

Grange Park Initiative - Summary

Scanning

'Grange Park, Blackpool, with a population of *over* 6000 is a socially deprived area. It is the largest council populated area per head of local population in England. It was suffering high rates of crime and disorder. A hardcore of tenants were involved in crime, drugs and disorder and were taking control of the Neighbourhood. Grange Park became a major demand driver for police resources and reports of crime nuisance and disorder were considerably higher than anywhere else in Blackpool. Grange Park achieved notoriety, and the area entered a spiral of decline.

Analysis

A small minority of the population was involved in drugs and criminality. Reported crime was increasing dramatically. There was continued harassment of families resulting in a reduction in community spirit and pride. The appearance of the Estate suffered as homes that could not be re-let required boarding up to prevent further damage and theft. The policies employed by the Council and Housing Association in relation to problem tenants were ineffective. Public confidence in the police declined. Threats intimidation and harassment by hardcore criminal elements increased.

Response

The police working in partnership with local organisations aimed to improve the quality of life on Grange Park by implementing the following measures:-

Regular meetings between Police and local organisations (Community Forum)

- Setting up of Neighbourhood Watch
- Anti-crime operations
- Increased number of local officers
- Setting up CCTV on Muir Housing Estate
- Promotion of property marking and crimestoppers
- Operations by police to canvas the opinion of the community and gather intelligence
- Questionnaire
- Communications initiatives including media launch
- Partnerships with Youth Service and schools to promote sports
- Education of young people about drugs (Choices Programme)
- Increased use of civil law

Assessment

- Positive media exposure
- + Reductions in crime and disorder
- Increase in intelligence information from community and CCTV
- Increased confidence in police
- Improvement in general appearance
- Improvement in quality of life for, residents

Criminals were forced to leave the Estate as community and police unite against them. The impact was measured by police operations, which have shown increased public confidence and satisfaction with police service, and the reduction in the numbers of burglaries.

The residents are now much happier living in a community which is united in making Grange Park a better and safer place to live. Local beat officers are welcomed in the community. This initiative is an excellent example of Problem Oriented Policing.

