



City of Wells

P.O P. 2001

Presented by

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ABSTRACT: BIG INITIATIVES IN ENGLANDS SMALLEST CITY

The Nature of the Problem Addressed

Despite the idyllic setting of Wells and the city's historic appeal, obvious cracks began to appear in the social fabric. The 1998 district wide Crime Audit highlighted youth issues as being a major contributory factor to the fear of crime in Wells. Underage drinking, high confiscations from underage drinkers who gathered in open spaces, and associated problems of rowdiness and disorder were becoming a problem at weekends.

The lack of things for young people to do steadily gained profile with the proliferation of skateboarders and Bmx riders on the city's narrow streets. Residents began to complain of late night disturbances in the car parks, with loud music and joy riding going into the early hours. As the media stories increased, local residents began to build up a fear of young people which would prove difficult to undo. National media has shown that this is a problem throughout the country.

Retail crime was increasing and shop stock losses were high and unacceptable. The issues led to the local community officer leading the formation of an unique partnership, which commenced with radio link.

Evidence Used:

Police Confiscations - detained property
Motor Vehicle Thefts - Crime Management
Retail Stock Losses -Crime Management
Reports of complaints from retailers, residents, licensees and Council officers

A Brief Description of the Response

This document has been constructed with details under the headings of the SARA process for each of the key initiatives, which have achieved outstanding results in crime reduction and enhanced the community safety. The initiatives are:

- RADIO LINK
- VEHICLE CRIME
- CHURCHWATCH
- NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH
- WELLS YOUTH ALCOHOL CONFERENCE
- WELLS AREA YOUTH FORUM AND YOUTH ACTION GROUP
- VALIDATE UK PROOF OF AGE CARD
- WELLS LICENSEES ASSOCIATION AND PUBWATCH
- WELLS RETAIL CRIME INITIATIVE

Funding for youth and retail crime initiatives is given in Appendix 1

Impact of the Response and How Measured

Outstanding reductions in alcohol confiscations (See main report). Measured using detained property (DPR)

Overall Crime Figures (Crime Management)



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Continual decline in retail crime. Measured using shop loss figures.

Positive feedback from media reports. (See Appendices)

BIG INITIATIVES IN ENGLANDS SMALLEST CITY

RADIO LINK

Partners

Andy Leafe	Wells Beat Manager	Cheralyn White	Boots (National Retailer)
Becky Tilley	City Centre Officer, MDC	Audrey Weekes	Pickwicks (Independent Retailer)
Jenny Davies	Community Safety Officer, MDC	Fran Edwards	Chief Executive, Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Simon Burfield	Car Park Attendant (MDC)		

Scanning

The Police identified that one of the main problems in Wells was retail crime. Retailers in Wells were reporting large stock losses and shop theft was the main cause. Store managers reported problems with head offices over stock losses. Mackays, for example, as a national clothing retailer, had stock losses four times higher than a branch in Haslemere and both store had the same square footage.

Analysis

PC Leafe arranged a seminar by the sector crime reduction officer, Sergeant Rutter. This made staff more aware of the problem, more vigilant, shop layouts were changed, property that was targeted was marked. But these actions weren't enough and only highlighted the problem and made store managers aware that staff error or dishonesty were not the cause.

Wells is geographically in close proximity to two major cities and three large towns and the city was targeted by criminals together with local habitual drug users as a soft touch. The Police identified gangs from Bristol through stop checks, arrests and internal circulations. The larger towns and cities had CCTV, radios and security staff, and Wells didn't have this luxury. It was therefore seen as an easy target.

Response

In response to rising complaints, Wells Beat Manager PC Andy Leafe made a presentation to the Wells Partnership. Wells partnership is a forum for local debate and discussion, chaired by a member of the local authority and supported by representatives of all local organisations in Wells. The Partnership is a catalyst for bringing agencies together and getting concerns of local agencies voiced through the media. Meetings are bi-monthly. Andy highlighted the problems of retail theft and explained that the cascade phone system operating between the shops at that time was inadequate and too slow. He suggested that the formation of a radio link was now needed.

In partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and Retailers, Andy and Becky sought a national scheme to link retailers with the car park attendant and police, so they could be alerted to shoplifting and suspicious behaviour. The Sedgmoor Community Safety Officer was invited to Wells to explain good practice for the scheme which was running in Bridgwater. Five companies were invited to tender by

the Chamber of Commerce and a series of interviews were held. MRS Communications were invited to establish Storennet in Wells in summer 1998.

