

Tackling Anti- Social Behavior on Brookhouse Residential Housing Estate. Eccles. Manchester.

Greater Manchester Police working in Partnership with members of the Salford Crime Reduction Partnership.

Endorsing Senior Representative Chief Superintendent Brian Wroe (B.A. Hons)

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Summary.

Nature of the Problem

Anti Social Behaviour on a mainly council owned residential housing estate of approximately 800 two-storey semi-detached properties. Mainly associated with gangs or groups of youths. Interventions described in the initiative commenced March 2002 and continue to the present time.

Victims

All ages of residents on the estate, together with owners and users of a small block of shops on the estate.

Offenders

Youths from the estate or immediately surrounding area.

Offences and incidents

Typical examples include Criminal Damage, Juvenile Nuisance.

Initiative

The opportunity for change was heralded by an Anti Social Behaviour Order protocol agreed by Partners in the Salford Crime Reduction Partnership. The protocols relied upon the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The procedures gave opportunities for diversion as well as punitive action to deal with Anti Social Behavior, particularly where it was repeated, or where each instance did not in itself amount to a criminal offence.

The lead agency in terms of referrals into the procedures were the Police, secondly the Local Authority housing, thereafter multi agency action was brought to bear particularly in terms of diversion.

Using the SARA model in each case, the victim, location and offender were identified, and no one aspect was dealt with to the exclusion of the other.

- Victims. Actions in all cases included supporting and strengthening the community, individual members of which were the victims.
- Location, strategic target hardening took place, together with a mixture of covert and overt surveillance filming.
- Offenders. Key players in the gangs were identified using local intelligence from the community and Community Beat Officers. Key suspects were the first targets for enforcement measures; lesser ones were dealt with by way of diversion or enforcement.

Cost

Not cost intensive.

Outcomes.

Improved quality of life and increased feeling of well-being and security on the estate.

Statistical analysis shows an overall significant reduction in criminal damage and juvenile nuisance.

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Objectives

- To tackle gangs of youths on Brookhouse estate causing damage, intimidation and anti social behavior.
- To reduce the incidents of damage, intimidation and anti social behavior.
- To reduce the real sense of fear present on the estate, and to strengthen the community to assist. (As public confidence grew incidents would not necessarily reduce, however as public confidence in reporting grew more incidents were being reported)

Defining the problem

_____The problem was identified by local community beat officers, partners and residents of the estate. which was supported with analysis using I2, OPUS and GMPICS data. Crime comparisons were made over the previous 3 years which highlighted the following:-

- A steady increase in anti social behaviour recorded in the latter part of 2001, leading into 2002.
- Gangs of youths aged between 10 and 18, particularly centred around Brookhouse shops.
- Behaviour was intimidating to shoppers and passers by.
- Damage and anti social behaviour occurred.
- All youths were known on the estate, however witnesses were afraid to support any police action.
- Youths had been spoken to and advised by different police officers on a number of occasions, there were faults in the recording system whereby this was not being collated, and youths believed they could do what they wanted, seemingly accruing no consequences for repeatedly coming to notice.
- There were some arrests for public order, however Court penalties did not deter the youths. Bail was repeatedly given by Courts for repeated anti social behaviour and criminal activity, allowing youths who had been arrested to repeatedly continue with their behaviour.
- Lack of parental control over the youths. A predominance of lone mothers, or mothers with a series of partners who were reluctant to control their child's behaviour. In a lot of cases we found an overt willingness from parent(s) , particularly mothers to cooperate, unfortunately backed up by little sustained determination or skill in dealing with their youths.

- Lack of facilities on the estate for any diversionary activities. The estate is geographically remote from any youth centre or youth provision, and a significant number of youths extended their initiative only to hanging around the shops, gaining their entertainment and a sense of power by causing problems for more vulnerable members of the community.
- There is evidence of drug use by youths on the estate, however no different from anywhere else. (ie, it wasn't a specific major contributory factor on the estate) we found alcohol was the most significant "drug" leading to anti social behaviour.
- Housing stock and the general condition of the estate was relatively good, people looked after their houses and gardens. There was a culture of shutting the curtains and not taking a stand against the problem brought about by fear and also a feeling someone else would sort it out.
- Shopkeepers were loosing revenue as people tended to avoid the shops, there was a danger that existing local shopping facilities, especially useful for older or infirm members of the community would be lost as shopkeepers sold up and went somewhere else.
- For a period bus services were withdrawn form the estate having suffered attacks from youths as they drove through, further isolating more vulnerable or elderly members of the community without cars.
- The schools on the estate had suffered damage and intimidation to teachers.

Dealing with the problem.

There were a number of issues to deal with, commencing in the early part of 2002.

