

**Project Name:**

Operation Bagley – Welland Crescent

**Location:**

Welland Crescent, Barnsley, South Yorkshire

**Summary**

The aim of the project (Operation Bagley) was to restore pride and respect back into Welland Crescent. This would be achieved by a two-pronged approach;

- Clearing the area of environmental blight
- Tackling all forms of criminal activity

The problems on Welland Crescent have been on going for a decade with a gradual decline in acceptable behaviour by local youths and residents. The area is blighted by numerous run-down and derelict properties and has suffered due to a lack of investment in the environment.

There was a difficulty in readily analysing data in relation to Welland Crescent, it became apparent that data sharing amongst agencies had never been carried out. This was over come by having regular meetings and requesting data. This helped in reducing a void in data and highlighting the main problems. The high number of police and partner agencies empowered all involved to make a concerted effort in tackling the issues highlighted.

Operation Bagley was a multi-agency response along with South Yorkshire Police to tackle issues. Short-term blitz took place between 5th-8th October 2009 bringing together a number of agencies and professionals who between them would apply a concentrated effort of both enforcement and support over a four day period. It was recognised by all that however successful this operation was, it was merely a short term 'sticking plaster' and that longer term strategic decisions and actions would need to be taken to rectify the problem in relation to inadequate condition of the housing and the inaction of the landlords.

The problems on Welland Crescent have not been resolved; we have won the battle but not the war. The recent blitz has shown a commitment by police and partner agencies to tackle issues. Operation Bagley's results show how effective a short-term blitz can be in cleaning up an area and tackling criminal activity. The results far exceeded expectations. The operation was symbolic of the desire for all partner agencies to tackle the problems on Welland Crescent, and this represents the first step in a long-term plan to improve the quality of life for all residents.

**Word Count: 349**

## Scanning

The aim of the project (Operation Bagley) was to restore pride and respect back into Welland Crescent. This would be achieved by a two-pronged approach;

- Clearing the area of environmental blight
- Tackling all forms of criminal activity

The problems on Welland Crescent have been on going for a decade with a gradual decline in acceptable behaviour by local youths and residents. The area is blighted by numerous run-down and derelict properties and has suffered due to a lack of investment. The number of reported incidents and intelligence reports suggested crime ranging from drugs offences to assaults and antisocial behaviour were the acceptable norm. The area had become a dumping ground for litter and waste that resulted in arson related offences. Many of the above factors are policing priorities that if left would have affected confidence and satisfaction in both the police and council. The general state of the environment and disproportionate level of crime have done nothing but increase social tension, this became apparent when residents provided impact statements.

Welland Crescent is situated to the South of Barnsley in Elsecar and consists of 122 properties, of which seven are derelict, burnt out or beyond repair due to years of neglect. A further four properties are empty and 50% are in a poor state of repair requiring building works. Three properties are council owned the remainder are privately owned or rented. Welland Crescent was built in the 1950's as a temporary solution to house Scottish miners.

Average property prices in Barnsley are £129,779, properties on Welland Crescent sell from as little as £20,000 at auction to a private sale of £60,000. Only 3.04% of the UK's population will live in these types of houses, which are known as type 44 in the ACORN classification. Income on the street is low with a third of families earning less than £10,000. Over 10% are single parent families.

Several large embedded criminal families live on and frequent the street. 49% of households on Welland Crescent are on income support and housing benefits. Controlled substances were sold and used on a regular basis by residents. This is evident due to the amount of drugs warrants executed, drugs arrests and intelligence received. Robust stop and search powers are continually exercised in and around the area. It was also a recognised default area for duty group officers, public order vans and traffic to visit when on patrol. Even with this concentrated amount of patrols and visits it did not stop criminal activities.

Arson was also a concern and an issue for South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue (SYFR) who had received a high rate of calls for the area. Figures obtained from lasos.org.uk (local area statistics) show that the ward average for fires is 3.79 and 8.35 for Elsecar. SYFR figures show sixteen fires for the period Jun 08 – Jun 09 with a spike of nine fires committed between Mar-May 09.

The above information lent Welland Crescent to becoming an ideal area to be tackled at higher-level tasking and co-ordinating groups. Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (BMBC) have moved the issue of Welland Crescent up the strategic housing chain and is now a priority for funding in the 2011-2014 budget plan.

