

British Transport Police

Operation Farrow

Crime and Disorder Reduction

The Tilly Award

2001

Description of Project

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OPERATION FARROW

A PROBLEM SOLVING APPROACH TO BEATING THE PICKPOCKET

1. Introduction

In the year 1998 to 1999 there were 5,000 victims of Theft Person offences (pickpockets) on the London Underground. However, in the year 1999 to 2000 this figure more than doubled to over 10,000 offences.

(See Appendix 1. Ten Year Crime Trends)

Operation Farrow was the British Transport Police multi-agency problem solving response to this problem.

The Operation was launched in August 2000; it is an innovative, long-term strategic partnership between British Transport Police, London Underground Ltd and other agencies to beat the pickpocket by tackling the problem from all sides, through deterrence, detection and prevention.

Pickpocketing on the London Underground accounts for the highest proportion of crime the British Transport Police have to face. It was recognised that reducing the problem was something that the police could not do alone. One of the cornerstones to achieving the aims and objectives set out by Operation Farrow was partnership working, not only with London Underground Ltd, but also the travelling public and other partners, such as the Social Services and Immigration Service as well as the local business community in the identified hot spot areas.

Since the start of Operation Farrow, crime relating to pickpockets has reduced by approximately 26.1%. However, it still accounts for approximately 50% of overall crime committed on the London Underground.

The London Underground Area of the British Transport Police are committed to dealing with volume crime, Operation Farrow is supported at the highest level in response to the problem of theft person offences.

2. Objectives

The objective of Operation Farrow was to reduce the number of theft person offences from August 2000 to 625 per month. With a long-term goal of on no more than 400 offences per month after August 2001.

These objectives have so far been achieved and are now being maintained.

3. Analysis

The tactics used in Operation Farrow were based around the most detailed analysis of victims ever undertaken by the British Transport Police. Over eleven thousand crimes and their victims were looked at in detail.

(This Victim Analysis 1999/2000 runs to over 25 pages. See Appendix 2 for a summary)

From this analysis it was possible to identify the time and day of the week when offences occurred, as well as hotspot locations. It also identified victims by nationality, gender and Home County in relation to British residents.

This research showed:

- 20% of our victims were foreign visitors
- 43% were London residents
- 37% came from outside the London area

The research also showed that 80% of victims were female.

The following fifteen London Underground stations have consistently been the hot spots for theft person offences:

Leicester Square, Victoria, Oxford Circus, Kings Cross, Piccadilly Circus, Embankment, South Kensington, Tottenham Court Road, Liverpool Street, Covent Garden, Green Park, Knightsbridge, Paddington, Bank/Monument and Waterloo.

The analysis proved that most offences took place within the geographical area of the Circle Line.

Analysis was carried out on a weekly basis. From this we saw that more offences took place towards the end of the week, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, during the evening rush period, between 1500hrs — 2100hrs.

(See Appendix 3)

Analysing the offences so thoroughly ensured we were basing our deployments on facts, rather than anecdotal evidence. This has been evidential in the constant evaluation and updating of tactics.

The causes for the pickpocket problem on London Underground were identified. They are as follows:

- A hardcore group of prolific and repeat offenders.
- Opportunity created by the increased number of passengers on the Underground system, (in excess of 3 million passenger journeys every day).
- Opportunity created by increased numbers of tourists on the system.

- A system designed during the nineteenth century with links to major interchange stations and airports, before CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design) principles were developed.
- Lack of public awareness and personal security.
- Valuable personal property carried by individuals.
- Influx of eastern European Asylum Seekers.

4. Response

A multitude of tactics were utilised, which included a combination of deterrence, detection, prevention and partnership working, spread over three operational phases, with short, medium and long term objectives.

Forty extra officers were seconded to the central London area from British Transport Police posts around the capital.

These officers received specialised training in the tactics and habits of pickpockets. They were then formed into teams with specific responsibilities; each led by a police sergeant.

Using a combination of the analysis and tactics described within this document, they were then deployed onto the Underground system to combat the problem.