Assessment

Within an hour of the scheme's launch, the description of two people, suspected of stealing spirits, was circulated on the radio. (See Appendix 9) They were spotted by the car park attendant who followed and directed the Police to them. The spirits were recovered and suspects arrested. Previously, the Police would have gone directly to the store, but the radio link took them straight to the suspects. This increased the confidence of those in the scheme and provided a more efficient response by the Police.

Storennet now links 19 shops through radio handsets, and enables them to communicate quickly at the first sign of problems. One year later, New Look reported a 70% drop in shoplifting and MacKays **65%**. Both companies were confidently restocking shelves without fear of theft. However, PC Leafe sought permission from the ACC to circulate photographs of convicted repeat offenders under set criteria to the shops. This scheme was launched as the Wells Retail Crime Initiative and incorporated licensees.

Wells City Incidents of Shoplifting

April 98 - April 99	103 incidents
April 99 - April 00	66 incidents
April 00 - April 2001	44 incidents (57% reduction)

CAR PARKS AND CAR PARKING

Partners

PC Andy Leafe Special Constabulary Jenny Davies	Wells Police Wells Police Community Safety Officer	Traffic Wardens Car Park Attendant Lester Silk	Police Mendip District Council Crime Reduction Officer
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Scanning

Long stay parking for the city was in isolated streets on the edge of the city centre. Cars were being broken into and stolen.

Analysis

Owners were away for the whole day, cars were left in an isolated place, not overlooked by houses. No CCTV and poor lighting.

Response

Somerset Highways asked to improve lighting. Police and traffic wardens issued DON'T BOTHER windscreen leaflets prior to parking, to promote a clean interior car. The vulnerable vehicle scheme was promoted by the special constabulary, Police and the Mendip DC Car Park Attendants.

Assessment

There was a 40% reduction in theft from motor vehicles for the period 1999 to 2000.
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CHURCH WATCH

Partners

PC Andy Leate PC Chris Searle	Wells Police Wells Police	Nick Tolson	Verger, Wells Cathedral
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Scanning

Before becoming the City Centre Beat Officer, together with a colleague PC Searle, he recognised that at least once a month there was an incident of drunkenness, violence, theft or other offences that required police attendance at Wells Cathedral. The officers created links with Nick TOLSON, a Verger at the Cathedral.

Analysis

Officers considered reasons for the building being targeted:

- No admission fee charged
- Large premises with lots of dark, hidden hideaways
- No surveillance
- Large numbers of visitors
- Untrained volunteer staff
- Toilets accessible from city centre, without attendant.

Response

As a result of their discussions, a Wells area Church Watch was created, followed over the next three years by the Bath and Wells Church Watch, involving 573 churches which has a phone round warning system where churches can communicate with each other, warning of suspicious characters or similar events.

Assessment

Over the last 12 months, there has been no incidents of drunkenness at the Cathedral and only 7 other offences. The success of the Bath and Wells Church Watch was apparent when in 117 Diocesan churches there were 87 offences before Church Watch and in the 12 months after, there were only 14 offences. Nick has gone on to become the National Church Watch co-ordinator, who is also negotiating with churches in Europe and America.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Partners

PC Andy Leafe	Wells Police	Ian Roope	Head of delivery Service, Somerfield
Dave Elson	Neighbourhood Watch , Yeovil	Gordon Sapstead	Resident & MDC Councillor, Chairman of Neighbourhood Watch.
PC Lester Silk	Crime Reduction Officer		

Scanning and Analysis

This is government initiative which was started in the 1982 in Cheshire, and adopted nationally.

Response

Andy Leaf was in constant touch with the leader of the Wells Association of Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinators. The scheme had risen to 70 by September 2000 and is the largest and strongest in the East Somerset district. Andy attends Association meetings and supplies them with a regular monthly newsletter. As a result of this encouragement, the Neighbourhood Watch in Wells has forged links with other Policing departments in the Dog and Helicopter sections. The Wells Schemes are linked to the Avon and Somerset Constabulary WatchOUT software.

Recently, to get Neighbourhood Watch away from the 'curtain twitcher' reputation, Andy asked them to assist in compiling crime reduction packs, specifically aimed at residences, following a series of distraction burglaries. He then linked in with a local supermarket, Somerfield, who agreed to deliver the packs when making home deliveries.

Assessment

The Wells initiative received national and local coverage. It has been launched throughout the Sector over 100 packs have been delivered by Somerfield branch, Wells and 25 packs each at Street, Glastonbury and Shepton Mallet. To date, there have been no burglaries at the homes that have received these packs. Alan Smith, Chief Executive of Somerfield, was so impressed with the initiative that he has instructed the head of the home delivery service to implement the scheme nationally.