It was realised that a partnership approach was required. The initial planning stages of the operation identified agencies required and what the main objectives for the operation would be. It was necessary that Police took ownership of the operation, as it was known that agencies would need support in conducting their enquiries. Environmental blight was identified as the main issue to be rectified. A large majority of visible crime on the street was criminal damage, fires/arson and anti social behaviour, this was being carried out by local residents.

Problems were highlighted through a number of initiatives which were carried out over a number of months, these can be seen in Appendix 1.

It was clear that the issues on Welland Crescent needed a partnership based problem oriented initiative to solve the problems for the community that live there.

### **Analysis**

There was a difficulty in readily analysing data in relation to Welland Crescent, it became apparent that data sharing amongst agencies had never been carried out fully. This was over come by having regular meetings and requesting data. This helped in reducing a void in data and highlighting the main problems.

On evaluating the information from partnership meetings tasks and objectives for Op Bagley were established:

- Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (BMBC), environmental regulatory unit (ERU) as part of an environmental scan identified clearing the streets, gardens and surrounding areas tackling environmental blight. Problems had been identified by the amount of enforcement notices issued. This would be measured by the amount of waste removed, gardens cleared and communal areas landscaped.
- Improving support and awareness of issues affecting residents. This would be measured by the uptake of help provided by partner agencies. South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue would identify households requiring smoke alarms and advice on fire hazards, also assisting in one to one arson interventions where needed. BMBC would offer replacement bins where required, as it was known many had been set on fire or stolen. BMBC dog wardens would offer a free dog neutering service as it was known that residents on a low income could not afford or be unwilling to pay for the service.
- Hoyland Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) identified reducing and disrupting drug dealing in the area. The number of national intelligence reports re drugs and drugs warrant executed identified the problem. The only way this would be measured was by monitoring known drug users who did or did not visit the drug addresses. Due to the high policing and partner agencies in the area it was known that this alone would disrupt business on a temporary basis. Comprehensive crime figures were obtained from the Crime Management System.
- Reducing levels of all crime was identified by the numerous different types of incidents recorded. Utility companies, DVLA, TV licensing and department of works and pensions were consulted about specific addresses where intelligence gathered suggested offences would be committed. Individual agencies interrogated their own data bases to produce lists of properties that did not have licences, low utility bills or discrepancies against benefits claims. Houses were also targeted where it would be known counterfeit cigarettes would be on sale. Barnsley is known as the counterfeit capital of England. This would be measured by the amount of enforcement action taken and detected offences.
- Tackling anti social behaviour in an effort to stabilise the community. This would be monitored by a reduction in calls. Truancy officers with the police children and young person's officer (CYPO) would visit addresses of known offenders that school registers showed as having poor attendance. Youth workers would engage with local youths. Again, it was known that a high presence by police and partner agencies would reduce anti social behaviour temporarily.

A sustained operation was the only viable solution to enable all agencies and resources to tackle the issues highlighted. The high number of police and partner agencies empowered all involved to make a concerted effort in tackling the issues highlighted. Acting autonomously would have resulted in a lack of momentum and had not obviously worked in the past.

## **Offenders**

A majority of the residents are unemployed, single parent low-income families on benefits. There are a few large criminal families on the crescent who have established themselves over a period of time. Due to this, criminals feel they can get away with crimes and feel safe in the knowledge that the local residents will not challenge them because of intimidation and reprisals. The criminals are motivated to carry out their business at all costs.

The offenders have no choice but to live on Welland Crescent because they are unable to secure council housing or private-rented accommodation anywhere else. For these reasons, it is more likely that children on Welland Crescent will fail or drop out of school at an early age. 33.3% of secondary school children are classified as having special educational needs, the average in Barnsley is 17.7%. There is a failure of aspirations caused by poverty and crime in this area, and unless tackled, these young people will become the next generation of offenders.

On interrogating statistical information, it soon became apparent that you would be four times more likely to be a victim of crime on Welland Crescent compared to anywhere else in Barnsley. Welland Crescent accounted for 20% of the total number of crimes in the Hoyland SNT area. Appendix 2 shows the number of recorded crimes, incidents and fires between Mar – Aug 09. Statistics obtained from analysts at Barnsley local intelligence office and South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue show 'rowdy-inconsiderate' behaviour equated to 31% of total incidents reported, and 'concern for safety' accounted for 10% of the total.

