

Title: “Community disquiet and Anti Social Behaviour on the Kingsway Estate”

Force: Devon & Cornwall Constabulary
(South & West Devon BCU)

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Summary.

Kingsway estate is not out of the ordinary. The community was experiencing relatively low levels of crime and disorder which was having a disproportionate affect on the residents that lived on the estate. Fear of crime was high and there was a general lack of community cohesion and co-operation between residents and the local service providers in the area.

These problems existed for a number of reasons:

- The estate consists of a disparate mix of elderly residents and young families, some living within very close proximity to one another, i.e. council flats;
- There is a large proportion of young people on the estate, with one community centre and limited provisions for recreational activity, such as skateboarding;
- A small number of youths were targeting a small number of residents - most noticeably a transgender lady who was well known to the community and had become a repeat victim of hate crime;
- The community police officer had been seconded to a special operation and not replaced;
- The local housing provider lacked a coherent and rigorous strategy for dealing with anti-social tenants.

The project set out to:

- engage the key agencies that had a responsibility to address crime and disorder on Kingsway;
- encourage greater collaboration between the local housing provider and the tenants on the estate;
- Provide the community with a greater sense of safety on the estate; and
- Reduce crime and disorder, targeting the prolific offenders and supporting the vulnerable sectors of the community

These aims were achieved by:

- Establishing a local stakeholder forum, consisting of police, council, tenants association, residents association and youth services;
- Enlist the Community Mediator to facilitate greater collaboration between all parties;
- Re-integrate the community police officer;
- Initiate zero tolerance on targeted offenders, including liaison with Youth Offending Team;
- Review the housing provider's policy for tackling anti-social behaviour
- Focus the Residents/Tenants Association in assisting to reduce crime and disorder

The outcomes were:

- greater collaboration between all parties, culminating in regular meetings involving all key stakeholders on the estate, to discuss and deal with emerging issues;
- the local housing provider is now employing an anti-social behaviour officer and working closely with the Crime and Disorder Partnership (CDRP). A local ASB task group has been established the CDRP , including representation from the housing provider;
- the community police officer is well respected within the community;
- the transgender lady has ceased to be the victim of crime and is now deputy to the residents association;
- reduction in the number of calls to police and housing provider regarding anti-social behaviour;
- a prolific offender has been moved from the estate

Community disquiet and Anti Social Behaviour on the Kingsway Estate

Persons Nominated

- 1. Constable 4113 Gary HOOKINS, Teignmouth Police Station**
- 2. Kate LEGUM, Community Mediator, South Devon Youth Offending Team (in recognition of the partnership approach)**

Scanning.

The Kingsway Estate is located in Teignmouth, a seaside town close to Torbay. Kingsway is part of west Teignmouth, which has the highest level of overall deprivation in Teignbridge¹. The estate comprises of over 500 properties, ranging from flats to three and four bedroom maisonettes. Approximately, 70% are rented social housing accommodation and 30% are privately owned. The majority of residents are from white working class backgrounds (99%) and are from a mixed age group, including high proportions of families and elderly residents.

Certain factions of the community were making numerous complaints to the police, local district council and crime and disorder partnership, regarding continual problems of anti-social behaviour and minor disorder on the estate. The local council housing department was spending more and more time trying to placate angry tenants, dealing with complaints and the police were continually 'fire-brigade' policing the estate from day to day. The community was holding agencies responsible for not dealing with the problems and the result was a general lack of engagement between the authorities and the local community.

The reports varied from minor incivilities, such as swearing children to more serious reports of harassment, discrimination and violence. There were also a lot of reports relating to gangs of youths causing a nuisance on the estate².

Anti-social behaviour is a term that has been adopted by the government, local partnerships and police, primarily to crack down on persistent offenders who continually cause a disturbance or nuisance in a specific neighbourhood or area. This behaviour can constitute many things from drunkenness, constant harassment to criminal damage and drug-taking. The meaning of the term has also been subject to a wide interpretation and can represent different things to different people and organisations. As far as some of the residents were concerned on the estate, their perception was that law and order had broken down and the 'jobs were running riot'³.

Analysis

It was obvious from further analysis of the problem that some households or locations were generating a lot of the incidents that impacted on police and other agency resources. At the same time certain households were contacting the police and local council housing department more than usual to complain about issues and it has to be assumed that these individuals were not getting the quality of life that other residents on the estate were.

During 2002 the majority of calls to the police that were disorder related were categorised as resulting from nuisance youths or young people.

There were 130 disorder related incidents on Kingsway throughout 2002, approximately requiring a police visit (on a disorder related incident) once every 2 ½ days. Well over half of all disorder related offences in Kingsway during that year were as a result of children and young people. These stem from throwing eggs, harassment, fighting and nuisance behaviour such as shouting, swearing, running through gardens, throwing objects and making excessive noise in residential areas. In addition to this, according to police data, nearly all hoax and silent 999 calls made to the police from Kingsway were attributed to children or young people.

