
THE TILLEY AWARD 2000

OPERATION SEAL

SUBMITTED BY

DORSET POLICE

CONTACT OFFICER

SUPERINTENDENT SIMON MARTIN OPERATIONS MANAGER

BOURNEMOUTH POLICE DIVISIONAL HEADQUARTERS

MADEIRA ROAD

BOURNEMOUTH

Bill 1QQ

PHONE 01202 222131

FAX 01202 222251

OPERATION SEAL - ABSTRACT

Operation Seal related to a dwelling house, situated in a densely populated area, used for the purposes of prostitution and the supply of controlled drugs, namely Crack Cocaine.

Apart from the serious offences, which were associated with the premises; there was serious disruption to the quality of life for the surrounding neighbourhood. Residents were gravely concerned for the safety of their children, were kept awake at night by the unruly behaviour of the callers, and were also concerned that the premises and associated problems were precipitating a steady decline in the area.

Local police had made a number of attempts to resolve the problem but with limited success. This was leading to a loss of credibility in the eyes of local residents who failed to see any measurable improvements resulting from police action.

It was clear that the premises fitted the definition of a 'Problem' in terms of Problem Oriented Policing and fell to the local Beat Team co-ordinated by Sgt Tracey White. The Beat team set under the POP project underway in Bournemouth applied the principles of Problem Oriented Policing to the issue.

Information gleaned from the residents was researched by use of the Dorset Police Crime Intelligence System and quickly highlighted the characters involved were known drug abusers and/or prostitutes. Technical equipment was used to gather further information, together with plain clothed observations and use of Powers conferred under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, to carry out Stop and Search.

Consideration was given to the previous attempts made by police to solve this problem and it became clear use of a drugs warrant would only achieve limited and short term success. The Problem Analysis Triangle focused attention on the features of the premises, the features of the offender and the features of the other players involved in these offences.

The operation proved successful, resulting in solution of the problem and lasting improvements in the locality. The occupant and main offender was convicted and imprisoned for 3 years and 9 months for offences which included, Possession of Crack Cocaine With Intent to Supply and Allowing premises to be used for the purposes of Prostitution.

The residents were delighted with the result and their faith in the Dorset Police was restored. The icing on the cake came when the property was sold and new occupants moved into the address restoring normality to the neighbourhood.

OPERATION SEAL - THE OPERATION

1. The problem was initially identified by a large number of complaints from the surrounding residents, regarding the activities taking place in a dwelling house situated in a quiet suburban area of Bournemouth.

It was suspected that the said premises were being used for the purposes of prostitution and for the sale of controlled drugs, namely Crack Cocaine. This was attracting a large number of undesirable characters to the surrounding area and causing great concern to the local residents. Most of the unlawful activity occurred throughout the night, causing disruption and sleep deprivation for the neighbours and generally affecting their quality of life. Families mainly inhabit the area and there was concern for the safety of the children living nearby.

3. The aim of the project was to improve the quality of life for the surrounding occupants, to prosecute the offenders for the offences being committed and to finalise the matter, in light of the previous partial successes, which had been achieved by police. It was also important to regain credibility as a police service.
4. The problem was prioritised over others partly because of the seriousness of the offences being committed, partly because of the distress it was causing and partly because it related to the National and Local Policing Plans aimed at addressing the problems caused by drug abuse.
5. The problem was easily identifiable by virtue of the amount of complaints received and the fact that the residents were so enraged by the problem that they made their feelings known to the Chief Constable and their members of Parliament
6. Initially the sole source of the information was the surrounding residents. Having drawn our attention to the matter we took various steps, which will be explained a little later, which furnished us with a wealth of information. This included observations to identify the characters involved, the use of information provided by registered police informants, the use of technical equipment to gather evidence and prevent the requirement for paid overtime. We also liaised with other agencies; namely "Healthworks" who have an agent who is responsible for welfare issues relating to Prostitutes.
7. The Dorset Police Crime Intelligence System was analysed and all current information was considered when planning our response. The Force Drug Squad was regularly updated with our progress, as they were involved in a large-scale enquiry, which involved some of the players who featured in our operation. There was therefore mutual dissemination of information, which allowed us to understand the nature and extent of the problem.
8. It became clear at an early stage the fears of the residents were well founded. By analysing the information it highlighted for me, that since the Force Drug Squad and Force Crime Squad have changed their priorities after Crime Squads were Nationalised, nobody seemed to be taking responsibility for the 'small' street dealers.