• Deterrence/Disruption

Short Term

- Uniformed officers effectively deployed to known hotspot locations at the relevant times.
- Increased use of covert patrols tasked with the apprehension of offenders.
- Deployment with Immigration officers and London Underground revenue staff at gateways onto the Underground system.
- Teams of uniformed officers using overt video equipment. This tactic not only had the desired effect of deterring offenders from working on the Underground system, but it was also used as a valuable intelligence-gathering tool.

Medium Term

Use of bail conditions. Following arrest and where grounds existed then bail conditions were sought to stop offenders using the Underground system. This tactic can only be effective if the bail conditions are properly policed. To achieve this the officers attached to Operation Farrow were given regular intelligence briefings of those conditions imposed and when bail conditions were breached or changed.

The bail conditions imposed included the requirement for offenders to report to a police station local to their home address at two different times during the day. This helped to ensure they were off the Underground system during the key time periods.

The targeting of repeat offenders. Intelligence of offenders with numerous convictions was disseminated to the officers on the Operation Farrow teams so they could be targeted.

Advertising the success of the operation through all forms of local and national media to raise community awareness and reduce the fear of crime. Regular internal briefings were given to London Underground staff to raise their awareness and increase their confidence.

Long Term

Provisions that could be put in place with the use of the Crime and Disorder Act. Such as the pursuit of parenting orders, curfews and anti social behaviour orders.

All the above measures are still in place ensuring all the good work commenced on Operation Farrow continues and the impetus is not lost.

- **Detection**

Short Term

It was a priority that we had an increase in the number of officers with expertise in tackling pickpocket crime. Because of the nature of the offence, offenders will often use distraction techniques in crowded situations to hide their actions.

As a hardcore group of prolific offenders had been identified, the officers charged with the responsibility of catching them in the act of theft had to be able to spot them and their actions.

The Crime Management Centre at the British Transport Police Area Headquarters, set up a dedicated pickpocket desk, which had two roles.

The first was to create a running log of events. This was used to assist with the deployment of officers and other agencies. As theft person reports were received the details of time, location and any descriptions of offenders were passed to the Farrow teams, who could attend immediately.

The second was the analysis of the victims of pickpockets, to see if there were any emerging patterns. Also victim liaison, as it was important to know what the victim was doing prior to the theft to establish if they had been targeted and perhaps followed.

Medium Term

.Once the officers were trained and deployed operationally, the next step was to identify those offenders who were new to the system and had no previous convictions for this type of offence.

This proved difficult, as some offenders were able to frustrate police actions by claiming to be below the age of criminal responsibility.

It was identified that there were juvenile offenders who were being manipulated by adults. Identifying the adults then became a priority.

Long Term

The collation of known offender profiles, updating and dissemination to Operation Farrow officers the active offenders and their habits in relation to theft person offences.

+ **Prevention**

Short Term

A team of officers were tasked with the responsibility of reinstating an operation called Jackdaw.

Operation Jackdaw originally ran during the year 1998 to 1999 with a great degree of success that can be seen in the Ten-Year Crime Trend Graph. (*Appendix 1*)

It was their aim to raise the awareness of the public to the problems of pickpockets and the simple steps that they could take to protect their property before travelling.

The Jackdaw team set up high profile crime prevention displays at key location on the Underground system and handed out leaflets with the crime prevention advice to passengers before they started their journey.

(*See Appendix 4*)

Medium Term

It was the responsibility of the Jackdaw team to take the crime prevention message nationwide. They attended major cities around the country with rail links to London.

At these locations they would set up the crime prevention display and talked to passengers who were boarding trains to the capital. There was a lot of local media interest and Jackdaw was featured on news broadcasts around the country.

(*See Appendix 4*)

Long Term

The long-term aim was to make the Jackdaw message recognised as the symbol for crime prevention awareness on the London Underground and to get this message across to the travelling public by whatever means possible.

Another long-term crime prevention aim was to examine the existing CCTV systems used on the Underground for its effectiveness and suggest any improvements that could be made.

