

OPERATION ADELPHI

A PROBLEM ORIENTED APPROACH TO HOTEL BURGLARY REDUCTION

LANCASHIRE CONSTABULARY, WESTERN DIVISION, ENGLAND, 2000

SUMMARY:

Operation Adelphi was commenced in July 1999 with the aim of reducing the numbers of hotel burglaries being committed in the Blackpool and Fylde area in line with the policing plan. Prior to this date little was done in the way of a systematic approach to the problems and subsequent investigation. Adelphi brought focus to the problem with a resulting reduction in burglary. Hotel burglary was reduced by 52% compared to the corresponding period the previous year. In the 4 month period between July and October 1999 a reduction of 127 burglaries was achieved compared with 1998. The reduction was even more impressive when taken against three consecutive monthly rises from April to June. (143 in 1999 and 270 in 1998).

The reductions were achieved as the direct result of a partnership problem solving approach to the problem. A wide variety of responses to the problem of hotel burglary were considered and used in the response including: top offender profiling from MO and crime recording history; a comprehensive scenes of crime review; examination of the re-victimisation of hotels to identify trends; disruption practices; rigorous bail policy restricting access to hotels; hotel burglary seminars for hotel management and staff; re-visiting all hotel crime scenes within 2 days -Atlanta bicycle patrols; introduction of a photograph sharing scheme; setting up a hotel watch scheme; sustained media involvement; exploring external partnerships for funding; and distribution of crime prevention material.

A small number of offenders were responsible for many of the burglaries. They committed large numbers of offences with little or no prospect of detection. Large sea front hotels appeared to be the prime targets. Once an offender had access to a hotel he would often enter several rooms. Each entry was recorded as a separate burglary and tended to distort analysis of data. For example, In September one particular hotel was the subject of one visit by an offender creating 10 burglaries. To outsiders looking in this prevents the true picture from being seen. A photograph-sharing scheme was commenced supported by a wide variety of disruption tactics. Additionally the media and other agencies were used in a wide variety of supporting roles.

In the first month of the initiative crime dropped by almost 50%. These reductions were reinforced by radio and press reports of police examination of CCTV footage from hotels to detect offences. Disruption tactics included home visits to offenders. The crime prevention message being conveyed would be more poignant if officers with good knowledge of the day to day hotel crime situation were used. It appeared to work.

INTRODUCTION

Blackpool has particularly high levels of burglary compared with both Lancashire and England and Wales as a whole. This is evident in the following burglary figures of crime rates per thousand population:

- England/Wales 19.4
- Lancashire 19.4
- Blackpool 25.2

The town has somewhere in the region of 2,300 hotels and guesthouses catering for 18 million visitors each and every year. By the nature of the holiday business a hotel has an open door policy and therefore it has its own very unique problems. There is clear evidence that the more luxurious the surroundings of a hotel, the less security conscious are the guests.

Seasonal visitors make particularly tempting targets to the resident criminal fraternity.

In 1998 the total value of property stolen from hotels in Blackpool and the Fylde coast amounted to £385,000.

In June 1999 using the Lancashire Constabulary Intelligence system INTL I identified that hotel burglary offences had shown a marked increase. They had risen for the three consecutive months of April to June compared with 1998 figures.

I decided to attempt a POP approach to reverse the trend over a four month summer period. Specifically, the objective was to achieve a reduction in hotel burglary.

SCANNING

A review of the problem revealed several patterns:

- Offences appear to follow a pattern with burglary increases corresponding to holiday periods. The months of July, August and

October were identified as peak offending times from intelligence. Large numbers of offences in October coincided with the annual illumination display when large numbers of visitors come to Blackpool for short weekend breaks.

- Certain hotels tend to be victimised repeatedly. They are often larger busy hotels with open reception areas affording easy access to the opportunist thief. Over 50% of targeted hotels are on the busy promenade.
- Crimes usually occur between Friday and Sunday during afternoon and late evening when hotel guests are out of their rooms either in the dining room or visiting shows in the resort.
- Security measures in place at many hotels are inadequate allowing easy access to hotel rooms.
- The attacked hotels can be grouped into three key hot spot zones. Two cover separate areas of the promenade. The third consists of 2 main roads in the town centre with an abundance of good class hotels.

ANALYSIS

I spoke to a number of people both within and outside of the police service to enable me to list some of the factors that contributed to the existing crime problem. I used the problem analysis triangle (PAT) to address the problem from a variety of angles. This provided me with a thorough understanding of some of the issues that I needed to address in the short term and more importantly in the longer term.

I have attempted to list a few of the points that were identified during this process.