¹ Statistics taken from the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2000 - The Department of the Environment, transport and the Regions (DETR).

² Reference made to police data was provided by BCU analyst, Stephen French.

³ Testimony conveyed during public consultation.

The police analyst identified that one of the main problems revolved around young people congregating in groups; often believed or reported to be causing a nuisance in the street.

Further analysis revealed that more than half of all disorder reported were in some way connected to three main addresses on the estate, being either the address of the offender or the victim:

ADDRESS A.

The first address belonged to a Family. The 13 year old boy of the family was, according to police data, by far the most criminally active of all the youths on the estate. There were 28 incidents of disorder in this year that the boy had been linked to; nine times as many as any other young person. During 2002 alone he had gathered 20 convictions for offences such as assault, vehicle crime, burglary and shop lifting, much of which had occurred either in the town or on the Kingsway estate.

The family was responsible for just over a quarter of all disorder related incidents on the estate in 2002. Members of this family were linked to 33 of the 130 incidents.

ADDRESS B.

This address belonged to a transgender female who lived with her partner. She had been resident on the estate for many years and had long suffered the torment of the local youths on the estate.

There were many calls originating from this address, both to the police and local council. Many incidents related to homophobic harassment, criminal damage and abuse from youths. In three years (2000 – 2002) there have been 29 separate calls to the police from this address in relation to disorder, quality of life issues and anti social behaviour. In nearly all occasions, the offenders or tormentors were youths or children.

Although attempts had been made by the police to detect these offences, efforts to prevent continuing harassment to date had proved unsuccessful.

ADDRESS C

These were maisonettes and flats nearest the shops and the telephone kiosk and subsequently bear the brunt of most of the anti social behaviour experienced by youths.

The Analyst also identified three main hotspots of disorder:

- a) Firstly, the garage block – this area appeared to be where youths congregated and were reportedly causing a nuisance;
- b) Secondly, the grass area or communal areas on the estate had become focal points for disorder, certain locations had become meeting points and the disorder spiralled outwards from this location; and
- c) The shops and the areas behind them were frequently used by youths as areas for troublemaking. With very little 'natural' or 'formal' surveillance at the rear of the shops, it provided a dark and remote haven for criminal activity such as drugs, under age drinking, arson and violence.

It was also important to identify the times and days that this disorder was reportedly occurring on. The data showed a build up in disorder incidents after school closing hours. From 1600 hours onwards, until it peaked at 2030 hours, when disorder and anti social behaviour on the estate was at its most prolific. Nearly three quarters of all incidents occurred between 1600 hours and 2300 hours.

RESPONSE

Local stakeholders – No-one could dispute that the police and local council had a role to play in tackling the increasing discontent that was emerging on the estate, but clearly there were other 'stake-holders' that needed to be brought on side.

The estate boasted two very active and vociferous tenant groups: the Community Association, which included youth workers who worked extensively with some of the young people on the estate, and the Residents' Association, which was made up of some of the local population and was perceived by some as something of an exclusionary group⁴. The transgender woman from Address A, was secretary to the Residents' Association. At the time of the conflict, there was a great deal of hostility between these two groups, principally because the Community Association were regarded to be on the side of young people and were even accused of provoking young people to behave in an anti-social manner.

The Community Safety Partnership (CDRP) convened a public meeting for residents and stakeholders to raise their concerns with the agencies regarding levels of ASB and alleged failings in service delivery by the council and police. It was also intended to try and mediate between the two community groups to resolve long-standing hostility between these two factions. In order to ensure the maximum benefit was gained from such a meeting the partnership's Community Mediator was utilised, to chair the meeting.

The meeting was divided into various groups and tasked with drawing up a list of problems relating to the situation on the Kingsway Estate, and what they would like the agencies or the community to do to help. The meeting was an opportunity for people to have a good moan. The role of the mediator was to ensure that opportunities to make improvements were maximised.

Neighbourhood Beat Manager (NHBM) - As a result of the first ASB meeting a number of measures were immediately obvious. It transpired that the local Neighbourhood Beat officer had been on secondment for a number of months and his presence was greatly missed from the estate. Following the meeting he was re-assigned to the Kingsway Estate.

Newsletter – In order to communicate more effectively with the residents a regular newsletter was devised, distributed among tenants, representatives from the agencies and the general community. The newsletter highlighted what had occurred in the meeting and listed the concerns from the community and agencies. The newsletter also included the contact numbers for the community association, tenants' forum, the crime reduction sergeant, the neighbourhood beat manager and the council tenant participation officer.

The agencies were asked to formulate appropriate strategies to address the concerns of the community and how the residents could contribute to these solutions. Measures were drawn up for the short-term and also for the medium to longer term. These measures were discussed at the second meeting held in February 2003.

