

SAFER PUBLIC TRAVEL

The Tilley Award 2000

E3 OCU

PC 6911 SEWELL

**ACOCKS GREEN POLICE STATION
YARDLEY ROAD
ACOCKS GREEN
BIRMINGHAM
B27 6EF**

**TEL; 01 21 626 7161
FAX; 0121 626 7194**

E-mail; m.sewell@west-midlands.police.uk

Safer Public Travel

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Safer Public Travel

Operation Hackney: Summary

Operation Hackney is a partnership between West Midlands Police and Travel West Midlands to prevent reduce and detect crime and anti social behaviour on public transport.

The operation commenced on 4th January 2000 and was planned initially run until 30th June 2000. However due to the success of the operation it is to be extended for another six months until December 2000.

Background

Over recent years Travel West Midlands (TWM) and West Midlands Police have worked on joint initiatives which have in the main been reactive in their response to targeting crime and incidents of anti social behaviour. Due to a dramatic increase in offences of robbery in February 1999 in the Balsall Heath area of Birmingham a joint operation with Travel West Midlands was arranged "Operation Doolittle". The operation was co-ordinated by PS Wright and PC SEWELL (E3 OCU). During the 4 week operation 39 arrests were made for a variety of offences and the number of incidents of robbery was reduced to three during the course of the operation.

The two partners recognised the benefit of working together to achieve a common goal. Further discussions were held over a period of time to develop a partnership approach to longer term strategic solutions to crime reduction.

Travel West Midlands agreed a sponsorship deal with West Midlands Police to second an officer to work across the force area in partnership with Travel West Midlands. A sponsorship payment of £10,000 was made to West Midlands Police, and the nominated officer PC SEWELL commenced his secondment on 411100 under the new **operational** name "Operation Hackney"

Initial Initiatives

- A system was created for the collecting and storing of CCTV video evidence that is recorded on the busses. This new system complies with evidence as required by CPS and the rules governing disclosure.
- An intelligence system has been set up to collate information received from TWM passengers and employees. This information is disseminated to the policing area to which it appertains for action by local sector officers
- A number of police operations and Hot Spots have been identified and successfully targeted leading to the arrest of offenders, detection of crime and reduction of antisocial behaviour.
- Hot Spot areas for damage and disorder have been identified using data gathered from both partners, these have then been targeted with TWM inspectors and police officers, and on a number of occasions special constables, operating "Gateway Checks".

The actions of the partnership across the force area under Operation Hackney have resulted in over 100 arrests to date.

SAFER PUBLIC TRAVEL

The 1800 strong fleet of busses operated by Travel West Midlands conduct one million passenger Journeys a day. 500,000 of these journeys are conducted after 6.00PM during weekdays. Each week the vehicles travel an equivalent of 50 trips around the world circumference.

Travel West Midlands is investing 3 Million pounds over the next two years in a new fleet of busses, each of these busses costs £180,000 and is equipped with some of the most modern CCTV systems on the market. The number 50 bus route in Birmingham is the busiest and most profitable bus route in Europe and has received considerable investment from Travel West Midlands. The route is a showcase route for the city and is used as a main commuter route in and out of the city.

The Bus service operated by Travel West Midlands across the region is an integral part of the community infrastructure, to be without this service would have dramatic effect on the social and economic development of region. Travel West Midlands is the largest provider for school services in the West Midlands.

During February 1999 there was a dramatic increase in the offences of robbery in the Balsall Heath area of the City, 28 offences were reported to the police during this month. Almost all of these offences were committed by offenders travelling on the busses in particular the number 50 service. Some of the victims were threatened with violence, one man was stabbed in the arm and another received a broken jaw following a brutal attack. Many passengers had personal possessions and valuable items stolen including cash, jewellery and mobile telephones.

An initial meeting was arranged by Sergeant Wright and PC Sewell from Edward Road Police Station with the Area Garage Manager and other representatives from TWM. The purpose of this meeting was to examine the current intelligence held by the police and to establish the true extent of all reported crime on the number 50 route, with a view to developing a longer term strategic approach to reducing crime. During the course of the discussions it was discovered that TWM held driver reports of another 13 offences of robbery that had not been reported to the police. The true nature and extent of the problem began to emerge

The response to this information was swift and decisive and Operation DooLittle was launched. This operation was initially a four week police **operation** designed in Three phases to target the offenders who were committing the robberies the operation contained covert, overt and crime reduction phases.

