



Tackling ASB and Violent Crime – McDonalds Shepherds Bush Green

Summary of application

In November 2017, Neighbourhood Police on Shepherds Bush Green noticed an all-time rise in ASB, disorder and youth enabled violent crime on the ward. This was directly linked to a local McDonalds Restaurant which had been the generator of 71 crime reports in the preceding 9 months. These crimes ranged from common assaults to violent GBHs but there were many instances of unreported ASB. Victims mentioned a total lack of control within the premises. Local businesses were losing customers and residents were experiencing a reduced quality of life due the number of intimidating youths involved. Our objectives outlined a partnership approach to reduce crime and disorder, lessen policing demand and restore public confidence.

Analysis:

Using social media, crime analysis and street clinics, officers managed to gauge the severity of these incidents and build up an accurate intelligence picture of the negative impact McDonalds was having on the community. Large groups of intimidating youths frequently loitered outside the entrance doors and it became a hotspot for those involved in gang violence and drug activity. Local residents reported having to seek alternative routes to avoid the youths who frequently blocked the pavement. McDonalds was inadvertently fueling this issue by providing free Wi-Fi, playing provocative music and having a distinct lack of security which allowed easy access. There was evidence that gangs were carrying weapons and openly dealing drugs from within the premises. Public perception was that Police were ineffective in tackling the issue and confidence had been lost. We identified the need for a joined up approach between ourselves, Hammersmith & Fulham Council and McDonalds itself in order to deal with the problem.

Response:

Having exhausted many conventional tactics, we identified that immediate and drastic action was required. After careful consideration and research, the implementation of a Closure Notice under the new Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 was deemed the most suitable innovative approach. This encouraged McDonalds to take ownership of the problem it had unintentionally caused and allowed for sustainability of the joint response.

Assessment:

There was an immediate decline in all recorded crime and ASB which reduced policing demand and made a significant positive impact on the whole community. News of our successful response travelled fast and we were contacted by other Police services that were experiencing similar issues. After careful evaluation of the process, we were able to pave the way for future proactive initiatives of this type.

Number of words: 398

Description of project:

Scanning:

In November 2017, the Dedicated Ward Officer (DWO) for Shepherds Bush Green, PC Tom Cooke noticed that in the preceding 2 weeks there had been an incident of violent disorder and 2 offences of GBH, one of which involved a knife. On closer inspection, there had been over 71 crimes directly linked to one McDonalds Restaurant and these ranged from common assault, racially aggravated harassment, public order and robbery. Violent crimes appeared to be on the increase and the heightened level of ASB was continuing to have an unacceptable and detrimental effect on the community. McDonalds was also linked to nearby bookmakers as people were using the restaurant as a cover to take, use and sell drugs. There were also 55 linked CADs within the 2-week period (calls to police regarding disorder) and numerous intelligence reports relating to gang members and drug dealing within McDonalds.

PC Tom Cooke, PC Paul Davis and PCSO Ben Lambert established that peak timings of ASB on the ward fell between 1530 hours to 2130 hours and the most prevalent groups of perpetrators were identified as school children and a mixture of local gangs from neighbouring areas. This unruly mixture of youths and gang members congregating at McDonalds created a volatile situation which caused staff and members of the public to call Police. Extra council funded Police officers were put in place at specific times when disorder was expected. This meant diverting resources from other areas requiring attention on the Borough in order to keep a lid on the ASB and disorder generated by McDonalds.

PC Cooke established that these youths and gangs were not only causing ASB inside McDonalds itself but also outside on the pavement. Due to the design of the front entrance of the restaurant, the foyer appeared to be an extension of the pavement whereby these groups would just walk in using the seating areas for their own comfort without purchasing or eating any food. McDonalds offered free Wi-Fi and the music being played was of a hip hop/grime nature which seemed to encourage those intent on committing crime to loiter around. They also regularly sat on the bicycle racks outside the restaurant blocking members of public who were trying to walk past.

This was also causing disorder and a nuisance to local businesses who were losing trade as many of these youths would congregate outside their businesses in groups using intimidating language which often deterred people from entering. Paramount to this problem was the location of McDonalds Restaurant, 88-90 Uxbridge Road, London, which is on one of the busiest roads in the borough running through the heart of Shepherds Bush and conveniently close to Westfield Shopping Centre. The whole vicinity supports a vibrant and diverse community which is reflected in its local shops, businesses, residents, and visitors, making it a high profile and well visited area.

