

THE LYDNEY ROAD PROJECT

Submission for the Tilley Award
Category 2. Crime and Disorder Reduction



Chief Officer: Chief Constable Pilkington
Contact: PC Dawn Martin
Address: Crime Reduction Unit
Southmead Road Police Station
151 Southmead Road
BRISTOL
BS 10 5DW

Tel: (0117) 945
Fax: (0117) 945
Email: Commander.ch@aysom.police.uk

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SUMMARY

This project arose as a result of an increasing problem with youth disorder and crime in Lydney Road, in the heart of the Southmead Estate in North Bristol.

Information was received by a number of the public service agencies regarding Lydney Road in particular. The Fire Service, the police and various Council Departments were inundated with complaints, particularly regarding a large group of young people causing trouble in the area.

Southmead Family Project, a voluntary organisation with representatives from each of the main agencies working in the area, took on the responsibility for devising solutions to the problems.

Initially, they carried out detailed observations of the area, and then they used the information obtained to target individuals and to encourage a change in their behaviour by way of formal reprimands and diversionary activities.

Through a system of continuous assessment, the nature of the activities was tailored to the needs of local people, to gain their trust and develop effective partnerships with them.

From some of the feedback obtained from local people, it was clear that further work was necessary to enhance the area. The street had become unsightly, partly as a result of the criminal activities of the young people, and due to large quantities of rubbish, and abandoned or burnt out vehicles.

It was decided that the best approach would be for the community to work with both experts and volunteers to clean up and regenerate the street. In particular young people were welcomed and were keen to participate. The aims included developing a sense of pride and achievement amongst those living in Lydney Road.

Through a clean up project that 'took place during half term week, the street was transformed. Adults supervised young people working in groups to clear the streets and to tidy up the gardens. Security equipment was provided and installed in the most vulnerable homes by professionals and all abandoned cars were removed.

Evaluation of the responses described above was achieved through the use of surveys, through anecdotal feedback and through statistical information regarding the numbers of calls received by each of the agencies and the number of crimes reported in the street.

The results indicated that the project was very successful in terms of drawing the community together, developing relationships with representatives from the public agencies, reducing instances of crime and disorder and maintaining a cleaner and more pleasant environment.

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INTRODUCTION

During the 1980's and early 1990's, the Southmead Estate in North Bristol was labelled as a "sink" estate, with serious economic and social deprivation, extensive drug abuse, and strained relations between the community and the police and other authorities. Lydney Road lies in the heart of this estate.

Southmead Family Project (SFP) is a group that was set up in the 1990's to deal with problems in Southmead, led by PC Martin from North Bristol Police District, and including representatives from Southmead Housing, Social Services, Education Welfare, the Health Service, Community Development Trust and the Probation Service. Together the members of this group are able to co-ordinate resources to develop effective solutions to community problems.



Picture 1. Southmead Family Project Members

In Spring 1999, SFP was approached concerning an escalating number of complaints from residents regarding a gang of youths who were acting in a way that was intimidating, threatening and verbally abusive. These youths were also reported to be involved in criminal activity.

An approach was needed that would reduce the problems, by educating the young people as to the consequences of their actions, by providing alternative activities that were positive and constructive, and by improving the perceptions of the area. SFP was in a position to deliver these solutions using a partnership approach.

This report details the nature of the problems in Lydney Road, and goes on to explain the solutions that were found to these problems. In addition, as the project developed and feedback was received from a variety of sources, further actions were taken which all contributed to a considerable improvement in the conditions in Lydney Road. Further actions are still being developed, with the support of the community, as the project continues to develop and expand.