Distraction Burglaries: Since 1 Jan 2000, 9 distraction burglaries were recorded by the Crime Management Unit. Since October 2000, there have been none.

Neighbourhood Watch Figures:

1997- October 2000

50% increase in Schemes

WELLS YOUTH ALCOHOL CONFERENCE: An Unique Pioneering Initiative

Partners

PC Andy Leafe Webb Matthews	Wells Police Well Youth Worker, Somerset Youth Service	Inspector Harries 60 Pupils from	Wells Police Wells Blue School and Wells Cathedral School
Jenny Davies,	Community Safety Officer, Mendip District Council	Representatives From:	Wells Police, YMCA, Rosebank Centre Social Services, Licensees, Local Elected Members, Magistrates, probation Service, Drug Advisory Groups, Leisure Centre
Becky Tilley	City Centre Officer, MDC		
Cllr Chris Clarke (Conference Chair)	Leader, Somerset County Council		

Scanning

Throughout 1999, PC Andy Leafe observed a large increase in the amount of young persons under the age of 18 consuming alcohol. Public disorder and damage in the City Centre area was disproportionately high for a settlement of Wells' size.

For the period 1 June to 30 October 1999, there were 29 recorded incidents of criminal damage in Wells City Centre (source: Crime Management Unit).

During the same period, 174 calls were made relating to incident of public disorder, disturbance and criminal damage (source: STORM incident logs). It should be noted that these figures relate to all age ranges rather than a specific age group.

In an effort to counteract the increasing trend of under-age drinking observed by PC LEAFE, the police confiscated alcohol and notified parents (20 litres was the average amount of alcohol confiscated on a Friday). This did not curb the activity.

Analysis

The Mobile Street Worker project, led by Web Matthews, enabled youth workers to carry out cycle patrols (See Appendix 2) and attended minor complaints on behalf of the Police and offered 'lamp post' youth counselling. This met with some success, but Web and Andy decided to hold a young persons alcohol conference, to address the problem of underage drinking, as no single agency was equipped to tackle the issues alone (See Appendix 7).

Sixty young people from local schools were invited. These individuals were specifically targeted, having previously had contact with the police. The conference

was held on 18 November 1999. In order to identify reasons for underage drinking, the participants were asked their views on:

- 'Why do young people need to drink so much alcohol?'
- 'Boredom'
- 'What would we like to see in Wells?'

The conference was divided into two main seminars. In the morning the young persons were divided into 8 groups with 8 facilitators from different agencies. They then presented their conclusions of their discussions to the rest of the participants. Following this they were put into 4 groups, each group having one of the following different topics to discuss: Morley, Access to alcohol, Boredom and Peer pressure.

Lectures included

Health	by the Rosebank Centre
The Law	by the Police
Family/Social	by the Social Services
Alternative Buzz	by the Youth Services

In the afternoon session, the licensees put their side of the story and an interesting debate took place between all parties. This raised the awareness of the young persons to the effect that their drinking could have on licensees and their livelihoods.

Education is a key factor, young people have to be made aware of their limits, the health issues and most importantly, first aid. PC Andy Leafe had experienced an incident where a young girl had been immersed in a bath of cold water by her friend, to try and sober her up! When Social Services did their presentation, the youths expressed concern particularly for younger children, 11 year olds who were starting to drink and be involved in disorder. They offered their support and advice to them.

Response

Action Plans (See Appendix 6)

The Wells Youth Action Group was formed (see below).

Partners:

PC Andy Leafe	Wells Police	Becky Tilley	City Centre Officer
Web Matthews / Karen Mills	Wells Youth Service	Martin Pearce	YMCA
Jenny Davies	MDC		

1. ——— Proof of Age Card

Licensees expressed a concern that proof of age cards were being forged. They wanted to adopt a forgeproof single card, strictly administered.

Following research, the Validate UK card was selected and met with the approval of the newly formed Wells Licensees Association. Andy met with the Marketing Department of Racal, a locally based international company. The department suggested how to market the card and effectively target its audience. The card is recognised by the Government and cannot be easily forged. The card was launched at the Wells Blue School. Andy and Becky organised a discount brochure (See Appendix 4), to encourage young people to carry the card. They obtained sponsorship from Clarks Village and Wells retailers and card holders will get a 10% discount from a number of local shops, the swimming pool, cinema, and popular food outlets.

Full sponsorship of £2,850 was obtained by Andy and Becky to issue the first 1,000 cards free. Both local schools are fully co-operative and have agreed to take on the administrative role in the application for the cards.