Numerous meetings with local Residents Associations and businesses were held and PC Cooke devised a poll on social media platforms, namely Twitter and Next Door, where residents and local businesses could directly pass on information about the problems emanating from McDonalds. The criticism and responses were damning and highlighted the unreported levels of threatening violence and behaviour, harassment, alarm and distress which were affecting many residents, businesses and even staff employed at McDonalds. These problems were also a regular topic and cause for concern at our quarterly Ward Panel meetings. During his research, PC Cooke established that although there were over 71 reported crimes, there was also a distinct lack of under-reporting because the problem had been ongoing for many years which meant long term residents and businesses had simply accepted this situation and avoided the area. It was also established that McDonald's staff had been assaulted but chose not to report to Police over fear of losing their jobs.

The increasing levels of violence and rise in ASB posed a challenging situation for officers but it was clear that urgent action was required. PC Cooke linked in with the local McDonalds Manager to provide reassurance that we were there to support him and his staff. PS Burgess held an urgent meeting with Camilla McBrearty - the Community Safety Officer (CSO) at Hammersmith and Fulham Council. A discussion took place on how we could work together to discourage and move the problematic loiterers away from the front of McDonalds. It was agreed that an initial positive action would be to immediately remove the metal bicycle racks from the front of the premises as they seemed to be a magnet for those intent on committing ASB and crime. This was fully supported by the CSO and the bike racks were removed out of the ground by Hammersmith and Fulham Council within a few weeks. We saw instant results.

It was evident that we would have to think of an innovative new way of tackling this long standing criminal behaviour. Simply tasking extra Police Officers to stand outside the restaurant was not a viable solution with our shrinking number of resources and would only serve to momentarily displace the problem. We knew that other MPS Boroughs and Constabularies across the UK were experiencing similar issues but as yet there were no long term solutions. Our over-arching objective was to work in partnership with the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham Community Safety Team in order to meet the needs of the public and force McDonalds to take responsibility for some of the issues it had inadvertently generated.

Analysis:

As a local neighbourhood ward Sergeant answerable to local residents, businesses, Hammersmith and Fulham Council, Councilors' and MPS line managers, my team and I were aware of the huge increase in ASB, disorder and violent crime which was impacting on the quality of life of all those within the Ward, whether residing or passing through. Having exasperated many conventional avenues, we considered all the viable options and decided to take a bolder approach. Although it may not have been popular, we were confident that this course of action would see almost instant results and lead to further benefits throughout the Borough. This new approach, using fresh ideas and enforcement options was the only way that this long running problem had any chance of being resolved.

We began analysing the problem using the VOLT methodology (Victim, Offender, Location & Time) as described below to uncover the true nature and extent of the issue and enable us to work towards finding the most effective solution.

Victim – Local residents, businesses and visitors to the area

Considering the victims, PC Cooke went through all 71 crime reports within the last year linked to McDonalds and specifically looked at how the victims described their experience.

6001408/17 – GBH - Victim was a security guard who stopped a male loitering inside the doorway. Victim was punched in the face.

6025379/17 – GBH - Female victim was a member of public asking for money who approached a group of youths. One of the group punched her in the face knocking her unconscious. Food was then thrown over her whilst lying on the floor. Security did not get involved and allowed suspects to walk out unchallenged. Nor did they administer first aid. Members of the public assisted the victim until Police and ambulance arrived.

6015809/17 – GBH - Victim had a glass bottle smashed over their head.

6020932/17- GBH - Victim is manager of McDonalds who was punched in the face when challenging suspect's behaviour. 6025477/17 – Violent Disorder – Victim assaulted in a 2-minute brawl by 4 suspects.

Many victims and witnesses described that there was a total lack of control inside the premises and no security guards when needed. When security was present, they were disinterested and allowed gangs of youths to enter and do as they pleased with no intervention. Many mentioned that it was a frightening environment and avoided the area where possible.