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SCANNING: THE PROBLEM

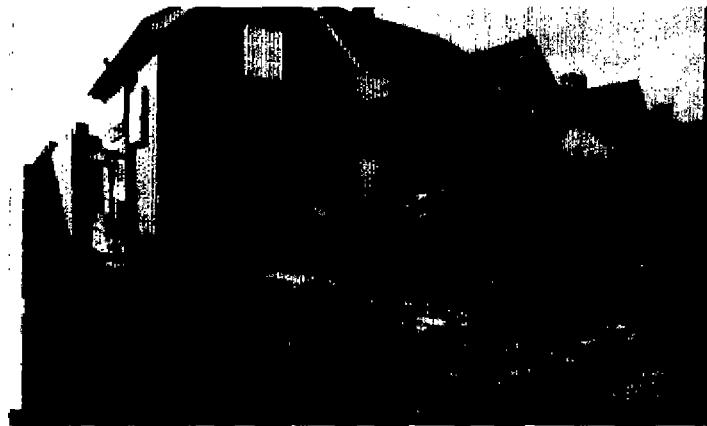
SFP followed up the concerns of the members of the community, and through research discovered the extent of the problems in Lydney Road.

At the beginning of March 1999, an unprecedented number of calls were made to Bristol City Council Housing Department, the Police and the Fire Brigade about problems in Lydney Road, Southmead.

The police received over 70 calls regarding Lydney Road during March and April 1999, mainly to report incidents of nuisance and disorder. Groups of ten to thirty young people were regularly congregating in Lydney Road, and the police were called to several civil disturbances where youths armed with knives and baseball bats and pieces of wood were fighting in the street with local residents.

In addition, Avon Fire Brigade received almost 50 calls to the same area, to numerous fires involving vehicles, houses, garden hedges and rubbish.

Southmead Housing Office were also inundated with complaints from local residents, and were having problems rehousing people in the area as the anti-social behaviour evident in the area was putting off potential tenants.



Picture 2. A house in Lydney Road prior to the Interventions

It was clear that the problems here were affecting all of the members of SFP as well as the residents, and therefore an appropriate set of actions was necessary to alleviate the problems and regenerate an area that had been allowed to deteriorate.

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ANALYSIS: THE CAUSES OF THE PROBLEM

At the end of March 1999, SFP began observations of the young people in Lydney Road. This was in combination with letters sent to all residents from the housing department asking for information regarding known perpetrators of the problem (copy attached at Appendix A). The following analysis outlines their main findings regarding the nature of the problems in Lydney Road, using the Problem Analysis Triangle.