Grange Park Initiative

Lancashire Constabulary

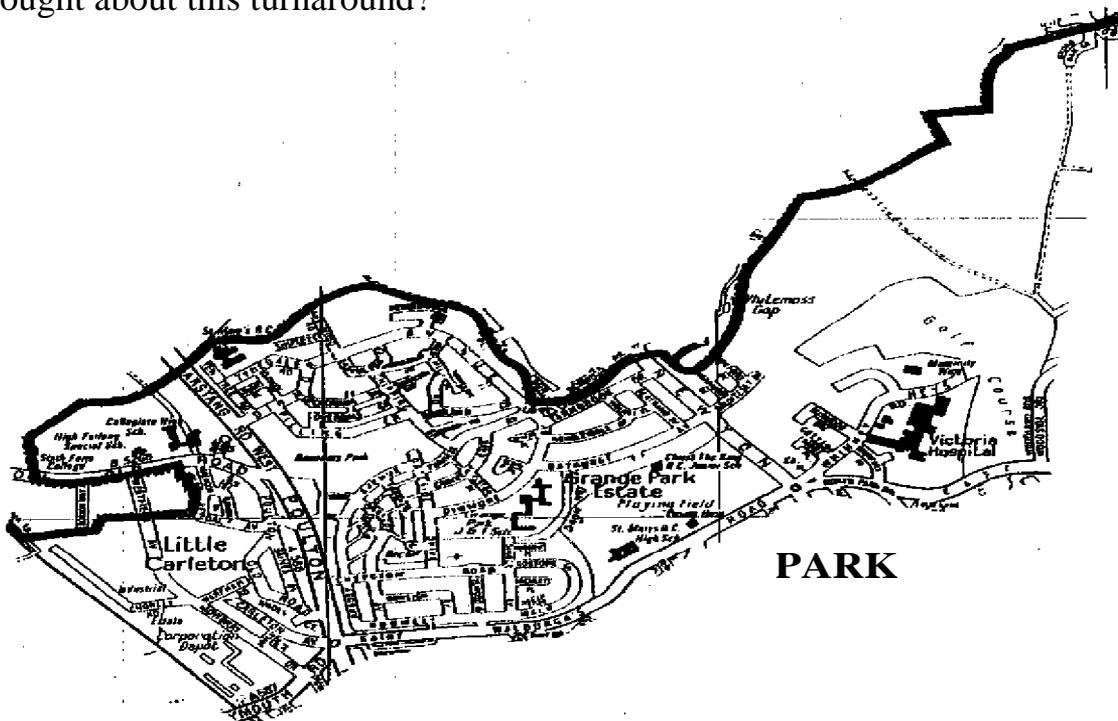
Western Division

Background

The Grange Park Estate in Blackpool with a population of over 6000 is one of the most socially deprived areas in Lancashire and suffers high rates of crime disorder and other anti social behaviour. The Estate is the largest council populated area, per head of local population in the country. Construction of the Estate began in 1948 and last year it celebrated its 50th anniversary. For many years now Grange Park has had a reputation in Blackpool as a notorious area, rife with crime and awash with drugs. It was a truly undesirable area in which to live.

The Grange Park Initiative has now been in existence for over two years having commenced in April 1.997. The Grange Park Initiative began as a commitment by Bispham Police Officers who worked on Grange Park to taking a long-term problem oriented policing approach to community needs. Local beat officers developed the objectives after consultation with members of the community, local councillors and resident association groups. The ultimate aim was to make the Grange Park Estate a better place to live in, where people could raise families and grow old without fear. This meant that it was going to be a long-term project.

In previous years if you had seen newspaper headlines with `Grange Park' you automatically assumed it was bad news, such has been the reputation of the Estate. That's all changing however, in 1999 the headlines are much more likely to be optimistic. What has brought about this turnaround?



Scanning

There has always been a historical problem with this area and the demand for policing services to the area was extensive, officers often attending the same incidents time and time again. The traditional reactive policing approach was not working and it was becoming clear the police could not solve the problems on the Estate on their own.

Attendance at the local community Forum gave us the opportunity to hear concerns voiced by residents and local councillors and other organisation working on the Estate. Local Businesses and shopkeepers were being constantly harassed by juveniles and shoplifters and the media played a part in alerting us to the extent of the problem with negative coverage of events taking place on the Estate.

Analysis

The evidence used in order to collate information for a response was as follows;

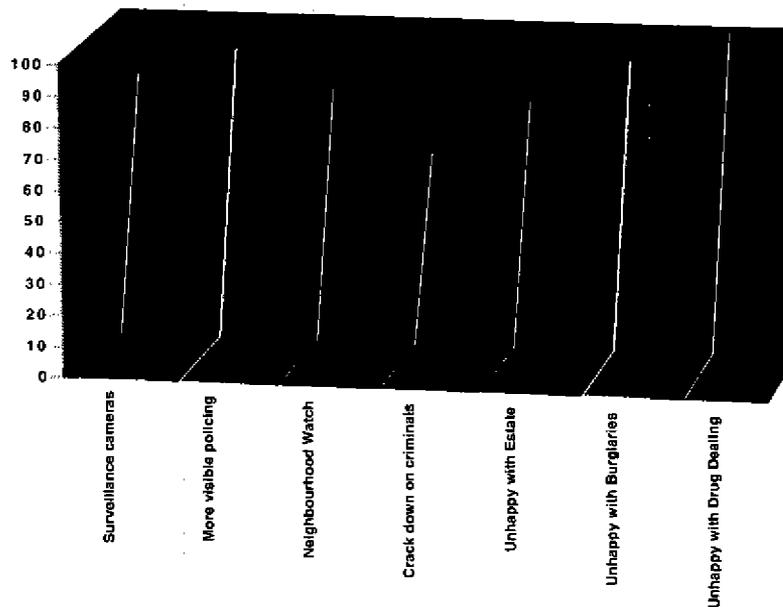
- 6th Form survey - carried out by 6th formers from Blackpool and the Fylde College
- Operation Abate
- The Muir Survey
- Indepol System
- CRS
- Intelligence Analysts
- The Force Intelligence Unit
- Contacts within the community
- Local Councillors
- Police Informants