A selection of residents replies from our social media poll:

“I have lived in the area for 15 years. I always avoid Shepherds Bush Green as I find the whole area unsafe after dark and I have found it to be like that for years! It’s a shame as it obviously has a very vibrant community.” Suzanne L (Next Door, 9 Dec 2017)

“Very concerning as it’s become hotspot for every ASB, bikes in pavements, Teens last night got stabbed there too! The Bush green and Goldhawk Road station area need more policing and support before someone else gets badly injured! The area it’s packed with teenagers terrorising the streets! Thanks.” PS F (Twitter, 9 Dec 2017)

“Those groups of teenagers standing outside McDonalds shouldn’t be there. When I walk by I always get cautious of my surroundings. I know what type of people hang outside.” Enrico R (Next Door, 9 Dec 2017).

Meetings were set up with local Residents Associations to gather information. This included Caxton Village Residents Association and Boddington Court Residents in addition to our Ward Panel meeting where we unveiled our plans to tackle the ASB. We were initially met with some scepticism but all were supportive of any action to tackle this problem.

Offender – Gang nominals, school children and those intent on committing crime and ASB

A number of the offender groups and individuals were identified as subjects already known to Police and the local community. Using MPS intelligence systems, our Gangs Unit and knowledge from local officers, it was established that a large number of the perpetrators were linked to local gangs and involved in criminal activity. PC Cooke and PCSO Lambert sifted through CCTV images of those causing ASB and committing crime and were able to confirm the gang affiliations. Those individuals were identified and issued with Community Protection Notices (CPNs) which enabled officers to ban certain individuals from the area. If an individual with a CPN returned to the area, this meant that they were immediately arrestable. The DWOs compiled a comprehensive list of offenders with and without CPNs to enable officers to deal with and monitor individuals who were persistently causing ASB.

Due to the drug dealing element, many other known offenders from across the Ward and neighbouring boroughs were attracted to the area. This included violent gang nominals, prolific burglars, beggars and some predatory sex offenders. Some youths were committing ASB whilst wearing school uniform so these were identified by liaising with schools officers and supporting teachers to come to McDonalds after school. Once identified, DWO’s held meetings at the local schools with the pupils, their head teachers and parents to offer advice. This resulted in banning orders being issued by McDonald to those involved which allowed the business to start taking its own enforcement action. Some school children were arrested and charged with offences which sent out a clear message to their peers. This had a huge impact and we saw a large reduction in school children attending McDonalds.

Location – McDonalds, Uxbridge Road, London, W12

The location centered in and around McDonalds Restaurant. There was little to no security and certainly none who would challenge those intent on committing or causing ASB. Security officers, some who weren't SIA authorised, would hang around with the perpetrators and even turn a blind eye to what was happening. Some were just overwhelmed with the enormity of the situation they had been placed in which sometimes led to them not turning up for duty. This meant that those individuals could enter unchallenged and hang around for hours using the seating without having to buy any food. Quite frequently, groups of youths would sit around a table sharing one drink. If staff challenged the youths, then they would be subjected to abuse or even threats of violence and sometimes be assaulted without fear of any reprisal. McDonalds was quickly becoming their place of business.

The bicycle racks directly outside attracted those to sit on and use the free Wi-Fi coming from McDonalds which they subsequently used to carry out their criminality. There were also two phone boxes and a bus shelter which were used in order to supply drugs whilst being obscured from CCTV coverage. A common tactic was for bicycles to be turned upside down outside McDonalds which was an indication that drugs were being sold and dealt from inside. McDonalds also inadvertently contributed to this problem by playing hip hop/grime music through its store speakers, allowing free access to Wi-Fi and not taking its security seriously. It was clear that environmental and physical changes would need to be incorporated into any planned action.

Time - After analysing the crime reports, PC Cooke established that the peak time of offending fell between 15:30 hours and 21:30 hours.

Response:

Shepherds Bush Green SNT looked at how other constabularies tackled this kind of problem with a view to glean any experience and ideas from their areas of best practice. We found that disorder associated with McDonald's restaurants was a common problem throughout the whole MPS and across the UK.