- Identifying and deal with the youths, especially the ringleaders. Significant use was made of covert surveillance under RIPA authorities, and also plain clothes observations using a specialist covert vehicle.
- Police Officers local knowledge was also used to identify offenders. Additional information was obtained from partner agencies, eg; schools in assisting to pinpoint the key players.
- Arrests were made where evidence was available or summonses issued for public order offences where no power of arrest existed.
- Strengthening the community's ability, confidence and resolve to become involved in the process. In the early days officers attended a series of meetings with the Local MP, Councillors, representatives from the public, neighborhood coordinator and the bus company.

Undertakings were sought and given for a concerted effort to deal with the issues, and to work in close partnership to build public confidence.

A well attended public meeting was held at the Community Centre on the estate with the Community Beat Officers where the objectives were outlined and cooperation sought.

Police Officers attended regular meetings thereafter with the residents' group, and encouraged its members to promote the proposals and publicise the results to the wider community.

- **Creating conditions to improve the economic viability of the shops as a service for residents**

Community Beat Officers made particular efforts to establish good relations with the shopkeepers who were suffering from the effects of the youth's behaviour, shopkeepers coming under personal attack and abuse, and suffering loss of revenue. High visibility patrols were maintained in the area to increase their confidence in policing, and they were kept informed of significant developments with the police activities undertaken.

Use was also made of the overt "eagle eye" camera in the area of the shops, and high profile Hawk video vehicle.

- **Creating conditions for the return of the bus route**

An agreement was reached with the bus unions and management for plain clothed Community Beat Officers to ride on some of the buses which increased the drivers' confidence.

A number of incidents were dealt with, as a result, arrests were made and youths summonsed, both for behaviour onboard and outside the buses. As well as increasing public confidence (ie publicised results through the community group and inviting feedback) it also eroded the confidence of youths who thought they could behave with impunity. It also increased the bus company's confidence in restoring the route.

- **Informing the CPS of the historic problems around Brookhouse so the Courts could be appraised.**

Community Beat Officers tracked the offender's case progress and attended court to personally advise CPS prosecutors when a key offender was in court. This was particularly useful as it reinforced to the CPS on the day the importance of the case, and our determination to achieve the best possible result from the Court.

- **Anti Social Behaviour Orders.**

Anti Social Behaviour Orders have been key to filling the gaps in other legislation where there has been repeat offending, or alternatively where the behaviour or evidence fell short of that otherwise required for prosecution.

A database was created specifically for Community Beat Officers who were allocated key offenders to classwork, monitor and build up anti social behaviour case files. (the OPUS database system has now replaced this.)

In Eccles at least 73 youths were put through various stages of the ASBO process, working closely with our partners in Local Authority Housing and the Community Safety Unit.

Many of those youths had some association with Brookhouse, of those 73 we have achieved eight ASBO's using the Core Group meeting and case conference method, and a further 4 of the youths were awarded ASBO's on conviction.

This has sent a shock wave around youths in the area, and has had a significant impact on Brookhouse itself, where we first targeted key players and obtained some of the first ASBO's.

We specifically asked the headmaster of a local school to be present at ASBO core group meetings to draw on his excellent knowledge of the youths concerned, which he agreed to. He is now a regular attendee where Brookhouse youths are involved.

Initially we found ASBO's were treated as some sort of 'badge of honour' amongst youths, who proudly boasted amongst friends they had got one, however, many of the youths subject to ASBO's have now breached and are beginning to find the consequence of custodial sentencing.

We submitted reports where we felt there was inadequate sentencing, highlighting cases where we felt the CPS or Courts had let us down, the situation is much improved now, possibly in part as a consequence of our early feedback which reached the judiciary via the Court User Group and Police Judicial Unit.

As a result Magistrates have received special training from the Partnership Crime and Disorder solicitor, and a programme is in place to heighten awareness amongst Judges following on from a meeting between one of our Superintendents and Lord Faulkner based in part on our early feedback.

The Police Community Beat Office also highlighted amongst other Police Officers the importance of early action of breach of ASBO's, which is now a divisional priority. We still track and attend court hearings where appropriate to ensure cases are vigorously pursued in the courts.

Another very significant aspect of ASBO's is the deterrent effect the process has on behavior, of the 73 youths that have been subject to this process, diversionary provision has been made for 40 of them (via the Youth Offending Team). The Partnership gave warning interviews to 30 youths. (some we decided to subject to diversionary activities at core group, others we decided to interview and warn as well as providing diversionary opportunities) It is now standard procedure to incorporate the Youth Offending Team into all warning interviews to tackle the youth's behaviour from a number of angles. Much of this work has resulted from early experience on Brookhouse.