## **Objectives**

- Continue to gather Intelligence identifying the main drug dealers and users on Welland Crescent. Tackle with a zero tolerance approach and prosecute.
- Use powers to conduct stop and searches of suspects
- Educate offenders on the street re environmental problems.
- Assist agencies in the prosecution of offenders.
- Educate offenders on the dangers of fire.

## **Victims**

All residents on Welland Crescent are the victims of a cycle that requires breaking. The derelict and burnt-out houses were a target for nuisance youths in the area, constantly subjected to criminal damage.

Mounds of discarded refuse and waste entice residents and outsiders to fly tip on the street this results in fires being set. Arson is a serious issue to residents and has left several properties unsafe and requiring demolition. Crime related incidents affect the residents and those in the immediate surrounding area. Residents are the target of nuisance youths who cause damage and gather in large intimidating groups.

The public perception of visitors and residents looking at the environmental blight on the street is one that crime is out of control and much higher than it actually is. Crime in Barnsley is at its lowest in 21 years.

Residents made it clear that it was intolerable living on Welland Crescent due to the general state of the area and associated problems. Below are extracts of impact statements made:

*“There are a high number of youths in groups who spend a lot of time hanging around. They have also caused a great deal of disruption and disrepair to the fences around the estate. Most of the fencing has been stolen. There is also a lot of litter on Welland Crescent and a high number of alcohol cans, bottles etc thrown on the pavements, grass verges and in the roadside, which is from youths drinking in the street and around the area. Also, I have had to ring the council on numerous times due to fly-tipping”. (Resident D)*

*“The area of Welland Crescent could be compared to an Indian slum, with poverty and anti social behaviour being high, most properties are abandoned/boarded up and so attract thieves and anti social behaviour, it is terrible to live with this outside of your own home. We are fed up of being intimidated by youths and fear of our property”. (Resident E)*

## Objectives

- Restore satisfaction and confidence in SYP and partners.
- Provide facilities to assist in tackling environmental blight.
- Drive forward Neighbourhood watch and establish a TARA (Tenants and Residents Association).
- Secure funding for Welland Community House and establish a comity.

## Environment

Welland Crescent is broken into what are known locally as squares. These run off the main road and the squares are dissected by alleys that link to a main alley at the rear of the squares. The layout of the street makes the area hard to police as it gives offenders multiple escape routes and makes an ideal place for gangs of nuisance youths to congregate.

The area is not aesthetically pleasing on the eye due to derelict and run down properties and large quantities of waste and refuse. The communal areas are used as an overspill for household waste. Often this would be burnt to avoid detection by council employees. These fires affect the area with their smell and residue left behind. It was noticed that a large amount of council wheelie bins were missing from the street, most are believed to have been destroyed by fire or stolen. Appendix C shows a map of the area.

Property owners in the new build houses adjoining Welland Crescent also wanted to see the area cleared up, as they believed this was reducing the value of their properties. Many property owners have rented their properties and left the area. There are no play areas on Welland Crescent. Welland House is a community house situated in the heart of the crescent but is not used to its full potential due to lack of funding.

On partnership, visits to Welland Crescent the state of properties were assessed and property owners contacted in an effort to force tenants to maintain their properties, however there is very little incentive to maintain the properties due to their value and unwillingness by the tenants to conform without enforcement action.

## Objectives

- Clear environment of waste and refuse.
- Challenge property owners and tenants over the state of their properties.
- Continue to look at long term strategic housing problems.
- Promote and educate residents on recycling of waste.
- Reissue wheelie bins to residents.

## **Response**

Operation Bagley was a multi agency response along with South Yorkshire Police to tackle the above issues. The short-term blitz took place between 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> October 2009 bringing together a number of agencies and professionals who between them would apply a concentrated effort of both enforcement and support over a four day period. It was recognised by all that however successful this operation was, it was a merely a short term 'sticking plaster' and that longer term strategic decisions and actions would need to be taken to rectify the problem in relation to the inadequate condition of the housing and the inaction of the landlords.

The following agencies were utilised as follows:

- **Police – Safer Neighbourhood Team, Mounted Section, Road Policing Group, Force Helicopter & Duty Group Officers:**

These resources were used to give assistance and collaborate with agencies, provide reassurance to members of the public and prosecute offenders. Police units were directed to patrol Welland Crescent in the evenings to keep the pressure on criminals for the duration of the operation. The force helicopter was requested to fly over to show a high level of police visibility.

