

SUMMARY - OPERATION EXODUS

A Problem Oriented Policing approach to tackling the Juvenile Nuisance Problems experienced in the 2K Area of Accrington

BY PC2798 GARY CROWE

(Team 2, Area 2, Eastern Division)

Operation Exodus was set up to tackle a juvenile nuisance problem that had been identified within the Richmond (2K) area of Accrington.

Richmond lies between the Ferngore local authority housing development and Accrington town centre, and bored youths from the Ferngore estate pass through Richmond on their way into Accrington centre. Unfortunately they have tended to do this in a rowdy manner in large groups to the annoyance of the Richmond residents.

Typical complaints have been use of obscene language, underage drinking and smoking and loitering on or near resident's homes and cars.

To assess the level of the problem incident logs were examined, local residents and community groups consulted, and observations made by the community beat officers.

The offending youths routinely hung around on quiet street corners in large groups. Although this is not an offence, these congregations developed into large noisy crowds, which intimidated passers by and lead to incidents of nuisance and minor damage.

The policy for dealing with these youths following a complaint was to issue a verbal warning and move them on. Although this gets rid of the youths short term it only displaces the problem, and the youths would resume their position when the *officer* departed. This would result in further calls and yet more officer deployments.

To combat this Exodus sought to re-educate the youths and the repeat complainants in the community.

Three strategies were employed. i) Overt video recording of the youths sought to deter their activities on the street and form a valuable addition to the area beat profile, ii) enhanced police patrols in the vicinity sought to obtain details of offending youths and to re-educate both them and their parents, iii) other agencies were brought in to seek a long term solution.

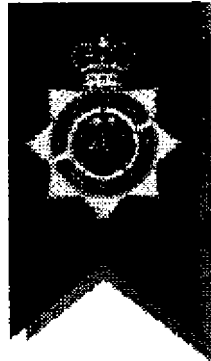
Local youth workers were contacted to discuss possibilities of organised events and activities for the youths, the council were contacted about improvements in recreation facilities, and letters were sent to offending youths and their parents advising them of what facilities were available for them in the local area.

Over the two month duration of the project recorded juvenile nuisance incidents fell to 20, compared to 56 in the previous two month period.

As a result, partnerships were formed with local community groups and organisations, there was an improvement in public tranquillity, crime levels fell, and most importantly the public's demands and expectations were met.

LANCASHIRE CONSTABULARY
EASTERN DIVISION AREA 2 — ACCRINGTON SOUTH

OPERATION EXODUS



BY
PC 2798 GARY CROWE

A S.A.R.A submission to tackle the Juvenile Nuisance
Problems experienced in the 2K area of Accrington, in particular
Richmond Street

Submitted to fulfill the S.A.R.A. requirements

INTRODUCTION

Richmond Street Accrington is a terraced residential street just outside Accrington town centre. It is bordered at one end by Willows Lane which leads up to the Femgore Council Estate, and at the other end by Richmond Hill Street, which also consists of terraced dwellings.

The residents of Richmond Street are mainly respectable Asian families, with a few white families toward the Willows Lane end of the Street.

Across Willows Lane, opposite the end of Richmond Street lies Richmond Road, which borders the Femgore estate. Richmond Road is made up mainly of semi-detached properties housing white families with children. It is believed that due to a lack of facilities to keep these youths occupied in the evenings, they and other youths from the Femgore estate tend to congregate on the corner of Willows Lane and Richmond Street outside the telephone boxes and an off-licence.

These youths are in turn causing a constant nuisance to the residents of Richmond Street by their rowdy behaviour, shouting, swearing, use of obscene language, sitting on parked cars and underage drinking. This is done both on the main street and in the back alleys.

SCANNING

What is the problem?