9. Winton Beat Team therefore "adopted" the problem. Having taken ownership of it we were very determined that we would achieve a positive result. Two previous warrants had been executed at the address with very limited success, no drugs were found on either occasion and it was clear that other avenues needed to be explored.
10. Analysis revealed the occupant of the house, and main offender, was stopped regularly by uniformed officers on routine patrol and searched under the Misuse of Drugs Act. However, these searches invariably proved negative and he was becoming ever more confident that he would never be caught. Therefore, the police response was varied and designed to cause maximum disturbance to his drug dealing activities. An officer, PC Colin Brodie was nominated as Officer in the Case, mainly because of his depth of experience, particularly on the subject of drug offences.
11. On certain days the tactic would be to sit up in a marked police vehicle directly outside the address to deter people from calling to purchase their drugs. At other times covert observations were conducted to identify the persons calling at the address and to try to establish a pattern to the activities.
12. For a complete week of nights the area was swamped with plain clothed officers and stopped and searched every caller who came from the address. The information we received from these people, who were all known drug users, was that he was refusing to sell to them because he knew the police were outside. Although we were disappointed that we did not manage to seize any controlled drugs, we did at least stop his trade for a week.
13. The operation was painstaking and time consuming. It required a great deal of flexibility by the staff involved in relation to the shifts that they were being asked to perform. It was, however, vital that all possible intelligence was gathered and lessons learned from tactics which had been tried and failed as well as those which had proved effective before taking any final action to ensure the desired result was achieved.
14. The beauty of having the whole team engaged on the operation meant that there were sufficient staffing levels without involving any other department. As previously stated, the ownership of the problem instilled a feeling of drive and determination within the team. The down side of that was that other Beat Team issues were not addressed until this problem was solved. However, the co-ordinator was able to persuade her managers that this was a priority worthy of such commitment.

15. All intelligence was recorded in surveillance logbooks and this was disseminated and researched by the officer in the case. At an early stage of our enquiry we established that the prostitutes who had been living at and operating from the premises had in fact moved to a different address. However; we managed to establish a pattern in relation to the drug dealing activities and we obtained a search warrant issued under the Misuse of Drugs Act.
16. On the first two occasions that we intended to execute the warrant, when we had a whole team of officers standing by, it soon became evident that the offender did not have any drugs in the house. The execution of the warrant was therefore postponed, as it was imperative that a positive result was achieved.
17. However, on the third occasion he was clearly dealing to a number of callers to the address. Wishing to take advantage of the element of surprise we entered the premises at 0130 hours when he was obviously not expecting us. A substantial amount of Crack Cocaine (at that time the largest seizure in the County) and Heroin was seized. Some of the Cocaine was already prepared, wrapped in cling film and found in the pocket of the trousers worn by the occupant.
18. The occupant was arrested and admitted Possession of the Crack Cocaine With Intent to Supply. He was charged and convicted and is now serving a prison sentence of 3 years and 9 months.

The success of this operation can be judged by the following factors:

- The residents were absolutely delighted by the result and by the police response.
- The offender was convicted of the offence and received a custodial sentence.
- Faith in the Police Service was restored after having previously felt let down to such an extent they wrote to their MP and the Chief Constable.
- The officers involved achieved great job satisfaction from the result.
- No further complaints have been received from the residents of this street, therefore, police resources can be used elsewhere.
- The quality of life has improved for the local residents, not only because of the conviction of the offender but by virtue of the fact that the property has now been sold and new occupants have moved in.

Conclusion

On the face of things it could be judged that this is just another drugs warrant. However, arguably through lack of application of the constituent aspects of P.A.T. and S.A.R.A. the execution of the two previous drug warrants had failed to eradicate this problem. It was only when the Beat Team was able to take ownership of the problem and to effectively apply S.A.R.A. and P.A.T. that a satisfactory conclusion was reached. It is our contention that this is therefore an example of Problem Oriented Policing in action and is accordingly submitted for the Tilley Award 2000.

OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO