

Lancashire Constabulary

OPERATION FACELIFT

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SUMMARY

OPERATION FACELIFT

The name 'FACELIFT' was chosen because that is exactly what was provided to both the properties and the residents which, or who, were the subject of this Problem Oriented Policing initiative.

THE PROBLEM

Three neighbourhoods in the rural suburb of Adlington near Chorley were suffering a high ratio of domestic burglaries. The premises were council owned and were occupied by pensioners aged 75 years or over, and who, in the main, were single females. The total number of dwellings is 42.

THE PROBLEM DEFINED

Crime statistics revealed that in the crime year 1997/98 the number of burglaries in the three neighbourhoods was three. In the following 12 months this total had grown to 12. This meant that a resident faced roughly a one in three chance of being burgled in a 12-month period. This ratio was 14 times greater than the ratio (two per cent) for other dwellings in the Chorley area as revealed by the 1998 Crime and Disorder Audit.

Following the creation of a partnership between the local police and the local council the residents entered a consultation programme. This revealed that the residents had real concerns for their safety and the security of their homes. Improved windows and doors represented 28 per cent of their wishes. Many intimated their reluctance to leave their homes for any length of time.

RESPONSE

Local police decided to call a meeting between various departments and the council. They agreed collective responsibility to address the problems and the following actions were planned:

- Consult and educate all residents
- Generate appropriate funding (£94,000) from Chorley Borough Council to replace all windows and doors with UPVC
- Display crime alert posters in all homes
- Have all property postcoded
- * Convene a Neighbourhood Watch for each neighbourhood
- Agree a top level security specification for the replacement windows and doors

A partnership was formed and regular meetings ensured that all actions were completed to a satisfactory standard, and within essential financial restraints, and appropriate deadlines.

IMPACT

The crime statistics reveal that since April 1999 there has been NOT ONE burglary or attempt in all three neighbourhoods. A further consultation programme with residents has revealed complete satisfaction. They feel safer and do not worry now about leaving their homes. The properties are safer, no longer have the stigma of "looking like council properties", are warmer, and do not need a programme of maintenance. The council is delighted with its own improved image, and has changed policy to ensure that this initiative will continue throughout the borough in a rolling programme.

OPERATION FACELIFT

PROBLEM

The ratio of burglary dwellings in three locations in a rural suburb in Lancashire had grown to 28 per cent. In the crime year 1998/99 there had been 12 burglaries from a total of 42 homes. The residents faced roughly a one in three chance of being burgled. Elsewhere in Chorley the 1998 Crime and Disorder Audit showed that dwellings faced a two per cent chance of being burgled. In the suburb this same year there had been a total of 70 houses burgled and therefore, the three locations accounted for one sixth of the overall problem. At the onset of 1999/2000 the ratio of burglaries was continuing at the rate of one per month.

I the local CID Supervisor, considered that a Problem - Oriented Policing response was required. I consulted the Divisional analysts to examine the problem and compare it with like neighbourhoods in the Chorley area.

This revealed that the pattern of increased burglaries at such locations had doubled in the past 12 months. The three locations in the suburb were in the top five for volume crime, there being a total of 33 like locations in Chorley. I then began to apply the SARA format. The rate of the offences was such that a police only operation would be futile — burglaries occurring day and night at a rate of roughly one per month.

To highlight considerations I examined the following:

LOCATION Semi-detached council bungalows which were easily identified and could be accessed by road or adjacent open land. They were weak - flimsy wooden windows and doors — and stood out from their neighbouring houses. They were separate, unconnected communities. They were also separate from the surrounding neighbourhood in a town with low numbers of patrolling constables because of its semi-rural location.

VICTIM

Very elderly and single occupants who have restricted income. They would not expect to pay to improve properties they rent. Very fearful of leaving their homes for any length of time. Would not make very good witnesses should any suspects be disturbed. They had no real confidence in the authorities and lacked leadership to resolve the problem. They were isolated from the community and nobody appeared to be taking any interest in their plight. If they suffered a break-in the council policy was merely to replace or repair the damage with continued weak fittings.

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While there had been no offenders arrested for any burglaries on the three sites, arrests elsewhere in nearby areas for burglaries at like properties indicated the offender could be either a local or a travelling criminal. The offenders would not require a special instrument to gain entry, and were not leaving any forensic clues. Even if they were seen or disturbed the quality of identification evidence would not be sufficient to sustain a successful prosecution. Also the vulnerability of both property and occupant were very clear.

RESPONSE

The only real response was to consider how the problem could be prevented.

I convened a meeting with people I felt might be able to contribute towards a full strategy of TARGET HARDENING.

Strategies aimed at:

1. improving the security of the properties;
2. increasing the ability of the residents to look after themselves.

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This meeting was a success in, that all persons present agreed that they had a role to play. They recognised that they had a responsibility to address the problem and a collective response would be preferable. A local partnership was formed.

The objectives were to:

1. reduce or remove the opportunity for burglary;
2. reduce or remove the fear of crime;
3. involve the residents in as many stages as possible.

The partnership comprised:

1. local police — who would chair the meetings and generate focused patrolling
Charley Housing -- who would:

provide appropriate funds to replace all windows and doors with a very secure design;

consult tenants to assess their fears and wishes, and allow individual choice and contributions towards improvements;

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provide a skilled workforce.

3. Crime Prevention — who would stipulate the minimum security specification in the design of the replacement windows and doors, and also conduct a quality control to ensure the fitting did not compromise the security.

4. Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator — who would assist with the tenant consultation and provide crime prevention advice, and organise all property to be postcoded. Also create a NHW for each location.
5. Special Constables — who would assist with focused patrolling and postcoding of property.
5. Local MP --- who would provide high profile assistance, seek Government support, and assist at reducing local in-fighting between local councillors.

PROCESSES

The partnership spent a lot of time in the early stages ensuring that the answers being provided were genuine, achievable, involved resident consultation and choice and most importantly were focused entirely on security improvements (See Supp Doc 1).

Early problems included identifying where the monies would come from. Deliberations involving the local MP with Executive Committees within Chorley Council helped smooth the way, and £94,000 was transferred to assist the objectives.

To fulfil the necessary security specification Chorley Housing had to change its policy and go to an external manufacturer. However policy was retained when its own workforce fitted the new windows and doors.

Crime Prevention personnel were then requested to conduct a quality control monitoring of the fitting. This proved valuable when work was halted in an early stage because it was not up to standard. The shortcomings were resolved and the work completed to the necessary standards.

The process of regular meetings helped in that progress was maintained. Each stage of development needing completion before moving on. All partners were encouraged to contribute and any issues of red tape were resolved so that unnecessary delays or complications were removed. Also, everyone was kept fully informed of the progress made and of the position reached at any one time. This helped momentum and a feeling of team work and achievement.

ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Since April 1999 there have been NO burglaries or attempts on any of the three locations (See Supp Doc 2).
2. All houses received new UPVC windows and doors constructed to a stringent Security Specification (See Supp Doc 3).
3. Individual choice of design of door was fulfilled.
4. Resident consultation generated a design of trickle-vent-ventilation to remove the need to open windows and doors in hot weather.

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5. Crime alert posters were designed in consultation with residents and then displayed in windows (for outside view) and behind doors (for resident guidance) in all houses (See Supp Doc 4).

The houses appear new and have lost the stigma of looking like "council property") (See Supp Doc 2)

7. The homes are warmer and do not require as much maintenance.
8. There is a NHW in each location.
9. All property has been postcoded.
10. The fear of crime has been greatly reduced.
11. The quality of life for each resident has been greatly unproved. (See Supp Does 5 &6).
12. A community spirit has returned.
13. COMMUNITY POLICE NEWSLETTER — Running alongside the initiative was the introduction of a monthly newsletter written by the local police. In the sector of Adlington the area sergeant writes a two page (A4 size) broadcast of current problems, issues and policing achievements. On the mailing list are NHW coordinators who in turn advise their members of any relevant information. This not only informs people of matters pertinent to their safety and the security of their property but also helps with the community spirit — people are not isolated. They can contribute, and help one another.
14. Policy within Chorley Housing Services has been changed to introduce this initiative as "Best Practice".
15. The necessary funding for continued like improvements at similar locations elsewhere in Charley has been budgeted for.
16. Recognition as "Best Practice " by the local MP, Lindsay Hoyle and confirmation from Home Secretary Jack Straw (See Supp Doc 7).
17. Awarded "Secured by Design" certificates (See Supp Doc 8).
18. Positive media coverage continued momentum and contributed to "Feel Good " factor (See Supp Does 9 & 10).

CAPABLE GUARDIANS

It is interesting to note, and, indeed, a sign of a healthy scheme, if there are CAPABLE GUARDIANS — or "CAPACITY BUILDING", if you listen to how the local council or politicians would describe them. Capable Guardians, or Capacity Building, is the terminology used to describe how the initiative exists beyond the immediate energy/focus. For example, evaluate any success/achievements after twelve months, and then what? --- Will it carry on being successful? There are achievements, or factors, which will continue beyond the original energy of the scheme and ideally they will not involve the partners directly.

So, have we educated or assisted the residents to stand on their own feet?

Here is a list of the ACHIEVEMENTS which we feel are CAPABLE GUARDIANS: (the numbers used are those used in the list of ACHIEVEMENTS shown earlier in this report).

2. UPVC windows and doors of a stringent security specification.
3. Choice of door design.
4. Trickle-vent-ventilation.
5. Crime Alert posters.
6. Stigma of council property appearance removed.
7. Warmer houses.
8. NHW schemes.
All property postcoded.
12. Community spirit re-introduced.
13. Police newsletter.
14. Change of council policy.
15. Continued funding to assist like areas elsewhere to have similar initiatives.
16. Recognised as "Best Practice".