Incidents that residents have contacted the Police for in just the past four months have included-

- Youths playing in empty building
- Youths throwing stones at cars
- Youths playing football on street
- Youths playing in rear yards
- Youths knocking on doors
- Youths sitting on cars
- Youths drinking in rear alleys
- + Youths throwing fireworks
- Youths verbally abusing residents
- Youths causing general nuisance

The problem that we as the Police encounter is that on our arrival the youths have either already gone or are still there but not causing any problems. Generally no offences are disclosed by the complainant, they just want the children moved away from their houses to give them some peace. This leaves us with the difficult situation where if they are not doing anything wrong do we have the right to move them. Usually after a stern warning about their conduct the youths do move, but only to a neighbouring street where they are causing the same problems, and as soon as the Police patrol leaves they assume their original position on Richmond Street.

SCANNING

With whom have we enquired to confirm it is a problem?

It is mainly through contact with local residents that the Police have been made aware of the seriousness of this problem. Area officers have kept a log of contact with local residents and noted their feelings.

To confirm the extent of the problem the LCTP computer incident logging system was utilised. This allowed the exact number of deployments to the 2K area to be tabulated and give some idea as to how 2K compared to other areas. The number of juvenile nuisance calls from the area in the months of August, September, October and November were acquired, and then from these figures the number of calls specifically from Richmond Street were noted.

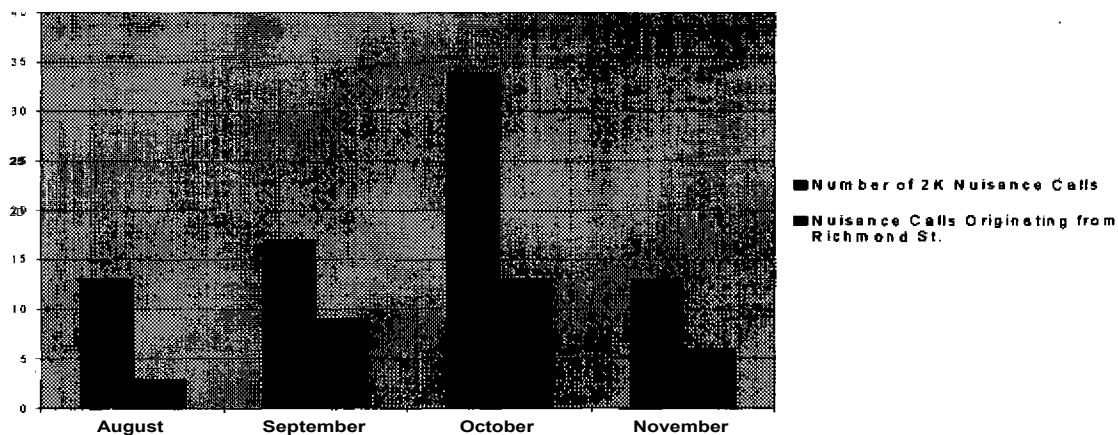


Figure 1: Graph showing total juvenile nuisance deployments over a 4 month period on the 2K area, and how many of those were specifically to Richmond Street.
'Source: LCTP Incident Log)

From analysing these figures we were able to notice a pattern as to whom the repeat complainants were. As these were our most frequent callers they were contacted in person and their opinions taken on board. The consensus of opinion was that there was not a satisfactory Police presence in the area, and that there was nothing for the youths to do as an alternative.

SCANNING

Which people/agencies does the problem affect, and who would have an interest in it?

Other sources consulted include-

- Local Member of Parliament Greg Pope.
- The Racial Equality Commission.
- The Higher Antley Street Mosque.
- Local Residents.
- The 2K allocated Area *Officers*-

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ANALYSIS

Within which core service area does the problem fall?

The Core Service areas which are applicable to this problem are-

Public Tranquillity

The maintenance of public order so that the community's confidence is increased.

Prevention of Crime

Reducing criminal activity through a diverse approach which seeks not only to prevent, but also to detect crime and bring to justice those who commit it.