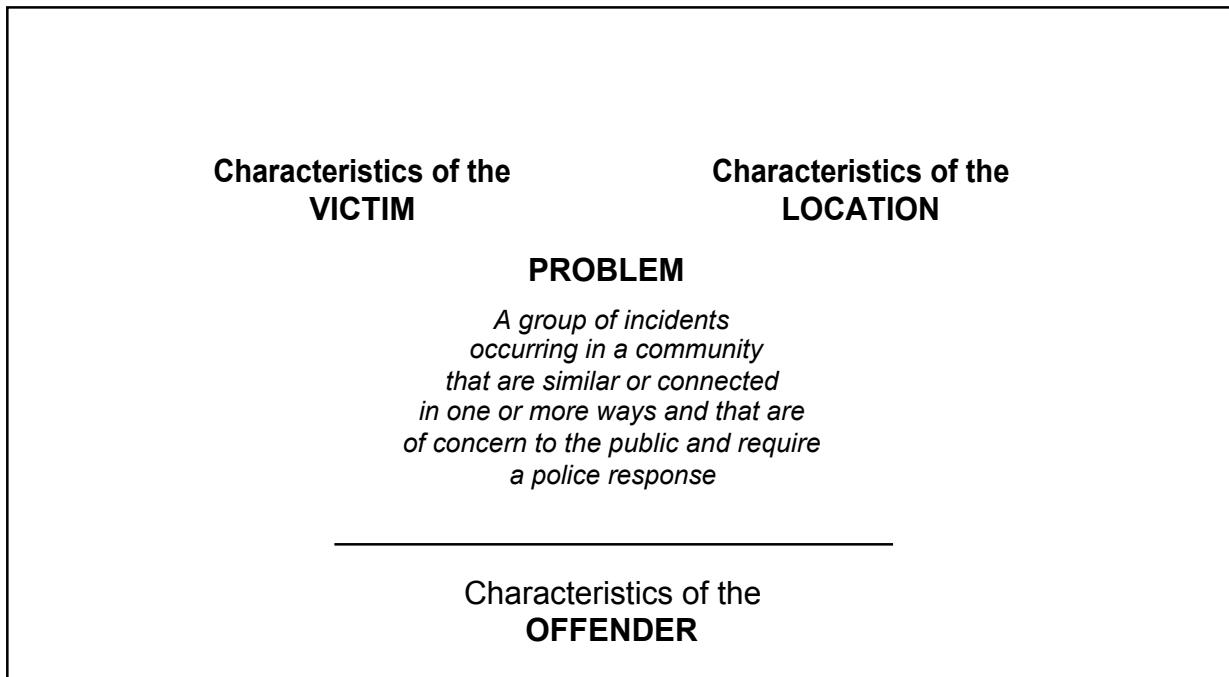


Diagram 1. The Problem Analysis Triangle

Victims:

Local residents of Lydney Road and the immediately surrounding roads were identified as the victims. They were subject to abuse, both verbal and physical, from the groups of young people, and their property was being damaged on a regular basis.

Offenders:

Approximately 20 individuals aged between 8 and early 20s were identified as a result of the observations. These offenders were mostly known to the police and to housing. In particular two households were identified who formed the nucleus of the problem.

It was established that the offending behaviour was rooted around boredom for the young people and a lack of a sense of community. Insufficient activities & entertainment were provided for the young people, and therefore they were seeking their own entertainment in destructive ways, for example, joyriding was seen as an acceptable pastime.

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Over time and through some of the early activities with the young people, it became clear that a number of them had difficult family backgrounds including parents in prison, bereavements, domestic violence and drug addiction within the family.

Location:

Lydney Road is in the centre of the Southmead Estate. This area is one of social deprivation, and Lydney Road is made up of mainly local authority owned houses that were in a poor state of repair, partly as a result of the criminal and anti-social behaviour that had developed in the area. The anti-social behaviour in the area was also causing occupants to move out of the area and therefore the number of unoccupied, boarded-up houses was increasing.

To summarise, the problems found in Lydney Road had a range of sources that could be approached:

- Young people with little organised activity to occupy them, particularly outside school term time
- A culture in which criminal activity was regarded as a good way to pass the time
- An area that had become very run-down, partly as a result of the anti-social and destructive behaviour and a lack of care for local authority owned property
- A lack of sense of community
- Family problems for many of the young people
- Weak relationships between local young people and members of the community in positions of authority (such as the police and council representatives)

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The Extended Summer Programme was devised which concentrated more on helping the young people to deal with their problems and also on understanding the impact of their actions on others. Monks Park Social Services, the Youth Offending Team, Bristol Drugs Project and Southmead Family Project all participated in a series of group discussions and presentations as follows:

Presentation / Discussion Topic	Partner Agencies Involved
The Consequences of Joy — Riding	Youth Offending Team, SFP
The Consequences of Drug Taking	Bristol Drugs Project, SFP
Bullying	Monks Park Social Services, SFP
Relationships with peers and Parents	Monks Park Social Services, SFP
Further Education and Job Prospects	Monks Park Social Services, SFP

Table 1. The Extended Summer Programme of Activities

These activities continued through the winter until March 2000. At this point a review of the situation was conducted.

Phase Two — Lydney Road Clean Up

Local residents, and some of the young people themselves, explained that they felt the appearance of the road had plummeted in the past two years, and was in places an eyesore.

The planning of a second phase to this project was therefore begun which sought to physically clean up the area by involving as many local people as possible who could be trained in the required skills and would take pride in the improved environment they had helped to create.

In order to deal most effectively with the physical problems in Lydney Road, a survey was distributed to 160 local residents (copy attached at Appendix C). This survey asked the residents if they wanted any work done around their homes, e.g. to tidy up gardens, whether they had any items that needed to be disposed of, and invited them to take part in the clear up project.