Following in the wake of Wells, East Somerset Police District has decided to solely adopt the Validate UK proof of age card. Other towns in West Somerset Police District (Bridgwater and Burnham on Sea) have liaised with Andy to adopt the scheme.

2. Wells Youth Forum

The Way Ahead Forum was formed following the conference as a voice for young people and to co-ordinate activities such as discos, which had been non-existent. The youth service and Police took members of the Forum and Skateboard group for a training weekend in Cornwall.

3. Licensees Association

There was no LVA in the area and prior to the conference the licensees were not in regular contact with each other. Becky contacted the licensed premises in Wells and arranged the first meeting of the new LVA.

They have now formed themselves into a thriving group and launched Pubwatch, with a cascade information system within one month of the alcohol conference. They intend to replace the present pager system with radios under the RCO scheme.

The Association agreed to support City wide exclusion orders. 8 persons have already been excluded for life. (see Appendices 8 for front page of Wells Journal 1/2101 and 11 for letter of thanks from Licensees.) This scheme has now been adopted by other towns in Mendip, following Wells as an example of best practice.

See attached comparison of call cards in Appendix 12 for Wells City Centre to show significant reductions in criminal damage, disturbance and drunkenness.

The Licensees Association has not confined itself to crime issues, but is keen to promote Wells positively. Links with the twin towns of Bad Durkheim and Paray Le

Monial to exchange wines, beers and local produce and support for the Portman Group "I'll be Des" Campaign are examples.

4. Activities - A diversion from alcohol.

(a) Skatepark

One of the requests at the conference was for a Skatepark in Wells. £5,000 worth of inadvertent damage was done to school property in 2000 by Wells skaters. The Police made a presentation to the City Council to remind them of their obligations under the Crime and Disorder Act. As an interim, the Youth Service and the partners have organised minibus trips to the Bristol Skate & Ride. A multi agency partnership is progressing the project. The skaters are actively involved, land has been secured and £11,000 has been raised. The youths are designing the scheme in accordance with Health and Safety guidelines. One fundraiser was engraving microscooters (See Appendix 5)

(b) D'e.c@fe Cyber Cafe

YMCA secured funds for 5 computers with internet access. The computers assist with homework and job hunting, and training is provided by the YMCA. Access was available from 8 May 2000.

To help :raise funds PC LEAFE organised a Police Ball, the first in Wells City for many decades. A very successful evening was held at the Town Hall on 17 March 2000 with all the prizes for the charity raffle being donated by local traders. This was supported by the Chief Constable, who attended. A donation of over £1100 was given to the YMCA and the Youth Advisory Group.

c) Sport Activities - Rural Transport

800 questionnaires were circulated by the Action Group. These were analysed and showed the most popular sporting activites for both boys and girls in years 7 and 8.

The Action Group met with managers from the sports development centre and Wells Leisure Centre. The information from the survey was given to them so that the two centres could effectively plan activities for holiday time, without duplication. One of the managers highlighted that approximately 800 Blue School pupils lived in rural areas and had transport difficulties. Andy Leafe then came up with an unique arrangement. With the co-operation of his colleagues, (who under geographical Policing have responsibility for villages) the police will drive young people in community transport (lottery funded via the Active Sports Co-Ordinator Colin Johnson), to organised sporting activities. This will help prevent boredom and feelings of isolation amongst young people in villages whilst building a rapport with their local police officers, who are actively involved in local youth clubs and youth work. A Breakdancing project is one example.

d) Football

24 young people regularly attend the football club at the Leisure Centre on Sundays. PC LEAFE attends off duty and on some occasions takes his refreshment break to attend. These youngsters would not normally be good enough to play in a team. Recently they were very proud to have attended the South West YMCA competition and to come away as cup winners. Sponsorship has been obtained from the District Council. One licensee was so impressed with the scheme, they anonymously donated £100 and has offered subsequent financial support. (See Appendix 3).

Assessment

Since November 1999 the Police, Mendip District Council and Somerset Youth Service have had fewer complaints of damage or disorder by this age group and only negligible amounts of alcohol have been confiscated. The young people who attended cascaded their new found attitudes understanding and benefits to the years following. A typical example if one 12 year old, whose mother voluntarily removed him from the Blue School, is now working with PC Leafe organising discos and is an active participant in fundraising for the skatepark.

Andy has forged close working links with the Blue School through discos, Validate UK, enrichment week, sporting activities and his work with the skatepark. Following close working with students, year 11 pupils personally invited Andy to their school prom! The school headmaster, Steve Jackson, has written to commend and highlight improvements arising from the partnership.