Meeting Demand

Working towards the provision of a high quality service in which we use our professional judgment to meet demand in the most appropriate way.

Partnerships

In order to achieve our core service aims we will participate in and develop a range of partnerships internally, and with other organisations and agencies.

ANALYSIS

The Problem Analysis Triangle (P.A.T.)

The Problem Analysis Triangle is a method of breaking down any problem into its component parts, namely the Location of the problem, the Victim of the problem and the Offender causing the problem.

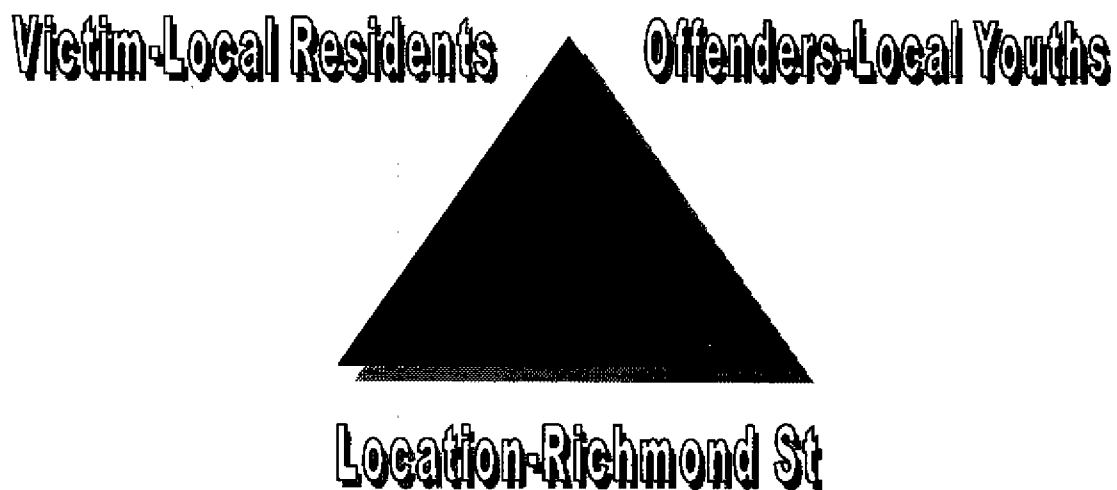


Figure 2: The Problem Analysis Triangle

The principle behind this idea is that if any one part of the triangle is removed then it all collapses and the problem is solved. Thus in order to solve this problem, either the location, the victim or the offender must be removed.

- ***The Location*** –Richmond Street consists of terraced dwellings with a small front yard with enclosed by a stone wall around 12 inches high. This is often used as seating by the youths. Some of the dwellings on Richmond Street are currently unoccupied and their front and rear yards are used as social gathering places. To the rear is a little used rear alley that is used for underage drinking and smoking. The off-licence on the corner of Richmond Street and Willows Lane is suspected of supplying the alcohol and cigarettes to the under-aged youths, and consequently it acts as a rendezvous point for them. The street itself does have street lighting, but it's rear alleys do not.
- ***The Victims*** – There appears to be a core of repeat complainants in the area. The question to be asked is why are they making so many calls in comparison to other residents? They all live some distance apart on the street so why are the people in between these individuals not reporting as many problems? Perhaps the tolerance levels of some of the residents is greater than others, or do they have higher expectations of what the Police Service can do about these youths.
- ***The Offenders*** – It appears that the offenders are mainly white youths from outside the predominantly Asian community of Richmond Street and the surrounding area. There have been few complaints of racial abuse, so this does not seem to be their motivation. Most of the offenders are from the other side of Willows Lane on Richmond Road and from the Ferngore Estate, so if they want to head into town to find something to do then Richmond Street is the most direct route.

It seems that the root cause of the problem can be broken down into 3 parts-

1. Lack of facilities for the local youths to keep them occupied and off the streets.
2. Lack of respect from the youths for the property and peace of mind of the residents of Richmond Street.
3. Lack of tolerance for the youths by the residents of Richmond Street.