Based on the results of this survey a detailed plan for the Urban Regeneration of the area was constructed involving Bristol City Council Environmental, SFP and British Conservation Trust Volunteers (BCTV). From the information that had been gathered, a three pronged approach was decided upon, including tidying up rubbish, improving the environment by working on gardens and the street, and improving security in vulnerable homes.

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Firstly, those residents who agreed to be involved were contacted, and for the young people who were taking part, consent forms were obtained from their parents (copy attached at Appendix D).

A training day was planned for the start of the half term week in May 2000, in which BCTV would train the young people to use the equipment required to can), out the clean up.

In addition, MacDonalds Plc were approached, and they agreed to contribute vouchers for their restaurants to be distributed to those who took part in both the training day and the clean up.

Then, letters detailing the programme were sent to all those who had expressed an interest in being involved in the clean up days later in the half term week. Posters were also put up in the area to try to attract the maximum participation possible in the scheme. In addition, the local newspapers and television station were contacted and arrangements were made for positive media coverage of the event.

The organisers produced documents for use on the clean up days to authorise the disposal of abandoned vehicles. A survey was also prepared to gather feedback from residents on the campaign and to assist in the evaluation of what was successful and what further work would be required (copy included at Appendix E).

The table overleaf provides a summary of the detailed proposal for the work that was submitted to all interested agencies at the time.

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Problems Identified in Lydney Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High crime – individual and property crime• The abandoning of stolen cars and rubbish• Gangs of adolescents hanging around• General run-down feel of the area• Truancy• Vandalism
Aims of Regeneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Instillation and promotion of community values• Developing a sense of shared responsibility• Promotion of individual and community respect• Reduce feelings of isolation for residents• Divert gangs from generally hanging around and / or causing damage or distress to others• Develop, promote and maintain a more positive living environment for residents
Proposed Methods of Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seeking the views of the community – what they would like to see happen• Getting the community actively involved• Getting permission from parents for children to be actively involved• The placing of skips for rubbish• The removal of burnt out or abandoned cars• Diversionary tactics to alleviate youth boredom• Improved security features of individual homes• Developing and promoting community values

Table 2. Summary of the Proposal for Work to be Undertaken

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EVALUATING RESULTS

Specific evidence regarding the full programme of activities was collated along with statistical evidence to demonstrate the extent to which the aims outlined in table 3 were achieved.

Evidence to show that	Statistical evidence to show that
<p>Young people understood the consequences of their actions more fully and were able to take responsibility for their behaviour</p> <p>The physical appearance of the street is improved</p> <p>Stronger relationships exist between local young people and positive role models in the community.</p>	<p>Security equipment has been installed successfully in local homes</p> <p>The number of calls to Lydney Road has reduced to all of the agencies</p> <p>The number of youth related offences and burglaries has reduced</p>

Table 3. Summary of Evaluation Process

The qualitative data will be discussed first for each of the activities that have taken place since March 1999, followed by a review of the statistical evidence, and finally a brief discussion of the sustainability of the initiatives.

Phase One - Dealing with Offenders

1. Letters and Visits

50 letters were sent out to families whose children had been involved in disturbances in the area. 12 telephone responses were received immediately on receipt of the letters from families who had no previous idea of the activity of their children.

Observations continued in the area after the initial letters were sent out and only 2 of the young people continued to offend and required second letters to be sent to their families.

Before an eviction notice could be served on one of the two central families, they chose to vacate the premises and, move out of the area.

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2. Diversionary Projects (July – September 1999)



Picture 3. Young People Taking Part in Diversionary Activities

148 young people from the Southmead Estate were involved in the diversionary projects, and the organisers noted the following positive results:

- Behaviour was generally good during these activities
- Instructions were listened to and obeyed
- Members of the group encouraged one another
- + The ability to organise themselves became more developed
- Other family members became involved in the activities
- Strong relationships with the supervisors were developed, and young people chose to make additional visits to SFP members outside of the organised activities
- Occupying the young people reduced criminal activity

As the programme of activity continued, feedback from participants taught the organisers valuable lessons. They realised that some initial reluctance to be involved stemmed from the stigma of being collected in the council minibus. This was overcome by using private cars to transport the children to a central pickup point, and as a result participation levels increased.