Results:

- |                                      |                               |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ➤ 18 Stop & Searches                 | 4 CLE 28 (Vehicle Tax)        |
| ➤ 2 Vehicles sized                   | 2 Helicopter Fly-over         |
| ➤ 4 Police interviews                | 2 Traffic Prosecution Files   |
| ➤ 1 Arrest                           | 7500 Cigarettes seized        |
| ➤ 34 Intelligence Reports            | 1 Referral to Social Services |
| ➤ 2 Fixed Penalty Notices (Disorder) | 320 Police Patrol Hours       |

The above actions had the desired affect of disrupting the criminals, showing the residents that the police were willing to tackle issues affecting the area, empowering the residents to provide information, this was noticed due to the increased national intelligence reports submitted.

- **South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue:**

SYFR were utilised in carrying out patrols spotting potential fire hazards on the street. Properties were issued with smoke alarms and every property was issued information on fire safety and arson intervention.

Results:

- |                          |                                   |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ➤ 42 Smoke Alarms fitted | 101 People made safe              |
| ➤ 2 Arson Interventions  | Area leafleted on arson/bin fires |
| ➤ 200 Working hours      |                                   |

SYFR were instrumental in pointing out to residents the dangers associated with arson. Two youths known for committing arson were engaged on a one to one basis and educated on the dangers. An environmental scan was completed by SYFR who liaised with other agencies in clearing potential arson hot spots areas.

- **Department of Works & Pension:**

Intelligence identified addresses possibly claiming fraudulent benefits. These properties were visited and checks completed.

Results:

- |                         |                               |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ➤ 17 Properties Visited | 13 Effective Statements taken |
| ➤ 2 Benefit Corrections | 1 Sanction                    |
| ➤ 4 Referrals for file  | 24 Working hours              |

The work carried out sent a positive message that fraudulent claiming of benefits would not be tolerated. It has placed offenders on the back foot and sent a clear message to the community contemplating engaging in this type of crime that they will be caught and action taken.

- **Electricity & Gas Enforcement:**

METERPLUS carried out appropriate safety checks and ensured that appliances were maintained. Properties had been identified where meters had been tampered with in the past and their immediate families addresses identified.

Results:

- 50 Properties Checked
- 9 Properties contained unsafe/possible tampered meters
- 35 Working hours

Numerous properties were identified where it was suspected that meters had been tampered with, these were made safe and if needed removed. The checking of these meters prevented possible fatal house fires making residents safe and spread the message that meter tampering was a crime.

- **Council Wardens & Neighbourhood Pride:**

Assisted in clearing communal areas monitoring disposal of waste and giving advice to residents.

Results:

- Co-ordinated rotation of skips.
- 50 Tonne of waster removed by skips
- 160 Working hours

The above work carried out cleared the local environment of 50 tonnes of waste, removing possible arson material from the area, preventing problems with pest control and enabled residents the opportunity to dispose of waste that otherwise would have been left in gardens to accumulate.

- **Probation Service (Community Pay Back):**

Offenders on the community pay back scheme assisted in clearing communal areas, gardens of derelict properties and aided residents in the removal of large quantities of waste.

Results:

- Assisted in clean up and removal of rubbish and waste
- 49 tonnes of waste removed by truck
- 320 Working hours

Pay Back carried out the vast majority of work clearing communal land of waste and bringing the area back to a cleaner, greener environment. The presence of offenders showed that there are consequences to committing crime. It also sent a positive message to residents that police do tackle crime and offenders are punished.

- **Environmental Regulatory Services:**

Visits were made to addresses in a poor state that were highlighted during the environmental scan.

Results:

- 2 Investigations into illegal storage & burning of waste for profit
- 1 Fly-tipping prosecution
- 150 Fly-tipping warning letters distributed
- 24 Individual request for bins
- 54 Bins delivered to the street
- 4 Section 26 notices served on properties (Clean up order)
- 10 dog fouling/littering signs stencilled on pavement
- 36 working hours

Enforcement notices were issued to residents whose gardens were full of waste and litter. Pavements were stencilled with 'pick up or pay up' notices. Advice was given to residents and requests for new wheelie bins were taken. Every home was leafleted with information on environmental waste issues. Notice boards that highlighted previous convictions committed by residents were posted outside

Welland House. These highlighted to residents that enforcement action was being taken resulting in convictions and that BMBC were tackling issues affecting residents.

- **Education & Welfare Officers:**

Education and welfare officers and CYPOs carried out truancy patrols in the area and visited addresses with known offenders.