Careful analysis was conducted of the intelligence gathered by the police, from passengers, drivers, TWM bus inspectors and local residents. The offender descriptions were profiled and Hot Spots were identified. This enabled best value in targeting both the police and TWM resources. The following method was adopted:

The first phase of the operation was covert and conducted in plain clothes, victims from robberies were taken by plain clothed police officers onto the busses and rode as passengers to identify offenders. During the course of this phase three offenders were arrested having been observed by the plain clothed officers damaging the upper deck of a bus with a marker pen.

The second phase consisted of high visibility "Gateway check" in partnership with TWM uniformed bus inspectors. The inspectors boarded the buses at key locations identified from hot spot analysis and checked travel documents and the tickets of passengers enforcing regulations under the PSV regulations of 1991. Police officers would deal with offences such as deception and forgery and other matters brought to their attention by the inspectors as well as any other offences that came to their notice. Many of the 39 arrests made during this operation were made at this stage of the operation.

The third phase of the operation followed the high profile gateway checks and was focused on crime reduction initiatives. 15,000 leaflets providing information to passengers about safe travel that were designed by the partnership were distributed by customer care assistance from TWM along the 50 route. (Appendix one). Meetings were held with community groups along the route and presentations were given by Sergeant Wright and Pc Sewell regarding crime prevention and security advice. Large posters were placed in communal rooms and reception areas of tower blocks along the route and a further 2000 leaflets were delivered to homes in identified in the area of vulnerable locations with the assistance of a local political group (appendix two). This crime prevention information was distributed in the community to deter the displacement of the robberies from public transport to the street and to encourage information concerning crime to be reported to the police through to Crimestoppers.

During the four-week operation 39 arrests were made for offences including the possession of drugs, theft, robbery, assaults and criminal damage by graffiti.

The operation was a great success within the four week operation only three robberies were reported compared to the 28 the previous month. This was the first operation of its kind in the West Midlands area and received a lot of press and media attention.

The partnership having been forged under the operation continued to produce a series of successes as the officers continued to meet with managers at Travel West Midlands throughout the following months and similar high profile police and TWM gateway checks were carried out across the force area.

During the course of these discussions and the implementation of similar initiatives across the force area it became apparent that the **lessons and successes learnt** during **Operation DooLittle** had merit in a wider implementation than simply one on the E3 OCU.

This was highlighted with a particular practitioner of street graffiti. This one Juvenile offender was responsible for the commission of 95 offences of criminal damage

along the number 50 bus route. This damage was not confined however to one area but in fact crossed three Operational Command Units.

As a result of sharing information and targeting specific locations with police officers and Travel West Midlands bus inspectors, a 14 year old male, was subsequently arrested and charged with the 95 offences which amounted to £10,000 of damage. This operation was co coordinated by PC Sewell who was the investigating officer for the E3 OCU.

The complexity of an investigation of this nature that covered three separate police areas and the co ordination involved with securing and preserving and obtaining the evidence for this prosecution highlighted the benefits that could be realistically achieved if an officer could maintain this approach to other crimes that were in need of investigation across OCU boundaries connected to public transport routes.

PC SEWELL submitted a proposal to the West Midlands Police suggesting the benefits of such a position for an initial trial period of six months. This was approved and received strong support from both sides of the potential partnership. The proposal was supported by sponsorship funding from Travel West Midlands in the sum of £10,000. The operation was planned to run from January 2000 to the end of June 2000, and was renamed **OPERATION HACKNEY**.

Building on the previous success.

The overall objective of this new partnership is the prevention, reduction and detection of crime and anti-social behaviour on passenger transport, in particular buses across the West Midlands police area. Both parties have worked extremely hard to ensure that public transport is a safer way to travel.

Since the start of this new phase there has been a lot of work done in both organisations to improve the systems of recording and intelligence gathering. In order that criminal intelligence gathered by the police, the public or TWM can be recorded evaluated and acted upon by the officers who police the community in which the incidents are reported.

Force wide analysis of the incidents reported to the police including the information gathered from driver reports to TWM takes place regularly. PC Sewell then directs the west midlands police recourses at a local level to address the specific problem. Where repetitive incidents of assaults and violence have been identified the police Operational Support Unit who are trained to deal with high levels of disorder and confrontational situations have been deployed to support the TWM staff in conducting gateway checks. This has the effect of detecting criminal behaviour but has also contributed to the reduction of crime and antisocial behaviour on certain routes.

In cases where the analysis indicates a lower threat the problems have been addressed by local Sector officers often with assistance from the Special Constabulary.