The local Ward Beat Officers were initially responsible for collating information from various sources in order to analyse the extent of the problem.

Operation Abate and the Muir questionnaire circulated showed that,

- Over 90% of residents stated they wanted CCTV installed
- Almost 100% stated they wanted more visible policing
- Almost 90% were in favour of setting up a Neighbourhood Watch scheme
- 70% wanted to see a police crackdown on criminals
- Over 80% stated they were unhappy with the Estate
- Over 90% stated they were unhappy with burglaries
- Almost 100% stated they were unhappy with the drug dealing that was going on.

Survey Outcome



Analysis of the crime figures from the Indepol system showed that there had been an increase in all crime of 23% in the Grange Park area, which represented 21 % of all crime in the Bispham geographical area during 1997 to 1998.

These cannot be guaranteed as accurate figures, as there was a significant underreporting of crime on the Estate due to fear of reprisals and lack of confidence in the police at the time. Therefore one of the first priorities was to breakdown barriers between the police and the community, therefore encourage the reporting of, all crime. It was necessary to gain a true picture of crime in the area *in* order to ascertain the extent of the problem and devise appropriate responses. It was anticipated that crime figures would increase in the short term, however this was planned as a long term problem solving initiative and reductions were not anticipated for two to three years.

The officers involved were hoping to involve the local community in participating in the proposed solutions to the problem and assume ownership for implementing some of these.

Response

It was decided to take a long-term problem oriented approach to community policing needs. This meant looking at the underlying causes of persistent problems and working with the community and other private and public bodies to deal with them. Taking this approach in the short term required more time and effort, however it was clearly important to focus effort in the right areas. A clear sense of direction and some challenging targets were set for officers.

Objectives

To improve the quality of life on the Grange Park Estate

To target criminals and those involved in nuisance and disorder

Create an environment for families

Promote partnerships

To encourage the accurate reporting and recording of crime, disorder and fear of crime.

The project had many aims that it hoped to achieve these being as follows

Secure a reduction in the level of crime, nuisance and disorder, on the Grange Park Estate

Reduce the level of road casualties

Improve public satisfaction with the level of service from the Local Beat Officers

Ensure the public were consulted and kept informed

Work in partnership with other agencies to reduce crime and disorder

Work in partnership with other agencies to reduce re-offending among young offenders

Target drug related crime in partnership with other agencies

Planned Responses

To instigate the setting up of a local Neighbourhood Watch scheme. The Local Ward beat officer for Park succeeded in setting up the scheme by June 1998. The first meeting was held on Thursday 11th June 1998.

Arrange meetings on a regular basis with the Residents Association, Community Forum, Muir Housing Association, School liaison, Blackpool Victoria Hospital and others. These meetings were minuted and groups were tasked with various undertakings.

The setting up of an Estate Manager to reside on the Muir Estate and provide intelligence information.

The relocation of the Muir Housing office to the Estate itself.

Improvements in the general appearance of the area carried out by Muir Housing and Blackpool Borough Council.

Increase use of civil law to evict problem tenants

Promotion of partnerships with the Youth Service and schools to promote sports activities and other activities to occupy children and direct their energies.