In times of current austerity, we had to be mindful about the number of Police resources which would be required in order to make any of our plans a success. This created a unique policing challenge and we started considering all the viable options to combat the high levels of ASB and crime. A starting point was the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014: Reform of Anti-Social Behaviour Powers, Statutory Guidance for Frontline Professionals (Home Office). Our work concentrated on parts 1-6 with regards to Police Powers and Powers for Dealing with Places.

We immediately implemented a Dispersal Order under Section 35 Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 in the area surrounding McDonalds Shepherds Bush Green due to increased levels of ASB and violent public order offences. Our response was recorded, developed and monitored on Development Plan FHID00003273. The Dispersal Order was initially success in removing a number of problematic youths away from the area but it was only a short term fix. This was labour intensive for officers and did not address the problem inside McDonalds itself. Throughout the problem solving process we kept the Community Safety Officer from LBHF Council and local councillors abreast of our strategies and reasoning. This was crucial in demonstrating that the problem was being taken seriously and being able to mutually benefit from the abilities of the council. For instance, in them removing the metal bicycle racks directly in front of the restaurant which resulted in an instant and noticeable positive impact.

Our attentions then moved onto the possibility of implementing of a full Closure Notice under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. This effectively meant that Police had the power to close the entire restaurant for a period of time. This is designed to be a fast flexible power which is instrumental in protecting victims and communities by rapidly closing premises that are causing a nuisance or disorder. Shepherds Bush Green officers were well versed in using this power for residential premises, but never had it been used for a commercial property.

PC Cooke invited senior managers from McDonalds to a meeting on 5th December 2017 to discuss various options. It was important to strike the right balance between rapidly reducing violent behaviour and being mindful that McDonalds were still trying to run a business and preferred the least intrusive options. It was stressed that Police wished to work in partnership with the business and were looking to support them in making changes to their working practices in order to take a joined up approach to dealing with the problem. A list of immediate requirements was provided which included playing classical music as opposed to grime/hip hop, switching off the free Wi-Fi and employing a more robust and experienced security crew. Senior managers were shown recent CCTV footage from violent incidents happening with the restaurant and as a result, they agreed to implement the suggested changes with immediate effect.

On 9th December 2017, PC Cooke took a call from the Operations Consultant (Appt Corporation Ltd t/a McDonalds Restaurant) who stated that McDonalds would not be listening or adhering to any Police recommendations. This was detrimental to the Policing plan and as such the decision was taken to go ahead with the Closure Notice. PC Cooke and PC Davis compiled over 50 impact statements from local businesses and residents, completed a 7 page witness statement and prepared all the papers for Court with a view to placing the initial Closure Notice. By taking this action we were demonstrating a duty of care to our local community and it was deemed an essential tool in preventing crime, protecting people and property and maintaining the Queens peace. It was also important to show local residents and

businesses that Police would not shy away from this issue just because McDonalds, a huge company, was the focus. We were mindful of the media interest that this was likely to attract.

On the eve of issuing the Closure Notice we were contacted by the Franchisee Owner Mr Atul Pathak OBE who was unaware of the meetings and issues within his business. The following day we held a meeting at Shepherds Bush Police Station with Inspector Khaliq, Neighbourhoods Inspector. Mr Pathak was shown all the evidence of ASB and violent crime which was intrinsically linked to his restaurant. PS Burgess reiterated our intentions of working together to resolve the issues. Our recommendations were agreed and implemented within 24 hours. Wi-Fi was switched off and no longer in use, grime/hip hop music was replaced with classical and they employed a new proactive security company who were confident to robustly challenge those causing ASB and prevent known offenders from entering. That being said, there was no longer a need to go ahead with the Closure Notice and McDonalds had begun to take responsibility for the problems it had created.

The joint actions of Shepherds Bush Green Safer Neighbourhood Team, council funded Policing Teams, Hammersmith & Fulham Council and McDonalds meant that there was an almost instant reduction in crime and ASB and freed up Police resources to concentrate on other issues within the Ward.

Assessment:

Crime statistics highlighted an almost immediate decrease in all recorded crime and ASB associated with McDonalds. 2017 saw 71 reported crimes but year to date, we have only seen 1 violent crime in 2018. Many of the individuals involved in crime and ASB have moved away and not been seen again at the premises. Almost a year after Police intervention, Wi-Fi is still switched off, classical music is still being played and the new security company continue to vet those entering and don't tolerate any unruly behaviour.