Other offences such as window etching and graffiti on board the bus have been successfully targeted using plain-clothes police officers travelling as passengers. Victims of incidents on buses were taken back on board the bus with plain clothes police officers in an attempt to identify the offenders by way of street identifications.

At locations where it was identified that anti-social behaviour from secondary school children travelling on buses several approaches have been adopted with positive support from the schools involved. Often following reported incidents of a minor nature an initial telephone call to the Head Teacher detailing the incident can instantly resolve the situation. Head teachers often address year groups reminding pupils about such issues as conduct and citizenship.

In cases where repeated incidents are reported involving school children and a particular school is identified the partnership has developed a "Road-show" which has been delivered to year groups of up to 160 Young people at a time. This is a one hour multi media presentation which informs young people about their responsibility to the community as well as factual inputs regarding TWM and the law. The presentation is delivered using a power point presentation, film footage and CCTV **footage** of the school pupils travelling on the school service the week of the presentation. There is a demonstration from TWM security detailing the quality and technical capability of the systems operated on their busses, feedback from the schools following this presentation suggests that this section alone instils a sense of safety and reduces the fear of been a victim of crime.

All schools visits to date have been very well received, and to reinforce the message gateway checks are made on the school route within a couple of weeks of the visit. The Cities Local Education Authority (LEA) have expressed support in the actions of the partnership and a letter from the LEA has been sent to all secondary schools in the authority informing them of the partnership and urging each school to address the issue of citizenship with their pupils whilst travelling on public transport, This approach has resolved previous incidents reoccurring, this in turn has already seen a reduction in reported anti-social behaviour on buses by travelling school children.

Crime reduction initiatives

There have been many creative and innovative approaches to problem solving born from this partnership, each initiative has been preceded by high profile "Gateway" checks and has involved local sector officers addressing problems in the area they serve. It has proven best practice to problem solve in this way as the results are then sustainable.

Crime reduction initiatives that have been implemented to date include the following;

- All 1,800 busses that operate across the West Midlands Region display an A4 sized poster advertising the SNAP anti drugs message. This is aimed specifically at youth.
- Bus tickets across the whole policing area carry the Crimestoppers logo on the rear, this amount to billions of tickets (12 million have already appeared on the number 50 route alone during operation Doolittle)(appendix 3)
- A specific Crime Reduction Initiative has been launched on 1st April 2000 for six months the intention of which is to reduce the amount of broken windows to busses across the region. Damage of this nature is estimated at 2,000 offences per year. To date there has been up to a 50% reduction experienced along some routes alone
- Leaflets encouraging passengers to report incidents of damage and criminal activity at target areas have been distributed by TWM. This had lead to information been passed to local police stations assisting in the targeting of offenders. Damage to bus shelters in particular has been reduced at the areas this leaflet has been delivered.(appendix 3)
- At the instigation of this partnership Centro are co-ordinating a similar initiative targeting damage to bus shelters on specific routes. 2000 leaflets have been produced by Centro to encourage .members of the community to report crime. (appendix 4)
- Plans are being made to co-ordinate force-wide policing of bus lanes with the intention of introducing common standards of enforcement. This will include the use of traffic wardens, possibly with additional sponsorship from TWM.
- Discussions are taking place with Operations Training and TWM to reduce the number of road accidents involving buses, some 3,000 each year at present. This will be delivered through a training package for drivers which will be delivered through TWM, this will include drawing up of new protocols for reporting and reporting on accidents involving TWM passenger transport.
- Liaisons have been made with British Transport Police, who police the Metro line ,to create close working links along the Metro route joint Gateway checks at hot-spot locations are taking place.