RESPONSE

What are the possible responses?,

There are a number of techniques already adopted by patrol officers to deal with juvenile problems. It is generally a 3-stage procedure. On the first occasion the youths are verbally warned and moved away from the area. On the second occasion the youths are again verbally warned and moved away from the area, and this time their details obtained and a letter sent to their parents outlining the circumstances in which their child was warned. On the third occasion they are conveyed immediately to their home address and formally warned in front of their parents.

If any offences are disclosed the youths are dealt with accordingly.

Residents also state that minor damage offences are being committed to vehicles and property, and that they are being verbally abused by the youths. By the time the Police patrol has attended the youths have generally gone, and the aggrieved are seldom able to identify the offender. This leaves us unable to pursue criminal proceedings.

To combat this a number of pro-active Responses are proposed. They have been split into two categories, those which are to be *implemented* by the Police and those to be *initiated* by the Police.

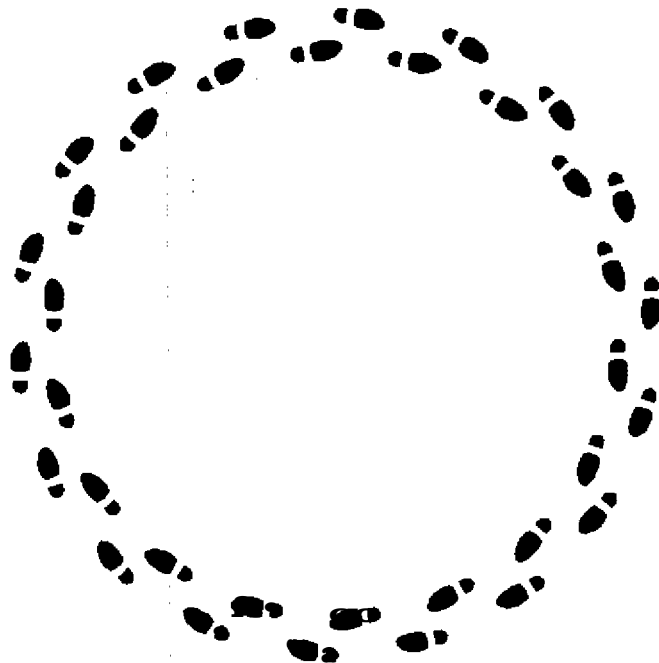
POLICE INITIATED RESPONSES

- To initiate action in conjunction with Hyndburn Borough Council Youth and Community Service. A number of 'Outreach' Workers operate from the New Era Youth and Community centre in Accrington who aim to provide leisure and recreation facilities for local youths
- Look at encouraging local youths to use existing recreational facilities such as the playing fields on Bullough Park or the organised sporting activities available at Hyndburn Leisure centre.
- To contact The Hyndburn Borough Council Works department with a view to improving the street lighting on Richmond Street, making it into a less secluded meeting place.
- Contact: the owners of the empty properties. This will be done in the hope that the properties will be made more secure, or that they will get them renovated and an occupant can be put into them as soon as possible.

POLICE IMPLEMENTED RESPONSES

- Increased high visibility policing in the area. Area officers should be allocated to use time on the area more effectively and make a visible presence to local youths. Also mobile patrols could be directed to divert through Richmond Street when in the area, i.e. use Richmond Street as a thoroughfare for patrols going from one end of the area to the other.
- Begin a log to record the amount of time spent by patrols in the 2K area. This will act as an effective assessment tool and will highlight the times at which the 2K area is at it's most vulnerable.
- Use of video recording equipment. This can be done using hand held video equipment which is already available, and footage of the Richmond Street area could be recorded either from an unmarked vehicle or from a room overlooking the street with the occupants permission.