Follow-up visits were made to families throughout the summer to support them and the young people and as a method of assessment of progress. It was through these visits that it was established that a further programme of events through the winter would be of value for a smaller group of boys.

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3. Extended Summer Programme (September 1999 — March 2000)

This programme had a deeper and more serious approach to helping the young people understand how their actions affect themselves and others. These presentations and discussions provided:

- Practical advice for the young people
- A chance to discuss subjects that affect them
- An informal environment to consider sensitive issues

Again a system of continuous review was incorporated into the programme and feedback was sought from participants. Their comments regarding the individual activities enabled the programme to be adjusted to have the most impact. In particular they gave the following feedback regarding the subject areas covered:

- The most frightening reality of joyriding is that injuries occur to others or to the perpetrator and could either be fatal or permanently disabling and require constant medical attention
- At some time everyone has been bullied, and everyone has bullied another themselves, albeit unintentionally. All agreed that bullying is unacceptable.

The boys involved all said they enjoyed the activities and found it useful to talk about the types of jobs they would be interested in and how to access them. A lesson was also learnt by the organisers as young people responded best to speakers they knew and were able to relate to, and this was used to develop the programme more effectively.

From formal and informal feedback from these sessions and the previous activity programme, it became evident that the young people and local residents were unhappy with the appearance of Lydney Road. They felt that an improvement here would enable them to feel proud of where they lived and therefore to treat it with more respect.

Phase Two — Lydney Road Clean Up

5. Survey

- 67% of surveys were completed and returned
- Both residents and young people wanted to improve the appearance of Lydney Road and to upgrade the security of the houses
- 58% of residents wanted to be involved in the clean up

6. Clean Up of Lydney Road

- Over 30 young people helped with the clean up
- 90% of residents were involved in the clean up
- 16 skips and 8 lorry loads of refuse were cleared
- 7 abandoned vehicles were removed

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- £3,000 of security equipment was installed in homes
- The local media were positive in their portrayal of the event (see appendix F)
- Local residents took pride in what they achieved



Picture 4. Volunteers Taking Part in Lydney Road Clean Up

The survey that was distributed among the residents revealed that people generally thought the project was successful. Positive comments included

"It was good for the kids, getting people working together and helping each other"
"there was a sense of community"
"we felt a sense of achievement"