Positive media coverage

Summer of sporting chances for Fylde



COACHING EXPERTS: Youth Sport Development Officer Joell Leary (center) with some of the coaches, police officers and children supporting the summer sports coaching scheme, at Fylde recreation ground, Bisselpool

The Evening Gazette coverage of the summer sports coaching scheme in partnership with the Youth Sport Development Officer

Various anti crime operations were carried out in order to target prolific offenders and remove them from the equation if possible. These were as follows;

Operations carried out over the two year period to date

- Operation Synergy** — to target burglars, heroin dealers and handlers of stolen goods, as well as DSS fraudsters
- Operation Aegis** — to target burglars using fingerprint evidence
- Operation Attain** — to target a specific burglar
- Operation Abate** — to visit every house on the Estate offering crime prevention advice and to conduct a questionnaire to gauge the level of public satisfaction with the police.
- Operation Alliance** — to visit every house on the Estate promoting property marking scheme — Selectamark and conduct a questionnaire as a follow up to operation Abate.

There have also been numerous covert plain clothes patrols carried out during the hours of darkness by local officers to target burglars and car thieves active at night as well as many instances of drug dealers being targeted.

Response to secure a reduction in crime

- Crime prevention leaflets were distributed by the Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators.
- An autocrime initiative was started around the Blackpool Victoria Hospital Area. This involved high visibility posters on lamppost's and leaflet drops on vehicles in the area coupled with uniformed foot patrols.

All dwelling house burglaries were re-visited by Ward Beat Officers who provided crime prevention help and advice.

- Ward Beat officers worked nights in plain clothes on numerous occasions, stop checking persons in vehicles and checking people with curfew bail conditions.
- The Evening Gazette was utilised on many occasions to publicise results of operations and initiatives and were asked to co-operate in publishing only positive information regarding the Grange Park Estate.
- Partnership with Muir Housing Association to install CCTV surveillance cameras on their estate.

Response to secure a reduction in nuisance and disorder

- High visibility policing is an on-going initiative
- Juvenile pro-forma scheme is also an initiative
- A local business sponsored the purchase of a video camcorder, which is utilised for the recording of juvenile nuisances and played back to parents.
- Improved liaison with St Mary's and Collegiate High Schools
- A football tournament for the Primary school children in the area to encourage the children's co-operation and tolerance of police.
- A juvenile hotspot on Chepstow road where there was an off licence was eliminated from the equation by the revocation of their license after liaison with the licensing team.
- Another problem area for juvenile nuisance was one of the local churches where children were causing considerable damage by climbing on the roof. This was solved by the pruning of surrounding trees and bushes and painting the roof with anti vandal paint.
- The Grange Park `Young Eagles' Club was set up to provide recreational activities for youngsters and give them somewhere to go. The aim of the club is to build up and promote self-confidence and esteem in its members. The scheme has been set up and run by a local business in co-ordination with the police Community Safety Department.
- For the younger children a Beaver' colony has been set up with the local Ward Beat Officer as one of the `Beaver Leaders'. As well as normal recreational activities, such as football sponsorship is being sought to take the children on outward-bound activity days. The venue for this group is the local church and this has discouraged any potential vandals from the area.

Juvenile nuisances of the period 1996 – 1997 was 441

Juvenile nuisances of the period 1997 – 1998 was 376



On National Reading Day 1998 the local Ward Beat Officer called in at Highfurlong School to read to the handicap children there,

Drug Related Response

The problems on the estate were exacerbated by the extensive use of drugs by residents. The police in co-operation with Blackpool Victoria Hospital, the NHS Trust, founded an Illicit Substance Forum which implemented drug awareness and training sessions at the Psychiatric Unit. A large percentage of patients with drug related problems were from Grange Park Estate. This forum had the following objectives;

- To work towards the elimination of illicit substances in Parkwood.
- To identify training needs with staff and agree appropriate training I education programmes
- To discuss particular incidents and agree any necessary action
- To agree joint agency policies and protocols
- To monitor security arrangements in regard to substance misuse.

The overall aims were to increase public satisfaction in relation to drugs and to increase identification recovery of substances.