- Test purchases could be made from the off-licence at the end of Richmond Street in an attempt to find out where the youths are buying their alcohol and cigarettes.
- Residents of Richmond Street could be contacted to investigate the extent of the problems they are experiencing. It may be the case that in circumstances the Police are being contacted purely because the youths are just stood on the street and the residents are being intimidated. If so, and there is no malicious intent by the youths, then the more persistent callers must be educated that the youths are committing no offences, and that there are no grounds for the police to be involved.



RESPONSE

The Agreed Action.

A multi-agency approach was adopted to deal with this problem, and it was tackled in three stages, All three overlapped and worked in conjunction with each other

STAGE 1 - BRINGING IN OTHER ORGANISATIONS

The Police could not tackle this problem alone. One body that helped us deal with this problem was Lancashire County Council. They have a department that deals with Youth and Community services in Hyndburn. A number of `Outreach' workers operate from here and have experience working with youths and dealing with their welfare matters. Also contacted about improving the lighting in the area was Hyndbum Borough Council Works department.

STAGE 2 - ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE GATHERING

This stage of the operation related to the gathering of video footage of the youths. This was to be done for three reasons-

- To be used as evidence against youths found committing offences
- To show to the disbelieving parents of youths found causing general nuisance
- To form part of the 2K beat profile which will help to identify local prolific troublemakers

Having gained clearance from the Divisional Commander the youths were filmed overtly using existing video surveillance equipment used by operational officers. While one

officer spoke to the youths, another recorded them and invites them to introduce themselves to the camera. Officers using the equipment could still operate on section whilst having the equipment in the car, or depending on resources, specific officers could be tasked to remain in the area with the equipment.

STAGE 3 - HIGH VISIBILITY PATROL

This was a simple matter of patrols making sure that they were seen in the area. Area officers had already made contact with residents and introduced themselves at the local Mosque, so some progress had been made in reassuring the public. It was important that officers made their presence felt to the local youths and spent time talking to them. If an attempt was made to communicate with them they could be sympathetic and agree to moderate their behaviour. If this was not the case then it was explained to them in no uncertain terms that definite action would be taken against them if they persist. Details would be obtained and contact made with parents/guardians.

A draught letter was made available to all officers and each team was briefed by their own 2K area officer of the fact that high visibility patrols were required. Mobile patrols were also asked to divert through Richmond Street as often as possible, using it as a sort of thoroughfare for getting from one end of town to the other. This was to increase apparent Police patrols without using any extra resources.

All of these three stages were to be implemented using existing resources without incurring any extra divisional cost.

RESPONSE

Time Scale and Desired Result

The period for this operation was over the two month period from the 1st December 1998 to 1st February 1999. This gave a two month period after which an assessment could be made of the operations success:

Incident logs for this period could be compared with the two month period before the operation, and a judgment then be made as to whether incidents reported had fallen. Crime figures over this period could also be compared with the previous two months and a drop should also be seen there.

The aims if this operation were to:

- **Reduce juvenile nuisance incidents in the 2K area**
- **Reduce crime in the 2K area**
- **Meet the demands of the public and improve relations**
- **To form partnerships with other organisations and agencies to help achieve core service aims**

ASSESSMENT

What was done?

STAGE 1— THE BRINGING IN OF OTHER ORGANISATIONS

This mainly involved speaking to community youth workers which operate in the Hyndburn area. The main problem that was encountered with the juveniles in the past was that when asked to move on they would say `WHERE TOT which often left officers in an awkward situation as they knew full well that there was nowhere for them to go.

