made.

## CONCLUSION

This project shows the reason why a POP approach is simple to articulate in theory but so difficult to implement in practice. POP depends on partnerships, the effectiveness of which depends on so many variables.

One critical variable is how the police operate. As society has progressed, problems continue to be created which the police, as a dependable 24 hour emergency service, continue to deal with. Over time the organisation has become more accountable, however resultant performance indicators have looked to increase efficiency in terms of outputs rather than outcomes. Response times for calls and incidents are a prime example of the police being monitored in terms of their speed to answer rather than their effectiveness of dealing with the caller. As such the police have not evolved within the preventative paradigm

which is so necessary for today's outcome driven p.i.'s . POP is asking police forces to change the way they work. Mainstreaming this type of work across police agencies, is proving extremely problematic across the globe.

There are also lessons here in how the police engage partners. Culturally the police, as a 'can do' organisation have a preponderance to lead. In POP this is not always effective; the more police resources put into an initiative the more potential for short-term results, and a lack of placing responsibility and accountability where it is most appropriate. Similarly partners aren't utilised effectively. In the evaluations many potential partners were not used and worryingly some critical ones are negatively correlated with successful outcomes. It is not surprising that officers will only use those partners they feel will support their success.

The future model needs further work. Multi-Agency Problem Solving teams with the authority to make others participate may assist in removing some of the blockages. They would increase the leadership in each local authority area. They would access resources and streamline action. Similarly something needs to be done to release the potential of elected members who are in an excellent position to assist in finding solutions to community problems.

The concept of POP therefore brings a great challenge to leaders within the police, and the partner agencies. Although it is an outcome everyone wants and strives for, no-one should be under any illusion of the implementation difficulties it brings. However this project has shown that organisational processes can be improved to ensure good practice is implemented which results in improvement to operational policing.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Chief Superintendent Stuart Kirby, Divisional Commander; Northern Division; Lancashire Constabulary; Thurnham Street; Lancaster, Lancashire LA1 1YB; Phone 01524 596600

## NOTES

This project has been submitted on behalf of the Lancashire Constabulary and it is acknowledged that numerous people and teams have been involved in its success. Special mention should go to: Kate Clarkson (University of Central Lancashire), and the University of Liverpool, who helped with the evaluation. Also the POP user group, SLEUTH user group and the IT Department of the Lancashire Constabulary.

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## APPENDICES

**Appendix 1: Frequency (in %) of how the 27 variables featured in the analysis of community based problem solving initiatives**

NO.	POP VARIABLES	%	NO.	POP VARIABLES	%
1	Partner from within lice	17	15	Evaluation criteria	63
2	CJS(criminal'ustice)	15	16	Resourced	59
3	Intoxicants	22	17	Evaluated	54
4	Youth	17	18	Sustainable	33
5	Education	6	19	Exit	46
6	Housing	13	20	>1 partner	30
7	Elected	17	21	Innovative	7
8	Local authority	13	22	Crime	67
9	Business	63	23	Antisocial	57
10	Voluntary	4	24	Road casual	11
11	Media	35	25	Police intensive	41
12	Community focused	70	26	Not implemented	
13	Theory based	59	27	Specific rose	85
14	Clear objectives	72			

**Appendix 2: Frequency (in %) of the 27 variables featured in the analysis of community based problem solving initiatives**

	VARIABLE	%		VARIABLE	%
1	Within police	30%	15	Community focused	95%
2	Criminal Justice stem c's	15%	16	Theory based	80%
3	Drug / alcohol services	0%	17	Evaluation criteria	95%
4	Education	30%	18	Not im lmented	0%
5	Housing	20%	19	Clear a ectives	100%
6	Elected members	10%	20	Exit strategy	60%
7	Local authority services	35%	21	Innovative	5%
8	County council services	35%	22	Sustainable solution	80%
9	Local business	40%	23	Crime based initiative	70%
10	Voluntary sector	5%	24	Antisocial behaviour initiative	45%
11	Victim groups	5%	25	Road Casual based	15%
12	Minority community groups	0%	26	Involved more than I partner	65%
13	Fire service	5%	27	Solution police intensive	30%
14	Health	15%			

### **Appendix 3: Evaluation criteria**

**Crawford (1998:216) said that evaluation should address the following questions:**

1. Was the initiative implemented as planned and what factors influenced implementation (the process).
2. Did the initiative make a difference to, or alter the size of the problem (the outcome).
3. What did the initiative do which impacted on the problem and how was the problem affected by the initiative (the relationship between the mechanism and the outcome).
4. In what ways did the context in which the mechanism was set encourage or undermine the impact of the initiative (the relationship between mechanism, outcome and context).
5. What else resulted from the initiative as well as the impact on the problem (unintended side effects).
6. Did the benefits and/or side effects last (temporal durability).
7. Were the benefits greater than the costs (the cost benefit).
8. How, where and for whom could the effects be replicated (the transferability).
9. What more do we know at the end of the evaluation about the patterns of outcome effectiveness of the initiative, and what else do we need to know (future evaluation).

**Crawford (1998) said that specific questions needed to be asked which were:**

1. What intervention or activity is proposed?
2. To whom or what is it directed?
3. What is the intended outcome of the intervention or activity?
4. What is it about the intervention or activity which it is believed will lead to a certain outcome?
5. Under what conditions or in which contexts will the activity produce the desired outcome?
6. What intervention or activity is actually delivered?
7. Under what conditions or in what contexts is the intervention or activity actually delivered?
8. What outcomes result from the intervention or activity?
9. How is the outcome evaluated or measured?
10. What is the relative social value of the various outcomes.