Results:

- 4 Truancy patrols
- 1 Case conference referral
- 8 Working hours
- 1 Child found truant
- 1 referral re bullying

There is a close link between truant children and crime being committed. These visits enforced the need that parents have an obligation to ensure their children attended school.

- **TV Licensing:**

Check and carry out enforcement on properties not listed as holding a TV licence.

Results:

- 6 Occupied properties without TV licences visited
- 5 Residents issued on spot fines
- 6 Working hours

A clear message was sent to offenders that non-payment of TV licence would be tackled and appropriate enforcement action would be taken. It was noted that often residents would not answer the door to the enforcement officer if he attended on his own; however, with police support access was gained to all properties shown not holding a valid TV licence. This was a low level example of partnership working but showed what results could be gained.

- **Dog Warden:**

The dog warden undertook patrols and owners visited who had come to notice prior to the operation.

Results:

- Dog neutering vouchers distributed
- 10 took up option of free neutering
- 4 Patrols made

Every property with a dog had the opportunity to take up a free dog neutering service. Those that took up the offer would have probably not considered it or been able to afford the procedure.

- **Youth Service:**

The youth service carried out engagement activities with teenagers from Welland crescent in the evenings visiting identified problem hot spot areas and local parks.

Results:

- 2 Night time patrols undertaken
- 35 youths engaged
- 6 Working hours

Large groups of offenders congregate on Welland Crescent in intimidating groups. Often they are not committing crime, however public perception is one of fear. They were encouraged not to loiter around properties and alleyways but to use designated parks and attend youth activities.

- **Media:**

Media was used to highlight the work by police and partner agencies throughout the operation. TV Look North ran a story on the evening news.

Local news papers ran stories and BBC radio Sheffield interviewed the SNT Inspector and beat officer.

The most notable impact was that of education on recycling. It was discovered in the scanning phase that wheelie bins were deficient from the area. In total 54 bins were deficient and reissued to 24 households. This had the affect as follows:

- Educating residents on which bin to use for disposal of waste ensured bin men would empty them of weekly waste.
- It would reduce instances of fly-tipping and reduce waste in the area.
- Reduction in waste would reduce arson.
- Lack of waste reduces pest control issues.
- The environment in general would be cleaner and greener.

### **Assessment**

The recent blitz has shown a commitment by police and partner agencies to tackle issues. Operation Bagley's results show how effective a short-term blitz can be in cleaning up an area and tackling criminal activity. The above results far exceeded expectations. The operation was symbolic of the desire for all partner agencies to tackle the problems on Welland Crescent, and this represents the first step in a long-term plan to improve the quality of life for all residents.

The medium term reduction in crime and recorded incidents as shown in Appendix D for the period October 2009 – April 2010 shows a marked improvement from the previous 6 months March 2009 – August 2009.

There has been a 100% reduction in arson attacks since Operation Bagley. Recorded crime has been reduced by 43% and reported incidents reduced by 58%.

A leaflet drop re success of the operation was sent to every address on Welland Crescent.

The main drug dealer has been forced to leave the area due to pressure placed upon him prior to and including the operation. This was due to the amount of warrants executed at the address and in part to intelligence gathered from residents. Public perception of police and partner agencies has increased significantly.

Op Bagley II was conducted over the period 21-22 Apr 10 and was carried out as a planned six month follow up to ensure that the area does not fall back to previous levels. The hope is that it will become longer between operations with environmental blight and crime being reduced.