- Presentations have been made to the other 40 bus operators in the West Midlands Region encouraging them to enter into the partnership and informing them of developments to date.
- Briefings with bus drivers have been conducted informing them of the partnership and the contribution they can make towards its success. They are active participants in the collection of intelligence which has led to the arrest and detection of several offenders
- Secondary school aged children are responsible for a large amount of anti-social behaviour on buses after school. To target this issue West Midlands Police, TWM, Centro, Birmingham Education Dept. and the other bus operators are currently developing a letter and accompanying video for all 70 plus secondary schools in Birmingham to promote better behaviour and good citizenship on passenger transport.
- A multimedia school road show presented by West Midlands **police** and TWM has visited several schools discussing citizenship and shown the benefits of CCTV systems currently fitted to busses across the West Midlands area.
- + Where specific locations have been identified as vulnerable to the commission of crime, in particular robbery and theft from the person crime prevention literature has been distributed to all passengers on that route encouraging them to safeguard their belongings whilst travelling on the bus To date 10,000 have been distributed
- The East of Birmingham suffered a large amount of broken windows on buses in early 2000. Therefore a crime reduction initiative was created to deal specifically with this problem. Leaflets encouraging the passengers to help maintain the service and report offenders to Crimestoppers were distributed to 6,000 passengers on the affected routes.(appendix 6)
- The Crimestoppers logo is to carried on all bus tickets across the West Midlands area, to date 12,000,000 have been issued on just one bus route, the final total is to exceed 300 million.
- All of the 1,800 fleet of buses now carries a SNAP-say no and phone message to encourage passengers to not use drugs and call Crimestoppers with information. This was sponsored by Crimestoppers and Acock's Green police station.
- An operation in partnership between TWM, Centro the local transport authority, the local police and the local housing trust has been launched to reduce vandalism and graffiti on a Birmingham estate called Castle Vale. The 5,000 homes on the estate are all to receive crime reduction literature leaflets targeting the problems identified by the residents themselves at previous meetings .The intention being to identify the offenders and effect arrests, and to make residents aware of the importance of the bus service, shelters and other public services which suffer from the mindless damage. Gateway checks and school visits will also back up the message.

The Successes

Success has been measured in a number of different ways.

The gateway checks for this year alone have resulted in the arrest of over 100 people including arrests for;

- Possession of drugs, ranging from heroin, cannabis and ecstasy.
- Possession of weapons including an imitation handgun from a juvenile, a machete from a youth at 930am going to a woodwork class!
- Theft, including a man who had got off the bus carrying 2 irons and a toaster he had just stolen.
- Arrests made for persons wanted for various warrants for failing to attend court at the appointed time.
- Deception, involving the fraudulent use of or forgery of travel documents.
- Illegal immigrants.
- Numerous school age children arrested for criminal damage to buses including arrests made for graffiti and arson.

There have been many arrests made as a result of the CCTV used on the buses and the subsequent appeals using photographic stills from the system advertised in the local press. These arrests include;

- A man responsible for a serious indecent assault on a 15 year old female was arrested two days after the attack on a bus as a result of photographic evidence taken from the CCTV and circulated to the TWM inspectors who identified him to police as he travelled on another route.
- Ten youths responsible for £30,000 pounds of damage caused when they set fire to a school bus were arrested the following day as a result of liaison between the police, TWM and school involved.

A youth has been charged with 29 offences of criminal damage by graffiti as a result of the CCTV footage been shown to the local police on the route.

The different approaches to the incidents occurring on the buses exceeded all expectations, positive feedback has been received from passengers, the local education authorities, employees of TWM and the local media.

The initiative to reduce damage to bus windows clearly showed a significant reduction in the offences. A reduction of 50% has been achieved in some of the areas suffering from the most offences saving the company thousands of pounds and preventing injury to passengers.

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A customer survey commissioned by TWM across a representative sample of 1000 passengers travelling on a variety of routes revealed that 95% of passengers felt safer when TWM inspectors were boarding the buses and even safer when the police were working with them to prevent and detect offences.

The number of assaults on drivers has reduced over the last twelve months by 30%, partly attributable to the partnership of Operation Hackney.

All of the different crime reduction initiatives have shown positive results of reduction in the offences targeted. It is difficult to quantify exactly how much of a success this has been over a long period of time as systems to measure this have only been recently implemented.

Constant press coverage has kept the operation in the public view, (Appendix 7) this has been through the local newspapers across the region, in national trade magazines for the transport industry, on local radio news programmes and for a **nation-wide** "Beware" programme for London Weekend Television Targeting vandalism.

Additional Information

Travel West Midlands have publicised the operation and the successes in trade magazines and through the local press. The operation is being cited as a working **example** in the force policing diversity training.

The collation of the CCTV video evidence is now stored correctly in video libraries and maintained by trained staff employed specifically by TWM to secure evidential continuity.

Road layouts and infrastructure are being examined by the partnership with an emphasis on bus lanes to create free flowing movement of buses to encourage greater passenger numbers. This is supported by a £30,000,000 budget available for such projects over the next three years.

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Good work and reporting made by drivers is **being** highlighted during the operation, whereby drivers are commended for good work related to incidents connected to the partnership. A presentation night was hosted by Travel West Midlands for such staff and recognition was given for their contribution to the aims of the partnership.

We are confident that as we continue together in this exciting venture that there are many people who are benefiting from quality of life issues as together we seek to reduce and detect crime across the west midlands Policing area. We continue to strive towards making public transport a safer way to travel.

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