Location

- The attacked hotels were predominantly large hotels with large open reception areas providing easy access to hotel corridors and rooms.

- Scenes of Crime were not routinely visiting hotels.
- The same hotels were repeatedly attacked with approximately 8 out of the top 10 victimised hotels being situated on the promenade.
- The majority of the attacked hotels are grouped together into four Ward Areas of Alexandria, Claremont, Talbot and Waterloo.
- The hotels could be grouped into a small number of hot spot zones that included the promenade.
- Considering the large number of hotels in the resort, in the region of 50% of all hotels burglaries were committed on the promenade.
- Many of the hotels had several access and exit points that were often unsupervised.
- The locks on many hotel rooms were of a poor standard.
- Key security in a number of hotels was poor.
- Staff training in crime awareness was lacking.
- CCTV systems in place were sometimes poor in terms of their recording capability or picture quality.
- Insecure windows and doors

Victim

These were identified as:

- Hotel owners - dialogue between hotels was poor.
- Visitors to the town.

- The property stolen in most cases was cash, credit cards, jewellery, clothing, and small electrical items.

Characteristics of the Offender/Source of the Problem

- Police computer systems were used to good effect to identify potential offenders taking into account their previous offending history and up to date verifiable intelligence.
- It was ascertained that a very small number of offenders were committing hotel crime on a regular basis and stealing from the same hotels time and time again. Hotel staff particularly receptionists were not aware who to look out for.
- Usual methods of entry used to gain entry to rooms included the use of plastic strips to open Yale type locks, bodily pressure to doors, and the use of screwdrivers or similar implements.
- All the identified offenders were unemployed and almost without exception drug users living in rented accommodation in the local area. The funding of personal drug habits appeared to be the primary reason for the commission of the offences.

RESPONSE

The priority response was to introduce measures that would reduce the number of offences being committed during the summer holiday period of 1999. The longer-term objective was and continues to be a reduction in burglary and the building of lasting partnerships to support our corporate objectives

The prime task was considerable when set against a month on month increase in burglary. Burglaries in June 1999 for example were up by 50% on the previous year.

I held a series of meetings with departmental representatives and then set about putting some of the ideas into practice. I took on the role of the project co-ordinator.

In the initial stages I was presented with vast amounts of intelligence from the divisional analyst concerning offending patterns and offenders. It included information on the total range of hotel crime including deceptions, vehicle crime, and assaults, criminal damage and much more. Breaking the crime statistics down I found that burglary accounted for the majority of all the crime committed.

Accordingly I concentrated only on burglary and excluded other offences from my analysis.

One of the problems encountered in using available intelligence was that the figures tended to be distorted. Once an offender enters a hotel illegally he will often enter several rooms. Under crime recording rules each entry is classed as a separate burglary. In September 1999 the Roscrea hotel in Blackpool was entered on one occasion giving rise to 10 burglaries. How do these rate to 10 visits on different occasions?

Before I could commence any firm action I had to set up some form of paper trail. To this end I introduced a paper and email tasking system which enabled me to monitor actions on a variety of fronts.

Actions initiated

- Offenders were identified and given a 1-10 priority rating taking into account their ability and willingness to commit large numbers of crimes. This was prepared from dissemination of information held on the INDE crime recording systems, PNC and INTL intelligence systems. An intelligence package was then prepared in respect of each offender.
- Crime hit hotels were prioritised, again using available crime information. Using the information clusters or hot spot zones were identified.
- A hotel crime awareness seminar was organised and held in a top Blackpool hotel where guest speakers addressed hotel staff on crime prevention issues to coincide with the operation. Hotel patrol by employees at peak times was actively encouraged.
- Media were contacted and asked to participate in the crime reduction campaign. Outside agencies were actively sought to assist with the response. ADT Fire and Security provided funding and use of equipment.
- An offender photograph database was initiated and disseminated to hotels in accordance with the Data Protection Act. From the onset of the operation I used the tasking system to maintain records. Each offender charged was the subject of media focus to act as a deterrent.
- Officers were tasked with associated duties associated with the initiative.

Partnerships

Internal

- Scenes of Crime Department: Crime prevention advice in the form of leaflets was produced for hotels in partnership with ADT Fire and Security. Suspicious incident forms were produced and circulated to hotels enabling complete records to be made of any suspicious incident at an early opportunity. Self analysis questionnaires aimed at identifying problem areas were produced for hotel owners.
- Intelligence Unit: Intelligence packages prepared for all priority offenders.
- Target Unit: Surveillance operations.
- CID: Disruption and processing of arrested offenders. Placing of bail conditions restricting entry to hotels

- Support Unit: Warrant execution.
- Cycle Unit: Crime re-visits and high visibility in hot spot zones.