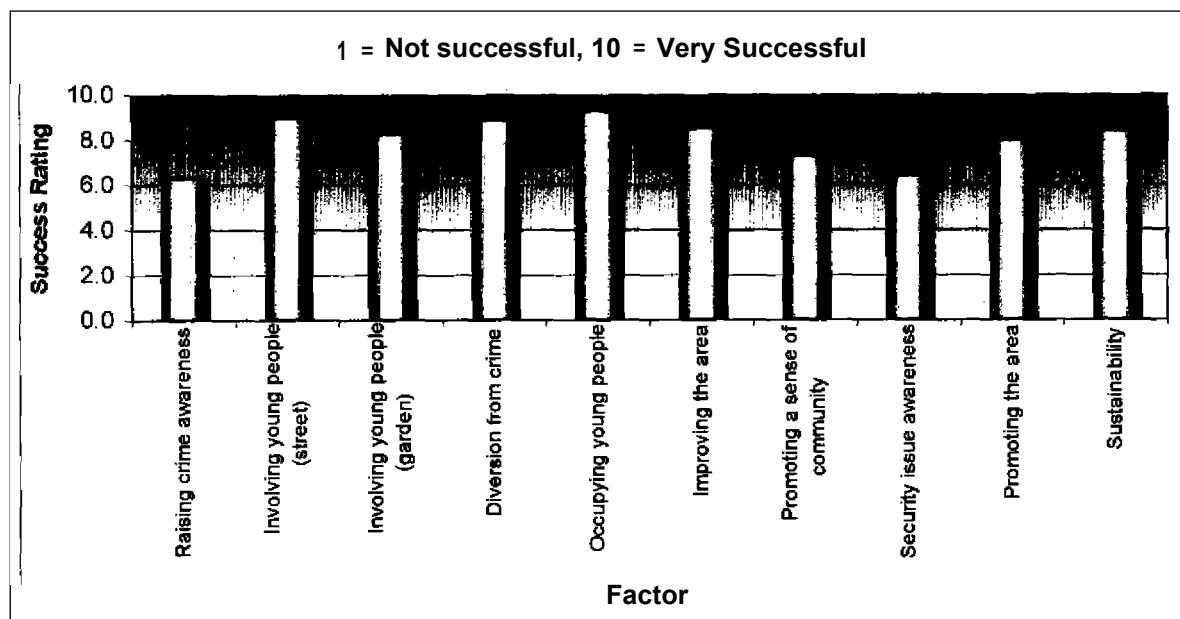


Chart 1. Evaluation of Lydney Road Clean Up

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The above chart illustrates the responses to questions regarding the success of different aspects of the clean up days. In particular it was viewed as successful in terms of diverting young people and involving them in a community project. It was also seen as positive promotion of the area.



Picture 5. A young Person Taking Part in Lydney Road Clean Up

Half of the respondents also reported that they believed the local residents would maintain the improved appearance of the area.

Respondents were also asked about areas that they felt were still causing problem in the area, and the following responses were each mentioned by at least three-quarters of respondents:

- Drug Selling
- Boredom
- Dumping & Litter
- Drug Taking
- Fear of Crime
- Empty Properties

As a result, future work in Lydney Road and the surrounding area will use these findings to focus resources into the areas of concern for the local residents, as well as those areas that have the greatest impact on the partner agencies. A further clean up activity is already planned for 2001.

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Review of Statistical Evidence

Chart 2, below, illustrates the numbers of calls per month to Avon Fire Brigade, with a red line to illustrate the trend in the number of calls. It is clear that there was a peak in calls in spring 1999, after which the first interventions took place, and that this was followed by a steady decline in numbers. In general peaks in the numbers of calls can be seen to follow approximately the same pattern as school holidays, reflecting the young age of many of the people involved.

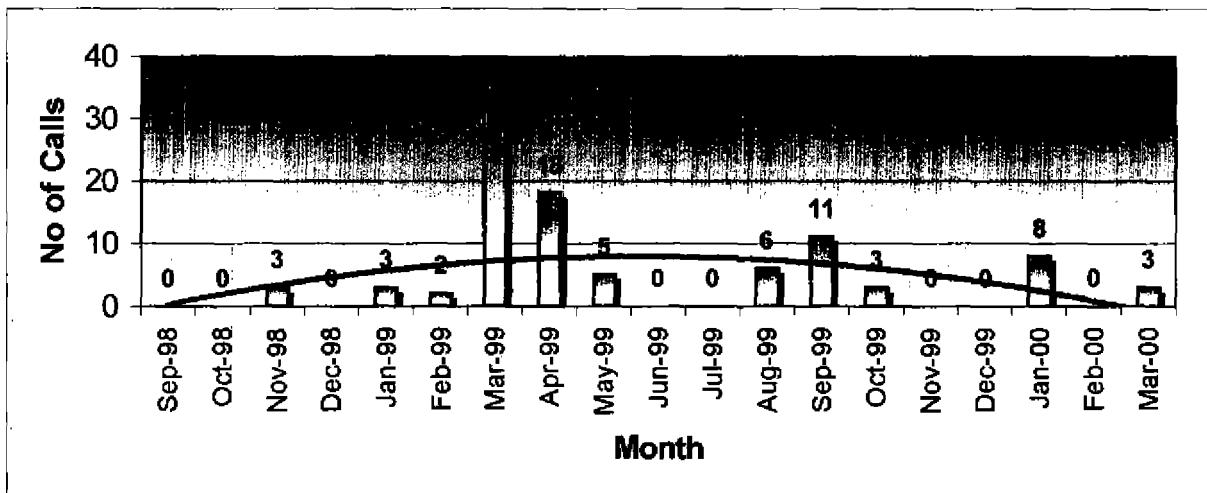


Chart 2. Calls to Avon Fire Brigade

A similar pattern was found in the numbers of calls to the police, and when results for spring 1999 were compared with spring 2000, a 56% drop in the number of calls was found, as illustrated in chart 3, below.