PARTNERSHIP

Where the initiative has benefited so well is from the energy, focus and determination to succeed from every partner.

This caused the two principal partners, myself and Steve Lomas, Head of Housing Services to reflect on "WHAT HELPED MAKE THIS HAPPEN?"

Here is a list of "ingredients" we perceived within the partnership which assisted:

- Ensure effort is spent on information and consultation.
- Don't hide behind "red tape".
- Get organisational and political support.
- Work together: agree collective/individual responsibilities.
- Get residents' support/enthusiasm/involvement.
- Commitment to overcome problems/help each other
 - not onesided
 - trust
 - meet declared deadlines
- Get positive publicity/reward success
- Pride in performance
- Quality control

Now I am going to introduce the perspective, values, and achievements as seen by Chorley Housing Services.

COMMUNITY SAFETY PROJECT ADLINGTON/ANDERTON

COUNCIL PERSPECTIVE

BACKGROUND

1999 saw a major change in the Housing Service Staff and Structure and the council as a whole. Historically the Housing Department has had a very structural approach to dealing with the tenants' needs. The major things involved:

- Greater consultation and involvement of tenants on the services we provide.
- Improved support for tenants to assist maintaining their tenancies.

The historical approach from Housing Services to problems of crime, particularly burglaries.

We would see it as a police issue to catch the offenders - so it wasn't our problem.

- We would repair any damage to the property, but would provide very little additional help to support the affected tenants.

PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

One of the major changes in attitude within the Housing Services was to get away from the view that it wasn't our problem - it dearly was. But could we provide all the answers? Upon analysis the answer was no.

From the first meeting with the police it was clear that neither of us had the answers singularly but we faced the same problem. The residents were very fearful of being burgled, some repeatedly. They were virtually prisoners in their own home, worried about going out, and leaving their homes, for fear of what they might come back to.

From the outset Housing Services wanted a genuine partnership not only with the police but also the local residents. All parties should be kept informed and involved in tackling the problem. The improvements that were needed must be sustainable once the physical improvements had been completed.

A key comment from the outset was that we would spend more time and effort with the tenants and the neighbourhood rather than concentrate just on the physical improvement to the properties' security. This decision was a fundamental key to success.

The first major hurdle to be overcome was the lack of money. At the beginning the Housing Services had no budget for this scheme and no likelihood of any extra money being found. The issue was seen as so important that a comprehensive look at existing resources was undertaken. Sums of money were reprioritised from within budgets and a sum of £94,000 was identified. Council members and the MP, Lindsay Hoyle were very supportive of the proposals and agreed to the money being made available. It meant us now doing other things but people were seen as more important than brick and mortar repairs.

Regular partnership -meetings with the police were set up and a joint approach agreed. Housing Service tenants participation and support staff set up Tenant Consultation Groups. These were co-ordinated with Neighbourhood Watch and both were supported by tenants.

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So what was going to be done? We did not impose a solution only, we set general "Secured by Design" guidelines. The best way to involve people and decide what should be done was to ask the tenants. So we did. They identified property security and environmental design as their main concerns.

A "Secured by Design" specification was drawn up and environmental improvements such as fencing and lighting were also progressed. Within the property specification we wanted to give the tenants a choice which was a major change in approach for us. This we did. Without compromising the Secured by Design specification residents were given a choice of doors and windows. The boost to tenants confidence by giving this choice maintained their enthusiasm and commitment. They began to feel it really was their scheme.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

The real improvement of the scheme has been on the quality of life for the elderly tenants. Comments made, many in writing, have stated how much safer they feel. This improved quality has generated a strong community spirit. Tenants now help each other. Tenant groups and the three Neighbourhood Watch schemes are well supported and attended.

There have been other benefits from the scheme. Both for the tenants, police and council. The council and police have an improved image, we don't just say things now, we actually do things as well. You can't cost this but enhanced relationships has improved co-operation in other housing matters of concern to our tenants.

Other tangible benefits have been a reduction of repair and maintenance cost of £57,000. It was good business for us. We've improved not only the appearance of the dwelling by allowing individual choice but the home is now more comfortable and costs less to heat. The homes do not now look like "council houses" and it is hard to distinguish them from privately owned dwellings. The partnership has removed a stigma associated with council dwellings and improved letability. People want to live there. Again, good business for us.

WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNT?

- Putting tenants first is good business. Spending time and effort involving the residents at the beginning has had rich rewards.
- Improved our knowledge and understanding of how the police work.

For two large organisations we do not always speak a common language. Each has its own jargon and methods of working which could be a barrier.

- Successful partnerships must "give and take". Compromise is often a solution but this takes courage to change one's ways.
- We've changed our policies. Structural repairs for individual window replacements are now to the Secured by Design specification.

Improved community spirit leads to better neighbourhoods.

CONCLUSION

The Partnership with the police and local residents has been a positive experience.

WE WILL BE DOING IT AGAIN.