External

- Hotel owners
- ADT Fire and Alarm Company: Sponsorship and supply of CCTV equipment.
- Blackpool Hotel and Guest House Association: Crime prevention material circulated to members.
- Media: Evening Gazette. Citizen Newspaper. Radio Wave.
- Fhlde Coin Equipment: Amusement machine security.

The peak offending days were identified as Friday through to Sunday. This created problems in terms of providing an appropriate response for high visibility patrol and disruption activity due to resourcing problems. This was the case particularly on Sunday evenings with minimum patrols available. Flexible working arrangements were looked at to enable the necessary work to be carried out.

Alerting hotels to the crime problems involved entering into an information-sharing scheme involving the distribution of offender photographs in accordance with the Data Protection Act provisions. In the early stages of this particular initiative no approved procedures had been put in place and photographs were simply scanned on computer equipment and circulated against an indemnity signature obtained from the hotels. As the scheme has developed a more sophisticated database has been created which is being continually updated with offender photographs. The documentation covering use of these photographs has also been improved over time.

Disruption tactics

Offenders were the subjects of a variety of tactics aimed at disruption and arrest. Although arrest was an option I felt that that it would be far easier to disrupt their activities by home visits combined with the use of a focused media campaign highlighting positive action being taken by the police and partners.

- Home visits to offenders: Plain-clothes visits by a detective and myself on regular occasions created offender unease. They were warned about the consequences of offending and shown press cuttings featuring successes to date.
- Surveillance: A top target identified as B would not curb his offending using the above tactic. Knowing that he had recently been released from custody and was committing offences I arranged for him to be followed. Immediately he was detained for theft and remanded again. The custodial sentence imposed denied him the opportunity to commit hotel burglary again during the summer.
- Search Warrants: As all the offenders were drug users it was possible to gather intelligence to enable warrants under Section 23 Misuse of the Drugs Act 1971 to be applied for.

ASSESSMENT

The initial operation was conducted over a four-month period to coincide with the anticipated crime trends. Crimes were monitored daily and key hotels were regularly visited to stimulate and promote their involvement. Appropriate crime prevention advice was given particularly in relation to secluded access points.

During the summer campaign hotel burglary was reduced in each and every month compared to the previous year equating to a 52% reduction in burglary with 132 fewer

burglaries over the period. Additionally 5 of the top 10 targets were arrested for hotel burglary.

Typical arrests during the operation:

Offender C had been seen in suspicious circumstances on a number of occasions in the same hotel but merely asked to leave even though the hotel in question had been the subject of repeat burglaries. When the hotels were supplied with offender photographs the male was quickly identified leading to his arrest. He subsequently admitted a total of ten hotel burglaries. CCTV dissemination also provided good arrests and linking of crimes. An example of the good use of CCTV was in the case of H who repeatedly entered hotel swimming pool changing rooms stealing wallets. Following identification he was linked to other offences using CCTV footage from similar MO offences some miles away.

Operation Adelphi has continued to evolve and it is now incorporated into the Lancashire Constabulary Western Division Crime reduction strategy. The hotel offender database is constantly updated and more and more hotels are becoming involved in the information - sharing scheme in what is seen as a positive police/ hotel partnership.

The pre-season crime awareness seminar was recently held with over 100 hotels represented. A permanent hotel watch scheme is now being formed with monthly meetings proposed the next being on Wednesday 31st May 2000.

The scheme will provide hoteliers and their staff with up to date information from other hotels and the police, and will be essential in reducing and preventing crime.

The partnership approach to hotel crime reduction saw the divisional Crime prevention department and ADT Fire and Security side by side at the Blackpool catering exhibition a major draw for hoteliers.

Additionally ADT supplied technical equipment to be placed within hotel premises to assist in the identification and detection of a

repeat offender. The equipment was provided at no cost to police or the hotel in question.

Target hotel offenders profiles along with supporting intelligence are now included on the force Intranet in support of police officers daily duties.

Adelphi was recently awarded the prestigious Lancashire Partnership against Crime award for the work so far.

A joint community safety initiative bid to the Lancashire Partnership against crime for funding has now been accepted enabling the purchase of 1000 hotel watch stickers and 1000 CCTV warning stickers. Partners in the bid included the Blackpool Hotel and Guesthouse Association, Blackpool Private Hotels Association, and the Holiday Association of Lytham St Anne's.

The objectives of this initiative are to:

- Improve inter-hotel communications and relations
- To reduce burglary in hotel and guest house establishments
- To reduce all crime and anti-social behaviour in hotel and guest house establishments To increase and promote public confidence and safety during their stay in the resort.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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