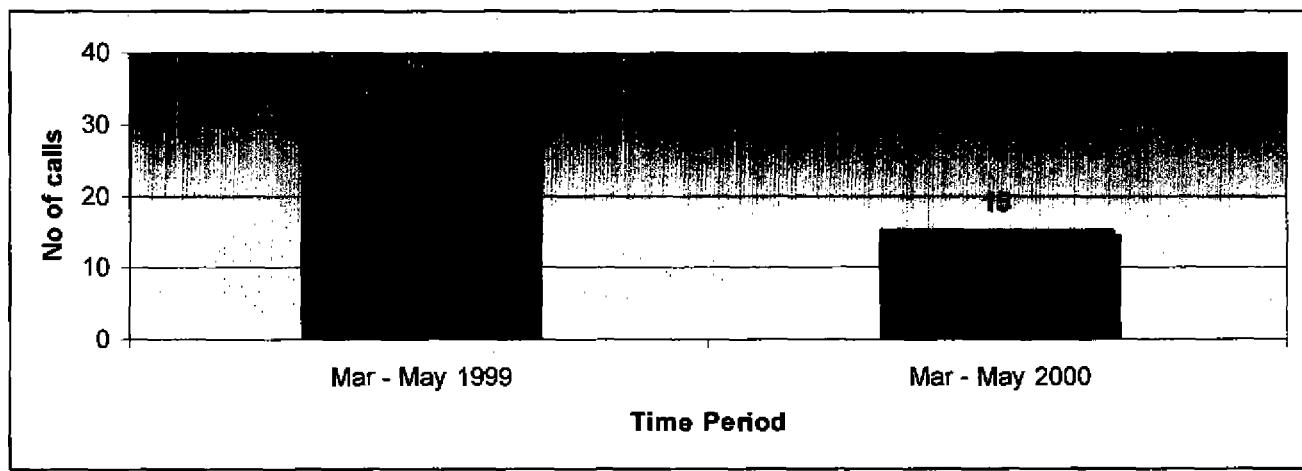


Chart 3. Calls to Avon and Somerset Constabulary

The success of the diversionary activities and the benefits of using a wide-ranging partnership approach through SFP have contributed to a successful bid application for £1.7 million to work with 8 – 12 year olds living on the Southmead Estate. This has been provided through the On Track Project.

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Since the clean up operation in Jun 2000, there has also been a drop of 44% in the number of reported burglaries.

In March 2001, there are currently no boarded up properties and no abandoned cars in Lydney Road, and the Housing Department have received very few calls regarding neighbour disputes.

Sustainability

A number of aspects of the approach adopted to deal with issues in Lydney Road have contributed to the sustainability of the project.

Firstly, the project has been conducted with a system of continuous assessment, which has meant that adjustments were made throughout the project to ensure the initiatives were as effective as possible. This has also enabled the local community and participants in the schemes to give feedback and make suggestions that have been acted on. This in turn has bred a trust between the local people and SFP in particular, which allows close contact to continue, and encourages problems to be raised at an early stage.

Secondly, the residents and young people in the areas were taught a range of skills to enable them to take part in the clean up scheme. This has meant they can continue to look after their own gardens and street, and in March 2001, the street still has a greatly improved appearance.

Thirdly, the involvement of so many local people in the project has led to a community of people who are able to communicate with one another and who take pride in their environment. The media coverage has contributed to this sense of achievement, and to a more positive image of the area in general.

Fourthly, the young people in the area have begun to understand the wider impact of their behaviour, particularly through the extended summer programme. This has led to a dramatic decrease in criminal and anti-social behaviour in the area.

Finally, young people and local residents have established much closer links with those in authority and now come into contact with positive role models on a regular basis. This influences their attitudes and behaviour, and may help towards their own future development.