- **Partnerships**

The enormity of the task undertaken by the British Transport Police would not have been effective had it been done alone. To this end, partnership working was considered to be an important part of the initiative.

Short Term

The short-term aim was to enlist the support of London Underground. The victim of crime is

- the responsibility of the British Transport Police, but they are London Underground's customers who also had a duty of care to them.

It was important to identify other agencies that could be approached to work in partnership. Numerous agencies were identified, which included the following:

Metropolitan Police, Social Services, Immigration Department, National Asylum Support, Westminster City Council departments within The Home Office and other London Borough where hot spots were identified.

(See appendix 5, London Underground Ltd and London Borough map)

One of the very effective partnerships was formed with the local business community through an organisation called '*Capital Link*', whose members consist of local business's in the Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus area of London. It was with their help that we were able to get the crime prevention message across in two of the main pickpocket hot spot areas. This was done rather effectively with the use of an electronic building display of the crime prevention message in the heart of Leicester Square.

(See Appendix 6, Courtesy of Global Multimedia Interface GMI)

Medium Term

Links were established at the relevant levels within the identified partnerships. The focus of the operation was explained and the organisations were asked to participate in initiatives.

For example, a joint initiative was undertaken with the Immigration Department, which involved Immigration Officers working with police officers and other agencies, dealing with arrested people who's immigration status was in question.

Information sharing with other agencies was key to the success of the operation. Sharing of information and intelligence with the Metropolitan Police was important as often the same people were committing offences within the jurisdiction of both forces.

Long Term

The long-term aims were to continue close working relationships, build on the existing success, and identify those areas that were failing.

Also to develop new partnerships when the need arose or an organisation was identified where close liaison would be beneficial.

5. Operational Support

Co-ordinating the resources needed to tackle a problem such as the one described is a major task in itself. An organised structure was put in place to co-ordinate all activities.

(See Appendix 7)

A dedicated Communications Centre specifically for Operation Farrow was created. This supported the day to day co-ordination of the initiative.

The Communication Centre was housed at Baker Street Police Station. It was resourced daily between 0700 and 2100 hours.

A dedicated crime analyst was assigned to the operation to provide detailed analysis for daily briefing and deployment.

Three daily briefings were given to the teams which included offender activities, current bail conditions and hot spot locations.

A daily de-brief was held to capture any intelligence for the following morning.

A specialised Criminal Justice Unit (CJU) was created to deal with the volume of cases created by Operation Farrow and to liaise with the Courts and the Crown Prosecution Service.

The Operation Farrow CJU handled all the court files prepared by the teams, they provided representation at Magistrates Court on sentencing and bail issues, researched the changes in process required to deal with the volume of cases and considered asset confiscation from convicted offenders.

6. Assessment/Evaluation

Evaluation of an initiative on the scale of Operation Farrow was very important.

It was imperative that the resources were effectively deployed and the tactics were having an effect. Those tactics that were failing had to be changed so that officer's time was not wasted. This applied not only to the operational officers but also to the CJU and support staff.

The main method of evaluation was the on going collation of crime statistics; this was done on a weekly basis. It showed those areas of the Underground system where the operation was effective and also showed any new hotspot areas that were forming.

All individual tactics were subject to risk assessment, evaluation and revision on a continued basis to ensure effectiveness.

The Jackdaw team were assessed on the amount of high profile crime prevention displays they arranged; also the media interest that they.

The partnerships that were formed were analysed for their effectiveness and those that had achieved their aims or were no longer relevant were scaled down or stopped so as not to waste resource time.

A benchmarking process was put in place to ensure that those officers employed on Operation Farrow were performing to a minimum standard agreed at the outset of the initiative.

Costings were also evaluated to ensure that the operation kept within the budget assigned to it.

7. Conclusion

Pickpocketing is the volume crime on the London Underground area. The crime trends over the past ten years prove this.

London is a growing community, so we can expect these trends to continue. Operation Farrow has shown that an effective targeted problem oriented approach can reduce the problem significantly.

It is also clear that it is not a problem that can be dealt with by one organisation alone. By working in partnership with others the British Transport Police has been able to share intelligence and pursue other avenues, that are outside the usual methods adopted by the police.

