

2001 Tilley Awards



The Makeover

(The Dumfries Tradesafe Partnership)

Category: Crime Reduction

Force: Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary

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The Makeover – The Dumfries Tradesafe Partnership

Summary:

Locus

Dumfries is a town of approximately 32000 residents, situated in south-west Scotland and is the nominal and administrative capital of Dumfries and Galloway region, as well as the largest residential and commercial centre in the area.

The Problem

Ongoing problems in the town centre included high instances of shop theft and disorder, against a backdrop of increased demands generally on the local police station. There was general apathy in the retail sector and no great enthusiasm for self-help. This is borne out by crime statistics from existing police recording systems, and first hand evidence of the officers involved.

The Response

In January 1998, Constable Dick Reade was appointed town centre liaison officer, from a community policing background. This heralded a shift in emphasis, from enforcement towards prevention in the policing of the town centre.

By establishing a radio-link system and marrying this to an existing CCTV resource, the retail and licensing sectors were effectively encouraged to take responsibility for their own safety and security. The result was the Dumfries Tradesafe Partnership, launched in November 1999. Dumfries Town Centre was declared a Safer Trading Environment, under the auspices of the Scottish Business Crime Centre.

The organisation is a genuine partnership between the local authority, police and the private sector, incorporating shared administration and responsibility for an ongoing comprehensive training programme, and constant development. Many linked initiatives have followed and are outlined in the main report.

The Impact

The result has been a steady downturn in Dumfries town centre crime, a trend that is continuing, and a raised awareness among the criminal fraternity that the system has a significant effect on their activities. There is now an increased confidence in the traders in Dumfries and Christmas 2000 was a record year from the point of view of both shop crime statistics and trading figures.

The essence of the Dumfries Tradesafe organisation is that it has drawn together and mobilised a mix of new and existing, but under-performing, resources to create a genuinely synergistic crime reduction partnership. The system is now regarded in Scotland as the example of best practice in this field and the partners regularly travel to deliver seminars and receive visits from other forces.

The Makeover – Dumfries Town Centre Partnership - Description:

Locus

Dumfries is situated in South West Scotland and is the nominal and administrative capital of Dumfries and Galloway region, a predominantly rural area. The majority of employment is centred around tourism, agriculture and the public sector. The largest single employer is Dumfries and Galloway Council, with the council administrative headquarters being in Dumfries.

Dumfries has 32000 residents, the majority of whom live in private or local authority/housing association estates, situated on the town's peripheries. The town is the largest employer in the region, being the base for a variety of retail, manufacturing and other commercial interests. There is a thriving town centre area, with a concentration of retail outlets, both multi-national and locally owned. There is also a busy licensing sector and night-time economy in the town centre.

The last ten years have seen the proliferation of out-of-town retail parks, incorporating large multi-national stores and fast-food outlets. This has led to a decentralisation of shopping habits and a concomitant change in the behaviour of shop thieves.

In January 1996, as a result of increasing concerns about public disorder and shop theft, a 6-camera closed circuit television (CCTV) system was installed in the town centre, funded by a partnership of police, local authority and retailers. This was expanded to 11 cameras the following year. Monitoring was carried out by two civilian operators, part funded by the police and the HOPE (Having the Opportunity for Possible Employment) Service, which aims to introduce disabled people into the job market.

Policing has traditionally been the role of the on-duty operational shift, which would supply officers to patrol on foot and attend to any incidents of disorder or shop theft. The shift was supplemented by a solitary town centre officer, whose role was primarily to deal with shop thieves. The role was never clearly defined.

The Problem

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In January 1998, Constable Dick Reade was appointed town centre liaison officer. Dick Reade had been a community constable for a total of ten years, and had spent the previous seven years in North West Dumfries, an area of predominantly local authority housing estates, with a history of deprivation and social exclusion.

A change of line management for the post resulted in the town centre officer being completely freed from enforcement duties and given; a "blank cheque" remit to prevent crime. This represented a sea-change in attitudes towards retail and licensing policing in the force area.

A review of the working practices in his area of responsibility was conducted by Constable Reade and the following issues were identified by him:.

- Albeit there was an established CCTV system in place, line management of the two operators was unclear, as day to day management fell to the on-duty operational sergeant and there was no clear line of communication for personnel issues, complaints or equipment repairs.
- Career development and training for operators was minimal, with the emphasis exclusively towards "on the job" experiential training.
- Although the CCTV existed to enhance the trading sector in the town, there was little communication between retailers/licensees and the operators and their managers.
- Awareness of legal requirements and rules of evidence was poor on the part of shop and bar staff. Any training conducted tended to be corporate events by the larger stores and was not tailored to local needs. This was reflected in comments made by operational officers who were "wasting their time" in unnecessary attendances at shops, where there was no clear evidence of a crime and/or suspect. The crux of this problem was identified as the quality of staff training.
- There were no regular links with the (then) town centre manager, who was responsible for promoting the town as a centre for work and leisure.
- There were no police links with the licensing trade, except the formal monthly licensing board meetings, attended by senior divisional officers to deal with complaints and breaches of licensing conditions.