**Word Count: 3,197**

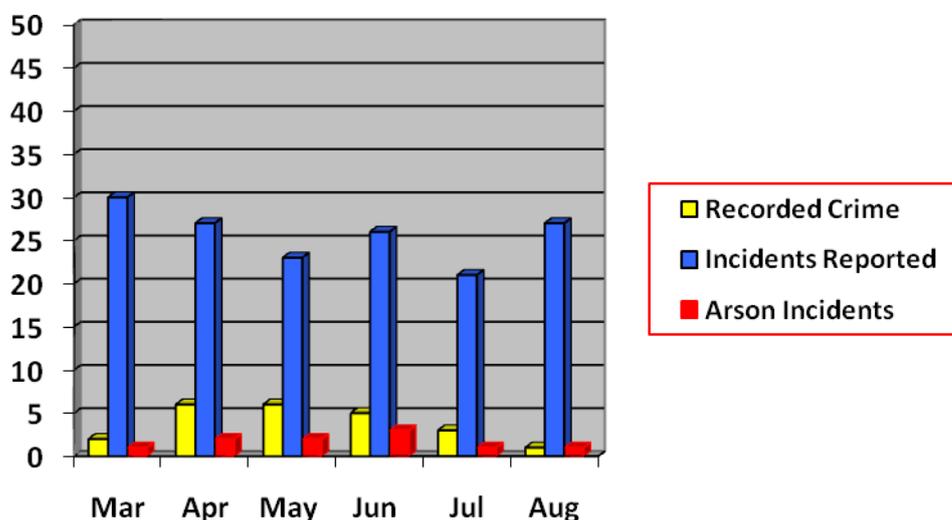
## Appendix

### Appendix 1: Indicators highlighting issues on Welland Crescent

1	Crime & Safety Group Meetings (CSSG) are held monthly to allow local residents and elected members attended monthly meetings. Concerns were expressed over the general state of Welland Crescent and their concerns about living conditions.
2	Partners and Communities Together Meetings (PACT). At regular PACT meetings involving police, partner agencies and members of the community, concerns were continually being raised about nuisance families and crime and disorder in the area.
3	Member of Parliament, Michael Clapham MP wrote to me on several occasions after receiving complaints of anti social behaviour and the build up of waste.
4	Prior to the commencement of Operation Bagley police surgeries were held over a five day period to allow residents to talk openly to police. A total of 24% of households provided feed back.
5	High numbers of recorded crime committed on the crescent. From March to August 2009 there were 26 recorded crimes. A large majority of crimes go unreported because residents fear reprisals.
6	Adverse local media coverage. Press articles have likened Welland Crescent to a 'Ghetto', such reports did nothing but drag the area further down making a bad reputation even worse.
7	Number of contact calls. Contact calls are left by members of the public directly to the SNT reporting anti social behaviour & crime. From March to August 2009, 50 contact line calls were made.
8	Emergency 999 calls. 139 calls were made to police call handlers requesting police or South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue.
9	Community impact statements were provided by eight residents who expressed their concerns and highlighted specific problems.
10	Intelligence gathering and submission of National Intelligence Reports were also conducted prior to the operation identifying the problems. A comprehensive picture was built up over an 18-month period prior to the operation. This information would become invaluable for assisting partner agencies tackle identified families and properties.
11	Neighbourhood Watch. The Neighbourhood Watch was established 18 months ago in response to crime and nuisance problems on the street.
12	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, wardens, environmental regulatory unit, pest control and strategic housing were consulted at regular meetings identifying issues that required tackling. It was clear that there were significant crime, anti social and environmental issues on Welland Crescent.

### Appendix 2:

#### Recorded crime between March – August 09

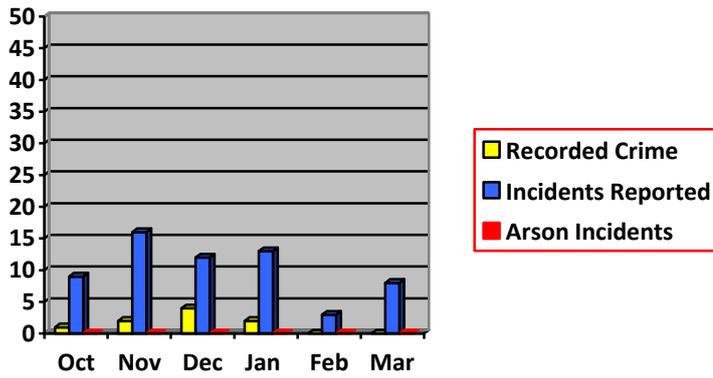


Appendix 3:



Appendix 4:

**Recorded Incidents  
Oct 09 – Mar 10**



# OPERATION BAGLEY PHOTOS





# MP seeks funding to restore Welland Crescent's pride

By Gael Stigant

A BARNSELY MP has paid a visit to Welland Crescent to see for himself the issues affecting the street.

Barnsley West and Penistone MP Mick Clapham took a stroll through the crescent with Hoyland SNT's PC Paul Davies last Friday morning.

PC Davies said: "Michael has written to me on several occasions over the last few years about issues on Welland Crescent and I have invited him down so he can see first-hand the problem we have with the properties, especially the absentee landlords and properties in a terrible state."

PC Davies showed Mr Clapham the littered, burnt-out and vandalised houses, which have been neglected by the absentee landlords.