All the organisations involved can learn from the experiences of Operation Farrow and employ these lessons when dealing with other problems.

Operation Farrow has managed to achieve the objective set out at its conception.
(See Appendix 8)

Success should be measured in maintaining the impetus, working with others to continually reduce the level of crime.

.Pickpocketing could be reduced further if people were to take a few simple precautions. These simple steps are the cornerstone of the prevention message and should be employed when travelling everywhere and not just on public transport.

By working with other agencies Operation Farrow was able to counter the effect of displacement that one could see with an initiative of this type.

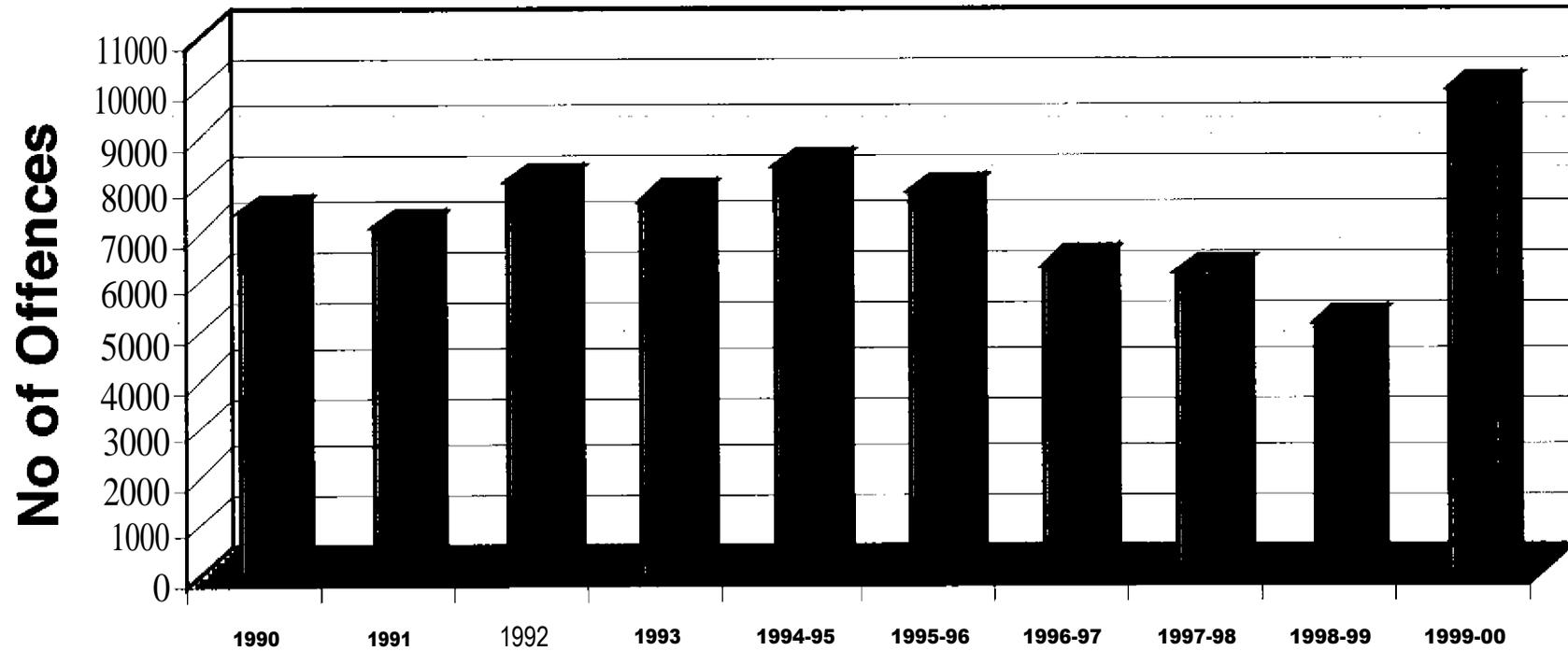
By having a solid base of officers, that are now trained in the detection of this type of offence and officers that are adept at getting the crime prevention message across, the British Transport Police are in a position where they can continue to meet the problem of pickpocket offences.