There has been a reduction in the Policing demand to Shepherds Bush Green across the Safer Neighbourhoods and Response teams. Alongside the decrease in crime reports, there has been a noticeable drop in the number of CADs and Airspace tiles (reports of ASB). The quality of life for local residents, businesses and visitors has improved significantly and McDonalds has seen an increase in revenue since more visitors and families are happy to dine at the location.

The model was so successful that McDonalds went on to apply for a 24 hour trading licence just a few months after the initial problems. This was granted by Hammersmith & Fulham Council - something which wouldn't have been possible before the improvements were

implemented. Shepherds Bush McDonalds has also been instrumental in sponsoring and supporting local engagement events, most notably our Community Weapons Sweep where numerous residents joined the SNT to raise awareness of the consequences of knife enabled crime.

Our success was recognised and published across a number of social media platforms:

“Playing classical music as a deterrent has often been used to stop teens hanging out outside shops and in tube stations, but this is thought to be the first McDonald’s to use the method. Working together with the police and the local council in Shepherds Bush to help them with combating persistent anti-social behaviour, we thought that playing classical music at certain times of the day would help to set a different and calmer tone. It is working really well and has been positively received by many customers, so much so that we are giving real consideration as to where else we might introduce it.” – Atul Pathak OBE, McDonalds Franchisee.

“Sgt Burgess and his team have been instrumental in significantly eradicating ASB in the area of Shepherds Bush Green and without their considerable work; this would not have been possible. Residents and visitors to the area were blighted by ongoing ASB and crime but this team worked tirelessly to end it by introducing creative solutions and initiatives whilst working alongside the council, local businesses and residents to address the problems. This has resulted in dramatic and lasting improvements that are now being implemented across other parts of the UK. I cannot thank them enough for their commitment to solving these issues and I would highly recommend this application for the Safer Community award. It is truly deserved.” - Cllr Sue Fennimore, Deputy Leader, Hammersmith and Fulham Council.

"This is a great example of the hard work and the way that the dedicated ward officers have tackled a neighbourhood problem which was impacting on the daily life of residents and other local businesses. The team worked tirelessly with our partners and the community, supporting the staff at McDonalds and ensuring that Shepherds Bush Green would not succumb to anti-social behaviour." – PS James Burgess

Metro - 14 Mar 2018 - Roughest McDonalds in London has slashed anti-social behaviour using classical music.

Sky News – 15 March 2018 - Big Bach and fries: McDonald’s cuts anti-social behaviour with classical music. McDonalds says reports of crime have fallen at one London branch as classical music ‘encourages more acceptable behaviour.’

Evening Standard – 14 March 2018 - McDonald’s restaurant cuts anti-social behaviour by playing classical music and switching off the wifi.

Getwestlondon – 8 March 2018 – Crime at McDonalds: How Classical music helped a fast food restaurant linked to drugs, violence and anti-social behaviour stay open.

Daily Mail – 14 March 2018 - Big Mac-maninoff and fries? 'London's roughest McDonalds' cuts down on anti-social behaviour by turning off the free Wi-Fi and playing CLASSICAL MUSIC

And as far away as Spain:

www.elespanol.com - McDonalds-combate-delincuencia-musica-clasica (translation: McDonalds combats delinquency with classical music)

Due to the success of our actions and being publicised and broadcasted by the media on different platforms nationally and internationally we were contacted by Neighbourhood Teams in North Yorkshire and Police Service Northern Ireland who were also experiencing similar issues in their Force Area. We were happy to share our actions and experiences. Other McDonalds Restaurants throughout the UK experiencing issues with anti-social behaviour have also adopted this approach, which was supported by McDonalds UK & ROI.

Ultimately and importantly, we achieved our objectives of reducing violent crime and increasing public confidence across Shepherds Bush Green Ward. This also laid the foundations for other proactive initiatives within the Ward (Impact Zone and BetWatch) which also serve to tackle crime and ASB. To date there have been no recorded violent crimes from McDonalds Restaurant and the Safer Neighbourhood Team continuously work in partnership with McDonalds.

Number of words: 3849

Agency and Officer Information

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