The 'Choices' drug programme is now being implemented throughout schools in the area. It is now a Government directive that schools must have drug awareness education, as it is now incorporated into the National Curriculum. The local Ward Beat Officer has, been trained in delivering the 'Choice' programme to school children, and this gives the opportunity to forge and maintain close, links with potential young drug offenders and educate them on the dangers of substance abuse.

Other drug related responses are executing warrants, using local intelligence information to eliminate major drug dealers and implement a follow up programme of rehabilitation for drug users who express a wish to improve their quality of life and turn away from drugs. Support is given from the local community for these people. The Community Drug Team has provided a free counselling service for any drug users or their families who want help.

Road Safety Response

Action Plan

Enforcement days - these included officers from Road Safety, Ward Beat Officers, Mike Dobson, a Ministry of Transport Vehicle Inspector, and Stuart Buckhan, a Taxi Enforcement Officer based at the Town hall in Blackpool. They aimed to secure a reduction in road casualties and to target unroadworthy vehicles and excessive speeding.

The emphasis was placed on education, so any one stopped or spoken to were give leaflets and information on areas such as the dangers of not wearing a seat belt and driving too fast.

Results of the operations were as follows;

Number of arrests	1
Number of HO/RT 1's issued	52
Number of VDR's issued	2
Number of FPN's issued	4
Number of motorists reported	4
Number of motorists advised / educated	50
Number of Ministry of Transport Prohibitions	5
Number of Police Prohibitions	3
Number of Taxi examinations	12
Number of vehicle examinations	25
Number of Diesel dips	12

Assessment

It would be an understatement to say that matters on Grange Park Estate have improved over the last two years, indeed they have improved beyond all recognition. While crime will never be eradicated completely, there have been significant reductions, and the quality of life for people on the Estate has been hugely improved. An extract from the Evening Gazette sums it up in this comment;

"PC Rick Frith is a familiar sight to the children as he regularly patrols the Blackpool Estate where they live"

"The group trust this man. They treat him as they would their father or a favourite uncle.

Yet this scene of friendliness and openness with an officer of the law would have been a rare sight on the same estate some two years ago.

Crime was at an all time high back then and there was an apparent disregard for police among many adults and their children."

The officers involved have made a commitment to working together in partnership to solve the problems on Grange Park Estate and without their whole hearted commitment and perseverance there would not have been such a dramatic turnaround.

There is now a two weekly surgery held at Grange Park Infant School so that members of the community can speak to their local ward beat officers in confidence while they are in the area dropping off their children at school. As it is a Thursday venue, it coincides with the visit to the school of the Social Services attachment to Grange Park Estate Infant School.

We now have in place a joint training scheme with the Grange Park Estate Strategic Planning Group, which is looking at long term quality of life, projects for the park.

There is a constant stream of letters of appreciation from community members to the Police station, something unheard of two years ago.

B & Q sponsored a Gardening competition for the Residents Association. The 'Best Garden Competition' winners were given £25.00 gift vouchers for B&Q with a trophy for the overall winner. The competition was judged by PC Rick Frith, the Ward Beat Officer, Christine Wright from the Residents Association and a Council Official. This was planned to instil some general pride in the appearance of the Estate.

Some of the above were not planned operational responses as such, however all have played a vital part in the transformation of the appearance of the estate and the attitude of residents with corresponding reductions in the levels of crime.

Recent analysis of intelligence information shows that in the period April 1999 to June 1999 crime has been reduced by 23% when compared with the same period in 1998.

Grange Park Estate celebrated its 50 anniversary on Saturday 4th of July 1998. The day began with a procession through the streets which began at Grange Park Junior School and ended on the playing fields of the school where an 'It's a Knock out' style competition took place with a police team competing against other organisations. Members of the 'Mounted Branch' led the mornings procession and the whole day resounded with community spirit.

This is and excellent example of a geographic Problem Solving Initiative.



PC Rick Frith taking part in the 'Glorious Grange' Fun Day celebrations on 4th July 1998