It is intended that Operation Farrow will continue in order to maintain these objectives.

Appendix 1

Ten Year Crime Trend

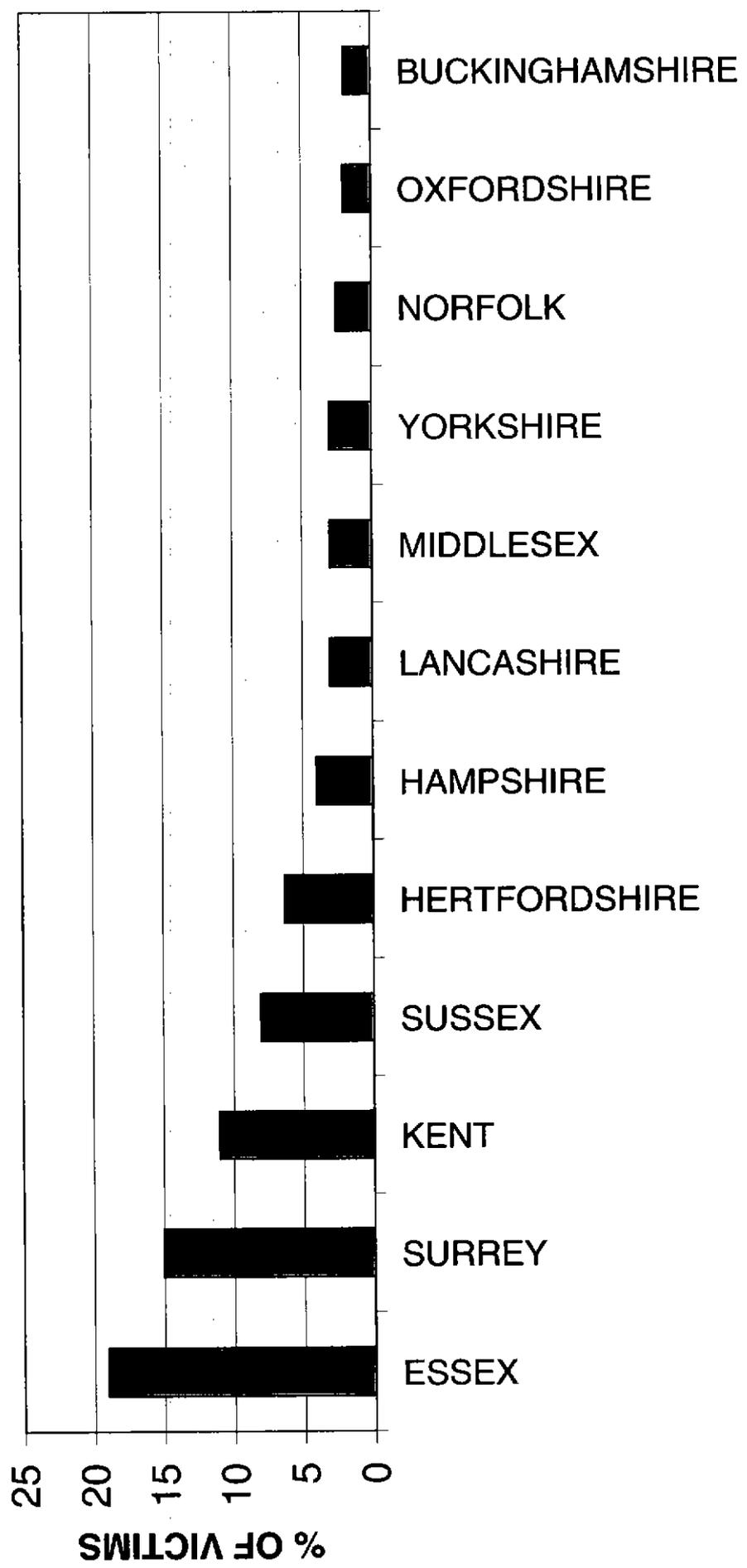