- On speaking to the youth workers a list of available activities was obtained which comprehensively covered what was on offer, from free sports facilities to libraries. This list was summarised and put into A4 for circulation to the youths.
- Along with contact with these youth workers, contact was also made with the local council with regard to improving leisure facilities in the area. Proposals are in the pipeline for more recreation facilities for the local youths.
- The committee of the Higher Antley Street Mosque was also consulted with a view to having some input with local Asian Youths. The committee was well aware of the juvenile nuisance problems and stated that they were taking steps to educate the youths that they had found to be responsible for such behaviour.
- Contact was also made with the repeat complainants. It was found that three addresses on Richmond Street were responsible for a significant proportion of the calls received. It was ascertained from them what the problems they were suffering

were and what they expected the Police to do about it. It was explained to these residents that the youths standing outside their homes were not necessarily committing offences and could not be removed or arrested at will just because they did not like them there. It was stressed that if they were causing a genuine nuisance then the police would do everything they could to help, but they were asked to think about whether what the youths were doing constituted a genuine nuisance. Local beat officers contact names and numbers were left with these callers and with several other addresses, as well as advertised in local shops and the Mosque.

- Also noticed was that the complaints involved several reports of drunken youths. On speaking to some of them it was discovered that a number of local off-licences were selling alcohol to underage persons. In conjunction with other officers test purchases were carried out at a number of nearby off-licences to ascertain whether or not they were selling to local youths.
- Finally, and most importantly the parents of the youths found to be responsible for juvenile nuisance incidents were brought in to the process. Officers attending incidents obtained the details of the youths in order that a letter may be forwarded to their parents. This letter was along the lines of 'Do you know where your children are and what they are doing?' and sought to inform them accordingly. This letter was sent in conjunction with the list of alternative activities available locally mentioned earlier. As such it was hoped that parents would try to motivate their children to find a more constructive pass-time and gave them a few suggestions.

STAGES 2 & 3 - OVERT VIDEO RECORDING OF YOUTHS AND HIGH VISIBILITY POLICE PATROLS

Beat officers geographically assigned to 2K and other surrounding areas were placed on high visibility foot patrol in affected areas. Initially, over the first 2 weeks of the operation there were as many as 4 officers on patrol at any one time between 6pm and

2am, but as the amount of nuisance calls fell over the following weeks this was allowed to fall to either one or two officers depending on the resources available.

The authority of a Superintendent was obtained to carry out overt video recording in the 2K area with a view to catching the youths on film and acting as a deterrent to them. This was sought for the one month period 1112198 to 31112198. During this period when resources permitted a uniformed officer was allocated the camera and filmed overtly, either on foot or from a stationary marked police vehicle at peak nuisance times. It was found that the youths gathered in affected areas did not like the idea of being caught on film no matter what the circumstances and always made a hasty exit from the scene.

The initial idea was to film the youths in action, and use the footage to show to their parents, and also to build up a visual beat profile of nuisance offenders. It was found that as soon as the camera was produced the offending youths would disappear. This made the camera an effective deterrent and became an effective tool in pro-active policing. Word quickly spread amongst local residents and youths about the camera, resulting in a sharp drop in nuisance calls received.

After the one month's authority for filming had expired it was decided against applying for an extension. The nuisance calls received had fallen significantly, and resources could be scaled down accordingly. It was felt that at this stage the presence of a uniformed police officer was just as effective a deterrent as a uniformed police officer with a camera.

ASSESSMENT

Were there any difficulties?