- **Parents**

We found it very noticeable at ASBO interviews that often Brookhouse parents seemed at their 'wits end' with their children, and seemed ineffective in controlling them. Many expressed a willingness to bring about change but just couldn't manage it. There is a youth services project running to establish a youth club on Brookhouse. We suggested we try to incorporate some of the parents who had expressed interest in developing into the youth club project, the ultimate intention being that the project would be self run by volunteers with training and community development guidance, some of their children may also become involved.

As a consequence a number of parents of ASBO candidates have now become involved in developing this facility, and the training they are receiving is also improving their parenting skills in general. In at least three cases the parents have taken their ASBO candidate child with them, the children themselves becoming involved in developing the group. Some of these were key players in anti social behaviour, so hopefully now they will be using their talent and leadership skills to have positive influence on other youths.

A lot of the parents involved have younger children, who might otherwise have turned out the same as their older brothers and sisters, so this has real long term potential for development of youth culture on the estate.

- **Community Wardens**

Community Wardens have been established on the estate by the Community Safety Unit, who made special efforts to become involved on professional terms with their work on the estate, and regularly share information and intelligence in accordance with partnership protocols.

- **Housing**

We have developed close working relationships with the housing authority on the estate, and regularly share information which has assisted in legal actions by the Housing authority for breach of tenancies, and has become another useful tool.

- **Trading Standards**

We incorporated intelligence gained by Community Beat Officers in a joint targeting initiative with Trading Standards officers against illegal sales of alcohol to underage teenagers using covert video and audio wired test purchasers. This led to prosecutions of off licences in the area known to be supplying alcohol to youths on Brookhouse.

- **Permanent Camera**

The Brookhouse estate was one of the first to receive an extension to the Town Centre CCTV programme. A very substantial camera pole is sited outside the Brookhouse shops with a permanent remote control camera fixed to the top. We regularly view footage from this camera, keeping close working relationships with the camera operatives in cases (which are becoming rare now) where there are problems at the shops with a view to identifying and dealing with offenders.

How successful was your approach

Very significant improvements have been made on the estate as a result of targeted and strategic work, carried out by the Community Beat Office, using the widest range of legislation and procedures available, and also by working in close partnership with a number of agencies ie; Housing, Social Services, Community Safety Unit, Bus companies (x2), Community Wardens, Education, Youth Services, Trading Standards, Councillors, Fire Service and historically direct work with the local MP.

Probably one very good indicator to the success is that shopkeepers are now reporting significantly increased takings, and the shops area is becoming normalised to a focal point of the community where people can go with confidence. Older people are now going to the shops in the dark, which they wouldn't have done in the past. That fear has been significantly diminished. Feedback in general from the community is there is a greatly improved feeling of well being associated with something as simple as just going out to the shops, knowing the tide has turned against offenders on the estate.

Professional actions of Community Beat officers over the period has also been crucial to the achievements on Brookhouse, their dedication and continuity is invaluable to long term problem solving.

The Community Beat officers know the offenders extremely well, through professional knowledge and communication skills they have developed a "working" relationship with the regulars which has led to much intelligence gathering. For example, the fire service were recently called to a bonfire party where the householder threatened to shoot them if they extinguished a dangerously positioned fire in his garden. Also present were a number of Brookhouse "problem" youths, there was potential for the incident to deteriorate, however the Community Beat officers who attended knew the householder concerned had minor mental problems which were exacerbated by drink, they quickly defused the situation and prevented any escalation. In the end the fire service left with the householder and youths extinguishing the fire themselves with buckets of water. This was a skilfully handled incident made possible only by the officers' excellent knowledge of the people on their beat, characteristic of all community beat officers at Eccles.

We made an appropriate referral to the health authority regarding the householder's behaviour and his mental condition, and also conducted an investigation into the allegations made to shoot the fire officers. There was insufficient evidence to prosecute for any offences, but the person concerned was dealt with by the housing department for breaches of his tenancy agreement, an injunction was obtained specifically restraining him from certain actions.

Police Community Support Officers have recently been introduced as a force resource, allocated to the Community Beat offices, they have been deployed on the estate to very good effect, by increasing a uniform presence to the expressed reassurance of a considerable number of vulnerable residents, also maintaining good relations with the Community Wardens and providing another intelligence gathering stream.

Statistical Evaluation

As well as noting that takings were up in the local shops, statistical evaluation was undertaken to quantify the actual numbers of recorded incidents and changes in patterns.

The below chart is a comparison of incidents recorded, relating to Anti Social Behaviour within Brookhouse (F2Q3).