Theft Person Offences - W Area



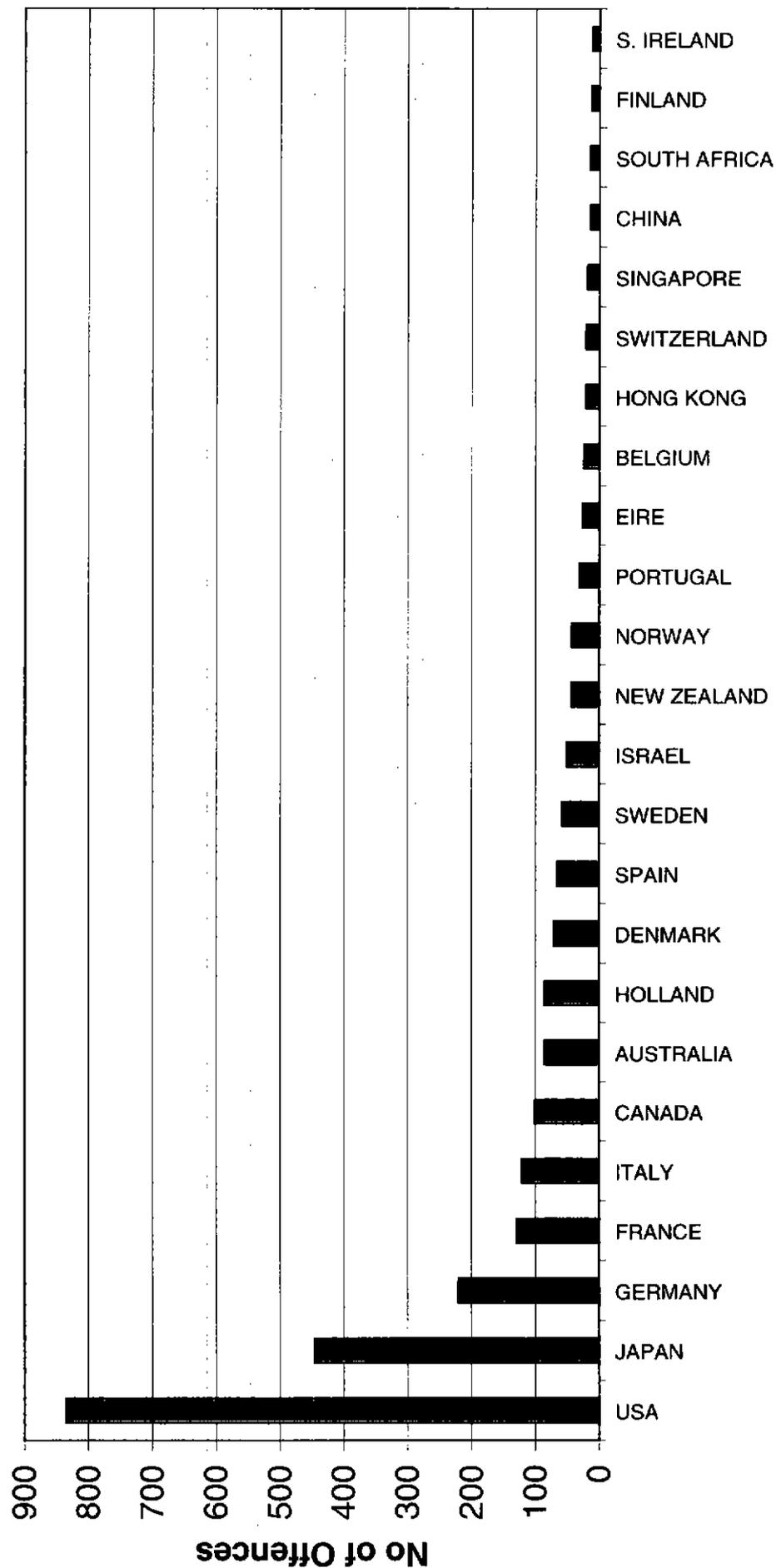
Operation Jackdaw 98 / 99

Appendix 2

UK VICTIMS OF THEFT PERSON ON THE LONDON UNDERGROUND BY COUNTY