" As far as underage drinking is concerned, the schools work in social and personal education has revealed that students are exercising more responsibility in relation to this issue. Students are also demonstrating increased awareness of the potentially harmful effects to themselves and others. THERE HAS BEEN A DISCERNABLE REDUCTION RELATED ABSENCE AND INCIDENTS."

Examination of police records demonstrates:

For the period since the conference (November to March 2001) there have been 22 incidents of criminal damage in Wells City Centre. This is a reduction of 7 incidents or 24%
During the same period, 121 calls were made relating to incidents of public disorder, disturbance and criminal damage. This was a reduction of 53 calls or 30%.

Confiscation of alcohol in unopened containers in the period since the conference, compared with the six months prior to it show:

Cider	90% reduction
Wine	Nil confiscated
Spirits	Nil confiscated
Lager/beer	65% reduction
Alcohol Pops	100% reduction

AN EXAMPLE OF BEST PRACTICE FOR OTHER MARKET TOWNS

Throughout 2000, the reputation of the Wells initiatives, particularly the Youth Alcohol Conference, had begun to spread. PC Andy Leafe received a commendation for his work from the Chief Superintendent at the 2000 Problem Oriented Policing Awards. Becky was contacted by the Home Office, who wished to use the Wells work as an example of a good practice toolkit on their forthcoming crime reduction web page. A presentation was made to a regional meeting of the Association for Town Centre Management, who praised the "grass roots" approach of the partnership.

The national lobby group Action for Market Towns, who promote issues affecting the vitality and viability of small towns, published the work as a Case Study for good practice and launched it at their regional seminar. The Wells City Centre Initiative was presented on behalf of the Police by Andy to the members, who comprised representatives from the Rural Development Agency, Clarks Village, town centre managers, parish councils and local chambers of commerce.

The Wells initiative also features as a three page example of POP in the "Guide to Effective Enforcement of Licensing, launched by ACC Drane, of Avon and Somerset Constabulary.

THE FUTURE: WELLS RETAIL CRIME OPERATION

PC Andy Leafe thought it crucial to move forward and amalgamate the various City Centre Crime Initiatives. He couldn't achieve this without the assistance of the city centre officer, together they had discussions with the Home Office. David Leigh of the Retail Crime Reduction Action Team who was very impressed with the initiatives already undertaken in Wells and the reduction in crime. He observed that the reductions in Wells were contrary to the national trend. He agreed with Andy that the way forward was to form a formally constituted group to address issues such as data protection, public liability insurance and work towards Safer Shopping status for Wells.

PC Andy Leafe began consultations with the local business community about the possibility of bringing the city centre crime reduction initiatives under one formally constituted group. Andy and the Chamber of Commerce compiled a newsletter for circulation in the city centre (see Appendix 13) and began presentations with Becky to the many groups which had formed in Wells, such as the Chamber of commerce, Licensees Association, Wells Partnership, the Business Forum and other trading associations. The aim of the group would be to co-ordinate the work of all the separate organisations under one structure. The ideas were warmly welcomed by the business community and the local authority (See Appendix 10 for newspaper article).

The incentive for businesses to sign up to the project include the prospect of being awarded a Safer Shopping Award by the Home Office. No small market town has ever achieved this status and David is confident that Wells will achieve this. This would be the jewel in the crown for Wells businesses.

CCTV

Wells has just secured funding (£425,000) from the Home Office for CCTV.

Appendix 1 Funding from Partners for Youth and Retail Crime Reduction Initiatives

Funding for the Wells initiatives comprised:

PROJECTS	Mendip District Council Funding from Community Safety resources and City Centre Fund.	
Bike Project and Youth Worker Time	£2,184	
Alcohol Conference	£ 700	Room Hire paid by Wells City Council
Road Runners Advance	£1,400	
Cyber Cafe	£5,600	Plus YMCA investment
Storenet	£2,414	Retailers pay annual fee and radio hire
Validate Proof of Age Card	£ 850	application forms. Cards cost £1-80 each
Pubwatch	£ 100	printing and stationery
Bishop's Barn Discos	£ 350	Each from MDC, WCC and Way Ahead
		East Somerset Police Contribution
Wells Retail Crime Initiative	£1,000	
TOTAL	£15,248, over 3 years.	

LIST OF APPENDICES

- 1 Sources of Funding
- 2 Bike Patrols
- 3 Football Sessions
- 4 Validate Discount Poster
- 5 Skaters Crime Reduction Initiative
- 6 Action Plans
- 7 Alcohol Conference
- 8 Wells Licensees
- 9 Radio Link
- 10 Wells Retail Crime Operation
- 11 Letter from Mayor of Wells
- 12 Call Cards for Wells City Centre
- 13 Storenet Newsletter