The comparison has been completed over three periods as shown:

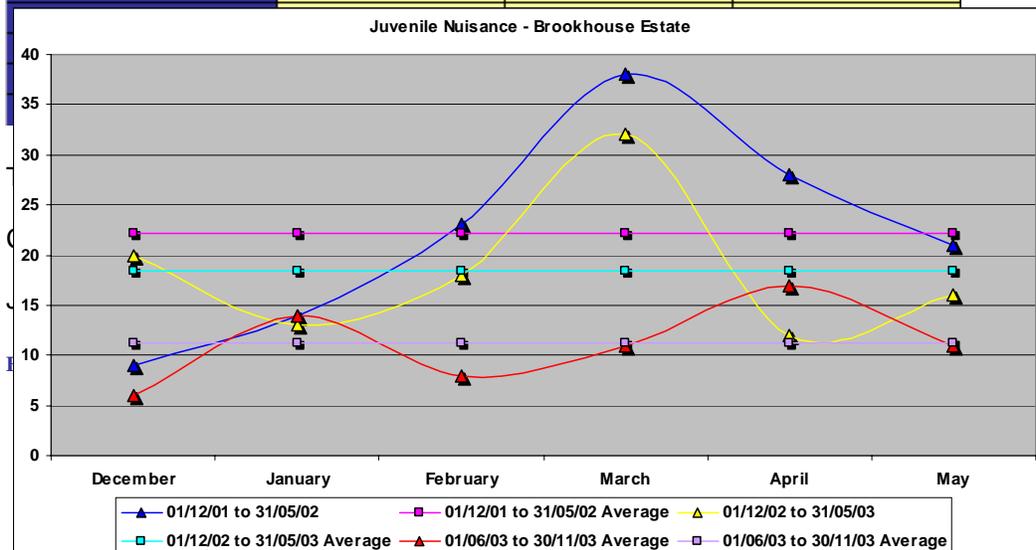
Figure 1
Comparison

	01/12/2001 - 31/05/2002	01/12/2002 - 31/05/2003	01/06/2003 - 30/11/2003
December	44	56	37
January	47	50	46
February	61	52	40
March	71	90	40
April	66	55	35
May	52	66	44
Total	341	369	242

In the 3rd period (01/06/2003 to 30/11/2003) 242 offences have been reported, showing a reduction of 99 incidents (29% reduction) from period 1, and an incredible reduction of 127 incidents reported in comparison to period 2 (34% reduction).

Figure 2
Cross Tabulation

	01/12/2001 - 31/05/2002	01/12/2002 - 31/05/2003	01/06/2003 - 30/11/2003
Common Assault	7	2	2
Street Disturbance	6	9	1
Criminal Damage	92	145	84
Other Nuisance	22	17	30
Juvenile Nuisance	133	111	67
Indecent / Annoying Calls	27	21	18
Motor Vehicle Annoyance	11	23	9
Other Disturbance	20	16	11



How does this project fit into an overall approach to problem solving?

Long term problem solving is crucial for long-term change, and Community Beat police officers are fundamental to this process.

Dealing with the offending behaviour is only part of the strategy demanded by problem solving, there are also other issues to deal with which may relate to the victim or the particular location.

There are far greater tools available through partnership working than just through policing in isolation with resources and expertise to be tapped into from partner agencies, its also vital to engender public goodwill and confidence, all of which are fundamental to the problem solving process which Community Beat officers are well placed to develop.

The activities described above all reflect practical application of the problem solving process on Brookhouse, and are indicative of the methodology adopted by Community Beat officers across the Eccles Community Beat Office.

This project has all the elements of the problem solving approach; the aim from the outset was to create long term sustainable change, both in term of dealing with the offenders the offenders behaviour, and also in terms of building confidence in the community, and through our partners creating environmental changes designed to reduce opportunities for crime or anti social behaviour

The change to geographical policing will enhance our ability to devote dedicated staff to particular areas, increasing the number of officers with a sense of personal responsibility and knowledge of the communities and areas in which they serve.

Intelligence gathering, crucial in identifying ringleaders allowing for a strategic assault on the gang culture will be enhanced by personal contact with the public, which in turn will lead to increased use of informants and the Crime and Disorder partnerships ability to work more closely with the community on a day to day basis rather than reactive policing.

Full use will continue to be made of technical surveillance methods under RIPA authorities.

Geographical problem solving will also help police officers have a more dogged approach to the investigative process, they will be better equipped to patrol their beats using the benefits of the National Intelligence Model, with the ability to plan and prepare gleaned from an awareness of incidents and specific criminal patterns of behaviour.

The new SARA and OPUS databases, together with the introduction of geographical policing will greatly assist the recording processes, and make for easier access to good practice.

Appendix 1
Map of Brookhouse estate.