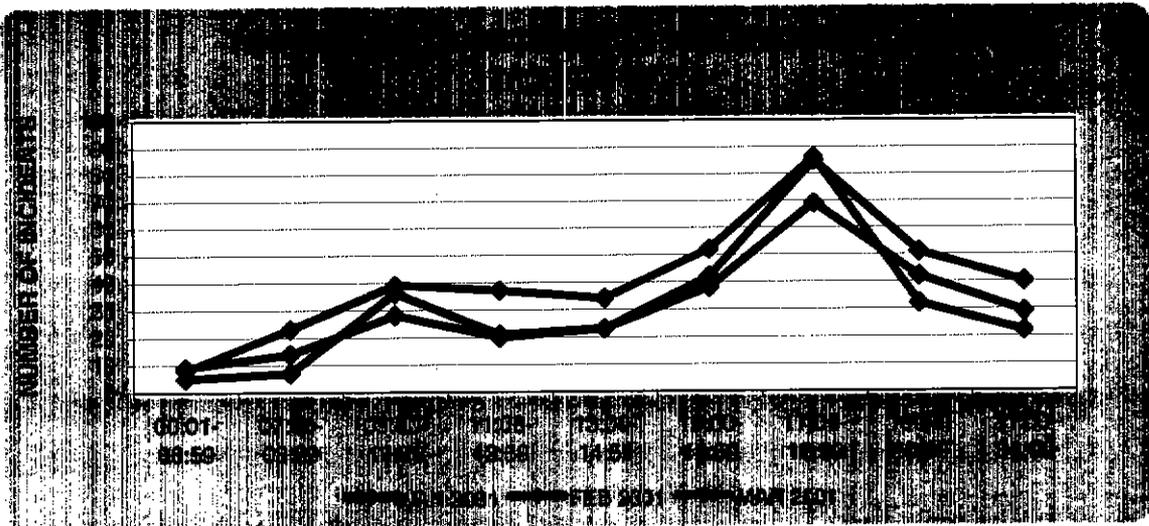
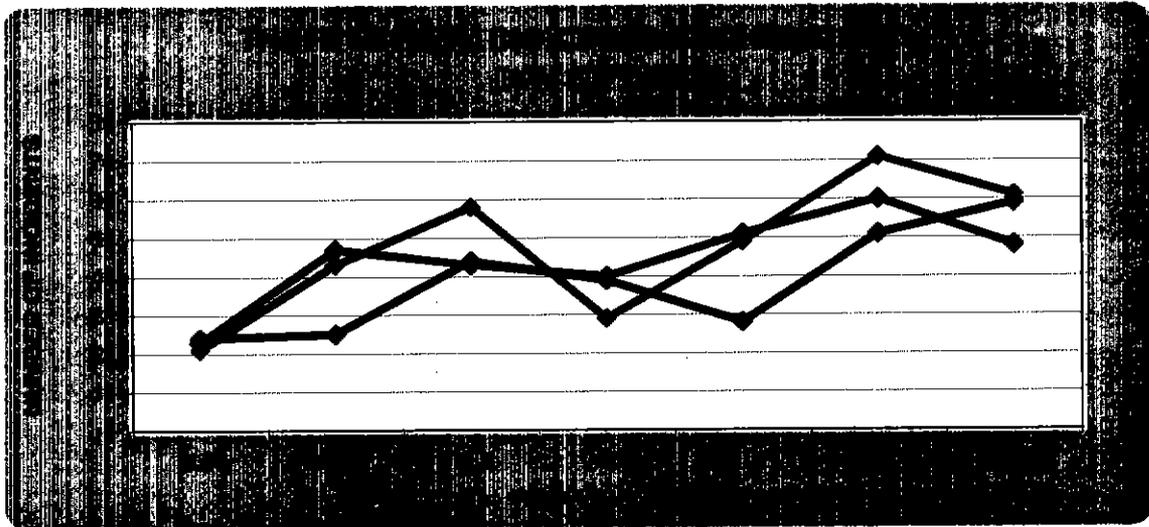
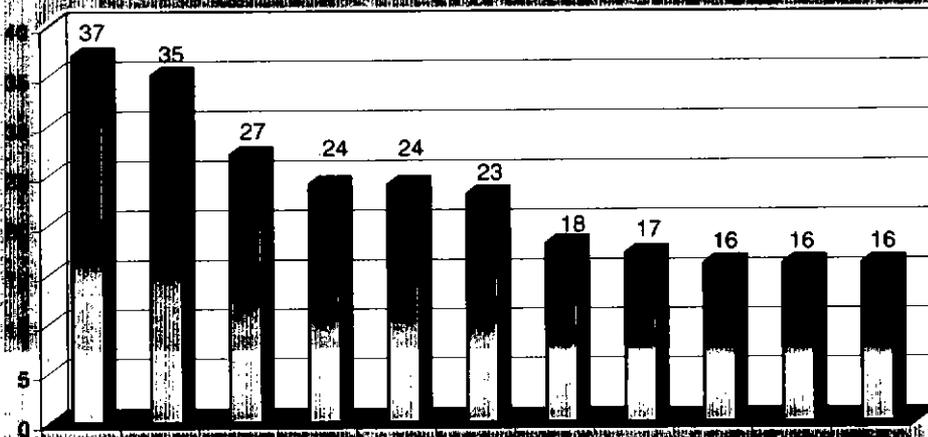
FOREIGN VICTIMS OF THEFT PERSON ON THE LONDON UNDERGROUND BY COUNTRY