Mr Clapham said: "It seems to me that the only solution to some of the issues is to think in terms of how we may get the right to demolish (some of the houses).

"Then what we need is to get some resources to start to make the place look such that it's conducive to restoring the pride of the community. Once we get pride we can start to move forward."

He said he would write to the chairman of the Coal Regeneration



After the clean-up: MP Mick Clapham and PC Paul Davies find out for themselves what problems are still affecting Welland Crescent.

Trust to ask if any funding was available for Welland Crescent.

He added: "The majority of people are really good people, it's just that we do have that minority who don't

seem to have any pride at all and rubbish gets dumped, which all adds to a downward spiral. Now it's been cleaned up we need to work from there."

# Residents blast Elsecar 'ghetto' area

By Gael Stigant

WELLAND Crescent residents have described their disgust at the 'ghetto' they live in.

In a letter to the Chronicle, the residents described how they moved to the area three years ago under the assumption it would undergo renovation and improvement.

"Three years later and absolutely nothing has changed," they wrote. "It could only be thought upon as a ghetto. There are still youth gangs that gather and intimidate people passing by and a continuous litter problem."

They added: "Most of the ex-council homes are now derelict, run down and dilapidated. We are forced to look at the disgusting state of the area every time we look out of the window."

They said they wrote to the council but got no response. By publicising their frustration, they

hope the council will take notice and begin regenerating the area.

But Coun Trevor Naylor said there's a limit to how much the council can do, although they have sent environmental officers there to assess the situation.

"I've got to apologise to the people but there's not much I can do," he said.

"I know it's a bad area but it's private properties that are being vandalised and set alight. I'm told the owners have gone, and where they have gone I don't know."

Sgt Neil Pearson from Hoyland Safer Neighbourhood Team acknowledged the area needs improvement.

"Some of the people who live there have no pride in where they live, their expectations are low and they make people's lives a misery," he said. "Because they have private landlords our hands are tied as long as their tenants keep paying their rent."

Sgt Pearson said the police are working in that area 'all the time' but to have a real impact everybody needs to get involved.

He said: "It's a long-term thing and the more they get on with it the quicker and better the results will be."

A council spokesman said they were aware of the problems affecting Welland Crescent and were working with police.

"Several successful prosecutions have been taken recently for various activities, one of which was reported in the Barnsley Chronicle last week.

"We will continue to work to resolve the problems these residents face. The run-down properties in this locality are not in the ownership of the council."

Coun Naylor is holding a surgery in Hoyland Town Hall today from 10-11.30am.

# AGENCIES IN big clean-up of 'ghetto'

By Gael Stigant

RESIDENTS of Welland Crescent, Elsecar have 'no excuses' for allowing their neighbourhood to descend into disrepair again following a major clean-up.

Officers from Hoyland SNT, along with other agencies arrived on Monday morning at the start of Operation Bagley, a four-day crack-down on the street which residents have previously described as a 'ghetto'.

PC Paul Davies from Hoyland SNT said: "Residents told me the place was an eyesore and full of rubbish and we took this information on board.

"Based on their requirements we have come down to clean up. We need them to have pride in their own street. There are no excuses now. Hopefully, we will have a cleaner, greener, safer Welland Crescent."

The operation, which took months of preparation, involved agencies such as the fire service, the Department of Work and Pensions, MeterPlus, the probation service, TV licensing representatives, Berneslai Homes, the youth service, Neighbourhood Pride and education welfare officers.



Kelly-Ann Keegan-Moore helps in the clean-up.

licence, the agencies also offered residents the chance to have smoke alarms installed, to have new wheelie bins delivered and to obtain a free dog neutering voucher.

Community Payback, a scheme under which offenders do work for the community, was there to clear truckloads of waste from gardens, driveways and grassy banks.

The majority of residents welcomed the operation.

Resident Kelly-Ann Keegan-Moore said: "It's about time we all worked together. By doing this the kids will live around here, grow up around here and hopefully stay."

as soon as the operation is over.

But two residents were unhappy with the way things were done. One said: "I think it's a good idea but officers are harassing us all the time. I feel intimidated."

Another added: "It's beyond a joke now and I'm fed up of it. I've even been to the doctor's. I'm losing my hair and they've put it down to stress. They can't leave us alone."

During the operation, officers found one home with a hazardous electricity meter that had been tampered with and seized 7,500 cigarettes from another.

PC Davies has thanked