Short- term measures

- A number of visits were made by the Housing Officers and the NHBM, walking around the estate to identify immediate improvements to the environment that could be made: for example, improving the lighting to the garage blocks, removing abandoned vehicles from this location and replacing broken lighting in the flats and maisonettes.
- The NHBM made a conscious effort to frequent the estate on a regular basis, it was a difficult task in balancing expectations when this was only one of the estates within his large beat area. He was able to concentrate on the hotspots identified through the National Intelligence Model.
- The CDRP Neighbourhood wardens were also tasked with providing a visible presence on the estate; ticketing abandoned vehicles etc.
- The dog warden was provided with information and was able to prosecute a local dog owner who regularly allowed his dog to foul the pavement. This sort of outcome was also published in the newsletter.

⁴. Testimony gathered by the Community Mediator, Kate Legum, whose role is explained within the 'Response'.

- Increased patrols in the area during the hours of 1700 and 2300 would help to combat anti – social behaviour. Particular emphasis made on the weekends, school holidays, Halloween and the run up to Bonfire evenings.
- Specifically in relation to Halloween and Bonfire nights, an operation was effected based around confiscation of articles being carried for anti-social purposes, such as eggs, floor and even bleach. Media releases were circulated deterring youths from anti-social behaviour throughout the district.
- Police Officers attended the Youth club giving general crime prevention advice and specifically warning children about the inappropriate use of the 999 system, deterring hoax calls to the police.
- Evidence gathering began to take place regarding the child from Address A and other known offenders on the estate. Meetings were convened with the Youth Offending Team to discuss suitable action plans. Anti-social Behaviour Orders/ Acceptable Behaviour Contracts were considered where appropriate.
- The NHBM worked with the CDRP to ensure zero-tolerance was applied to offenders on the estate, particularly the known perpetrators of anti-social behaviour. Local officers were briefed and investigations were rigorous.

Medium to Long- term measures

- Immediate creation of a Residents panel, incorporating the previous Community Association and Tenants Forum. This enabled regular dialogue to take place within the forum regarding problems on the estate. Such meetings required the Community Mediator to facilitate in the early stages to breakdown barriers and resistance to the new changes.
- A multi-agency forum consisting of Police, Youth Services, Council and representation from the Residents Panel. This enabled regular discussions to take place in search of solutions to problems identified by the Residents Panel or other sources within the estate. The types of issues discussed were problematic residents or children, more sensitive letting to certain residents that were being harassed, such as the occupant of Address B or a tenant within Address C, who was 83 and being intimidated by her neighbours.
- Formulation of a traffic management plan, incorporating traffic calming measures to reduce traffic speed to the main road;
- Re-development of the childrens' playground, where young persons were skateboarding into the road. The Council are now heading a partnership initiative to re-design the ground to incorporate a community garden and young person area.
- The Youth Centre liaised with other key partners to incorporate each others ideas for further development of the grounds surrounding the centre. Funding was sought and changes are scheduled for the coming year, to include a sports area.

ASSESSMENT

Police statistics reveal a 25% reduction in incidents relating to anti-social behaviour between 2002 and 2003. This statistics represent a fall in reported incidents to the police. What was very apparent to the stakeholders was that a considerable percentage of incidents were previously going un-reported through a lack of faith in the police and council housing department. From anecdotal reports provided to the various forums, it is safe to assume that the 25% reduction on police reported incidents is a conservative estimate, given that the community are now more likely (and it is now easier for them) to report incidents than in the previous year.

The Council housing department are now in the process of recruiting a dedicated anti-social behaviour co-ordinator, who will work with the CDRP partnership to formulate a more effective strategy for dealing with tenants who are anti-social prior to matters escalating in the same way again.

The family that were resident at Address A have now been relocated to another town, following failed efforts to curb the offender's behaviour. The Youth Offending Team continue to work with the boy, under his supervision order, incorporating an Acceptable Behaviour Contract.

The transgender individual from Address B was given constant support and offered alternative accommodation. She decided to stay within the estate and became very involved in the new resident's panel; she is now the deputy chair for the association. She has not been the victim of a crime since the commencement of this initiative.

The hoax calls from the telephone kiosk have now ceased.

The community mediator continued to have involvement with certain members of the community, attempting to mediate in long standing feuds.

The Multi-agency forum continue to meet on a quarterly basis, although ad hoc meetings are still convened where the need arises. Some of the successes include arranging for support and interventions from relevant agencies to prevent a three ten year-boys becoming criminally active within the estate. The working relationship between the various agencies has developed greatly.

The general atmosphere on the estate appears to have improved, with members of the community thanking the NHBM for the good work that he is now doing on the estate. Fear generators such as abandoned vehicles are given priority from a new arrangement between the police and local council. Enquiries are on going into whether the NHBM can establish a regular base within the estate. He now makes himself available from the Community Centre, for people to call in and see him.

The community mediator has plans to provide mediation training for youth workers and conflict resolution training for the general public, including the young people of the area.

Sgt John SHUTTLEWORTH
Crime Reduction Sergeant