- A misconception existed whereby both police and the public perceived CCTV as a panacea. In the retail sector in particular, there was little evidence of a "self-help" and an almost complete reliance on cameras. The police service, facing increasing demands on resources, tended to pro-actively patrol to a lesser extent.
- A pub-watch organisation, Make Our Bars Safer (MOBS), had recently been launched but had no clear direction or policy, and no link to the daytime retail economy.
- In 1997/1998, 2960 crimes were committed in Dumfries (Appendix I), of which 434 were theft by shoplifting, 812 Breach of the Peace, 62 urinating and 102 Drunk and Incapable. The vast majority of this type of crime, by its nature, occurs in the town centre area, and has a negative effect on the quality of life for persons working in and using the town centre (specific "town centre" figures unobtainable from recording system).
- Attitudes amongst traders, licensees and elected representatives were generally downbeat and pessimistic i.e. "in the doldrums".

By definition, many of the above points are subjective and/or anecdotal, based on observations, as opposed to statistics, but nevertheless represent an accurate "health check" on the state of affairs in Dumfries Town Centre in the first few months of 1998.

Direct comparisons of crime figures around the time are difficult due to a change in police recording systems in October 1996. In March 2001, the system has again changed, which will allow more accurate information, searchable by "beat" units.

The Response

The underlying ethos in producing a sustainable crime reduction in Dumfries town centre has been the adoption of a genuine partnership approach to tackling common problems. The town centre officer had no formal training in Problem Oriented Policing (POP), but a genuine belief that he had identified that the existing systems could be drawn together and made to work as more than the sum of their component parts. This came from a resolute standpoint that crime prevention is the key feature of a successful and safe trading environment.

The chronology of the development of Dumfries Town Centre is shown at Appendix 2.

Radiolink

The initial action, after identifying the problem, was to mobilise the retailers and create a radiolink system. This work involved:

- Research and tendering to radio providers.
- Persuading retailers of the benefits of joining such a system, previously untried in the area.
- Creating a protocol for operation and administration of the radios.
- Training shop staff in radio procedures.
- Linking the scheme to CCTV operators at Loreburn Street police station, Dumfries, and training them.
- Facilitation of the scheme finances (funded eventually from purchases or hires by users).

The initial membership, at its launch on 3 August 1998, was 10, including the Loreburne Centre, a shopping mall comprising of 35 units. This also established the link with Loreburne Centre management, which was to prove vital in future developments.

Control of the scheme was effected through the CCTV suite and operators at Loreburn Street Police Station ("Romeo Control"), as well as the town centre officer ("Romeo 1 ").

The fact that there were only two operators meant that there were gaps in control coverage, exacerbated by sickness and annual leave. To overcome

this, the Loreburne Centre, which has its own security staff, offered its own CCTV control as a backup facility (2 of the cameras of the town system are owned by the centre and have a dual control facility). Until recently, up to 30% of coverage time has been controlled directly via the Loreburne Centre. This is an excellent example of partnership between police and the private sector.

Administration

As membership increased over 1999, the administration of the scheme became more onerous and a partnership approach was used to overcome this.

Mr. Jim Ireland, Loreburne Centre manager, offered and agreed to provide the administration system for the scheme, at no cost to the users, with the town centre officer assisting and supplying any necessary information. The result was a comprehensive radiolink user guide, which is reproduced at Appendix 3.

As well as highlighting correct radio procedures, the document introduced and outlined the requirement for an incident report and statement from premises, as well as a compensation claim. These additional forms emphasise to users the requirement for evidence and the fact that the criminal courts offer an avenue for compensation for stock lost/damaged due to criminal activity.

There is also a flowchart, which provides an unequivocal guide for retailers as to when and when not to involve the police, therefore minimising the police time spent on spurious calls.

Exclusion Orders

A cornerstone of the radiolink system is the unique civil exclusion order mechanism, which is a collective decision on behalf of the membership to bar individuals from member premises. This applies to all members, albeit there are separate: premises lists for the retail and licensing sectors. The mechanism is briefly as follows:

- An offender commits a shop crime and/or act of disorder on the premises e.g. threatens/assaults staff.
- Arrested and sufficient evidence available to substantiate a charge and report to the Procurator Fiscal.

- Dependent on criteria e.g. prolific thief, violent, likely to re-offend, application is made to radiolink administration for an exclusion-order.
- Necessary paperwork completed by staff e.g. incident report, supporting statement(s).
- Exclusion order granted and letter handed to offender whilst still in custody.
- Offender released under police bail i.e. on the condition he/she appears at court on designated date (usually within the week) or kept in custody for next day court appearance.
- Report to Procurator Fiscal in usual manner incorporates radiolink paperwork and request by reporting officer that, if offender is released by the court on bail, special conditions be applied that he/she does not enter radiolink premises whilst on bail (i.e. up to date of case disposal at court).
- If offender breaches bail conditions by entering radiolink premises, re-arrested and put before the court.