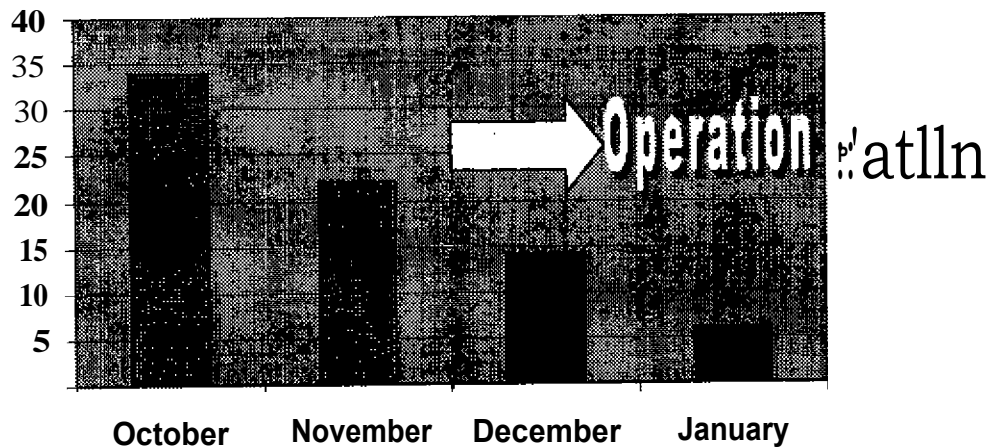
- *Little Angel Syndrome*. This is the utter disbelief of parents that their child could ever do anything wrong. The video footage was designed to handle this, but it was found that the notes made at the time by the officer who dealt with the child have been invaluable. With these notes we had the child's name, d.o.b., address, school, parents name and telephone number.
- Abstraction of officers allocated to operation was an issue which also arose on a number of occasions. This led to the situation where if due to illness or abstractions response duties were not fully covered, then quite rightly other officers must be found to cover them. Unfortunately, this was generally done by taking area beat officers off their area beat and onto response duties.
- Public reception to the operation was excellent, and many positive comments were received by officers carrying out the area foot patrol. However, there were still certain parties who believed that still not enough was being done, e.g. the persistent repeat callers.
- As a result of the operation being run on the 2K area, juvenile nuisance calls in surrounding areas increased. This was not the intention of the operation- the problem was supposed to be resolved, not moved. Occasionally youths were dealt with on these other areas but this spread the resources too thinly.

ASSESSMENT

What was the result?

The graph below shows the reported juvenile nuisance incidents for the two month period prior to the commencement of Operation Exodus (October-November) and the two month period while the operation was running (December-January).

Juvenile Nuisance Incidents



As can clearly be seen from the graph above, juvenile nuisance calls received fell from 34 during October to just 6 during January at the end of the operation.

The result has been:-

- **83% drop in juvenile nuisance over total assessment period**
- **1 Youth Arrested for Public Order Offence**
- **8 nearby off-licences reported for selling of alcohol to underage youths**
- **40 letters sent out to parents to inform them of their children's behaviour**
- **Beat profile enhanced and updated**
- **New Partnerships formed in community and with local agencies**

Please note-

The current boundary for the 2K area has only been in place for less than 12 months, making it impossible to compare figures for previous years juvenile nuisance incidents with this years.



ASSESSMENT

Could the responses have been improved?

A number of possible improvements could have been made in the implementation of the operation.

- Many of the responses implemented are not long term, and it is anticipated that juvenile nuisance will again increase once the operation concludes. Future operations should make good use of effective high visibility policing, as short term this has given the best results. This however is very labour intensive and should only be used as a short term proposal to `kick start' further such operations.
- Communication between teams must be evaluated for future operations. Although the team involved in the creation of Operation Exodus were familiar with the proposals and how they were to be implemented, it was difficult to inform and motivate the other 3 teams in the station as they worked opposite shifts
- Greater publicity. of the operation may have proved beneficial in showing the local residents that we were listening to their problems and we were taking action on them. This in turn could have built a greater community spirit and encouraged residents to work with us.

ASSESSMENT

What did the operation cost?

The simple answer to this question is **NOTHING**.

No additional officers were allocated to the operation, no overtime was incurred as a result of it, and no equipment was required that we did not already possess.

The officers that staffed the operation were allocated from the teams who were already on duty, and these officers could be spared because of careful planning in conjunction with demand managers.

This operation was carried out by simply applying the principle of geographical policing, allowing the area beat officers to patrol their area beats. It demonstrates that if officers can spend time doing this then additional resources and equipment aren't always necessary and genuine results can still be achieved

EL ACCRINGTON JUVENILE NUISANCE MONTHLY BREAKDOWN