Appendix 3

OPERATION FARROW ANALYSIS

THESE FIGURES REPRESENT ANIMALS



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British Transport Police

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Summary

**Operation Co-ordinator DCI Smith
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Operation Farrow

A PROBLEM SOLVING APPROACH TO BEATING THE PICKPOCKET

Project Title

Operation Farrow was set up in August 2000. It is an innovative, long-term strategic partnership between British Transport Police, London Underground Ltd and other agencies working in partnership. Its aim is to reduce theft person (pickpocket) offences on the London Underground by utilising a problem solving approach to achieve the objective.

Scanning the problem

In the year 1998 to 1999 there were 5,000 victims of pickpockets on the London Underground. However, in the year 1999 to 2000 this figure more than doubled to over 10,000 offences. Operation Farrow was the British Transport's Police response to this problem.

Analysis

Operation Farrow was based on the most detailed victim analysis ever undertaken by The British Transport Police. Over eleven thousand crimes and their victims were looked at in detail.

From this analysis it was possible to identify the time and day when offences occurred, as well as hotspot locations. It also identified victims by nationality, gender and Home County in relation to British residents.

Response

The partnership approach employed throughout Operation Farrow included a combination of deterrence detection and prevention, spread over three operational phases, with short, medium and long term objectives.

Deterrence

- High Profile Uniform patrols.
- Covert police patrols.
- Effective use and policing of Bail conditions.
- Provisions under existing legislation i.e. The Crime and Disorder Act.
- Deployment of London Underground revenue staff to strategic locations.

Detection

- Increasing the number of officers with expertise in tackling this type of crime.
- Identify those persons committing the offences.
- Known offender profiling.
- Intelligence gathering and information sharing with other agencies.

Prevention

- + Providing awareness and Crime Prevention advice.
- Improving the infrastructure.
- Longer-term preventative measures, including making the Underground safer by applying crime prevention through environmental design principles.

Partnerships

- Identifying organisations with an interest in reducing this type of offence.
- Building close working relationships with those organisations.

Assessment | Evaluation

Operation Farrow achieved its objective and reduced Theft Person offences by 26.1% in the months August 2000 — March 2001.

The measurement used was the number of crime reports received in relation to theft from the person. Tactics were evaluated throughout the Operation to measure effectiveness; amendments or changes were made as necessary.

Successful tactics were noted for sharing with other interested parties as a guide to good practice.