There have been human rights issues raised by local solicitors against this process, although the local Procurator Fiscal has fully supported the scheme and continued to request conditions on behalf of the partnership. Meetings between the partners, solicitors and the Procurator Fiscal have clarified the position, which will not be resolved without a formal challenge in the courts. The elegance of the situation, as far as the police are concerned, experience is that few "clients" will take the legal advice to refuse the opportunity for bail, simply to prove that the solicitor has a valid point in opposing the special conditions!

Safer Trading Environment

As a result of the success of the exclusion order radiolink scheme, an approach was made to the Scottish Business Crime Centre, with a view to having Dumfries declared only the second Safer Trading Environment in Scotland). Consequently, the Dumfries Tradesafe Partnership was formally launched on 29 November 1999, with great media interest (Appendix 4). The chairman of the organisation is the manager of the Loreburne Centre, demonstrating the ethos of partnership working, that ownership lies with all partners and not just the usual main players i.e. supporting agencies.

The ultimate goal of the organisation is to sign up every business in Dumfries and membership is increasing steadily as time goes on,

approximately 100 at the time of writing. Membership is free and costs are borne by the partnership and the goodwill of the main administrators.

Tradesafe partners now include the police, shops, licensed premises, town centre management, local authority, health board, chemists shops and filling stations, to name but a few.

MOBS

Liaison with the MOBS organisation was developed to increase its effectiveness; the town centre liaison officer attends every meeting and the administration, which was haphazard, was absorbed into the overall Tradesafe partnership, leading to a streamlining of overall effort. This has also contributed to links between the day and night economies, which overlap more and more as licensing and retailing hours are extended and become more flexible.

There are currently 50 licensed premises members of Tradesafe, 12 of which have radiolink. Efforts are ongoing to sign up more licensed premises to the radiolink, although the busiest pubs and clubs are already radiolink users.

Unusual Members

So flexible is the radiolink scheme that it has been extended to cover such unusual venues such as:

- Public toilets; the prevalence of drug abuse, largely driven out of the more public areas of the town centre, increased in public toilets. Radiolink was installed, in a well-publicised initiative, and the problem has been practically eradicated.
- Chemist shop; this shop was the main outlet for methadone issue in Dumfries, a situation which led staff to feel vulnerable.
- Local authority street cleaners; this was in response to threats of violence.
- Leisure facilities; in response to youth disorder at regular discos. In tandem with initial police presence (now withdrawn) and upgraded lighting and CCTV, the radiolink has drastically reduced the problem.

Blue Light

As a result of an article in Communicate Scotland magazine, it was decided to adopt the blue light scheme, whereby lights are installed with a wavelength at the blue end of the spectrum which makes it difficult to see veins under the skin, and therefore discourages drug abuse.

Blue light has been installed in toilets in licensed premises, toilets in shop premises and public toilets in Dumfries.

Secure Transport

In association with the Automobile Association (AA), the partnership has been heavily involved in the award of Secure Car Park status for two car parks in Dumfries and one other is currently applying.

A "safe cycle park" was opened in the town centre, utilising spare storage space in an existing cycle shop and involving the local authority to advertise it in tourist literature. This dovetails with the national push towards "modal shift" in transport habits and the opening of national cycleways, including a stretch of the Caledonian Cycleway through Dumfries.

Initiatives

As 2000 has progressed, the Tradesafe partnership has driven various other minor initiatives, e.g. litter patrols involving community officers and local authority officers and the sale of personal attack alarms, in conjunction with the Dumfries and District Crime and Safety Forum.

Training

It was identified at an early stage that staff training in all sectors was inadequate and sporadic. Dumfries Tradesafe Partnership has addressed training across the board as follows:

- The radiolink guide is itself a training document (Appendix 3)
- Shop theft presentation package; there is now an ongoing rolling programme of training for shop staff and shop security staff, undertaken by the town centre officer and other security officers from the private sector. The success of this is due to the frequency of the delivery, from the viewpoints of both the legal

requirements and familiarity with criminal personalities and activities.

- A programme of door supervisor training has been undertaken, in conjunction with MOBS, licensees and the local licensing board (programme at Appendix 6).

A guide to . liquor licensing laws in Scotland was produced, in partnership between Tradesafe and the Trading Standards office (Appendix 7). This was distributed to all licensed premises in the force area (approximately 500).

- "Drugs Aware — A Guide for Licensees" (Appendix 7) was produced under the Safer Scotland banner. The document Was delivered to all licensed premises in the force area during a "day of activity" by community officers, together with sharp safes and SDEA posters. This was funded by the local Crime and Safety Forum and MOBS and has been recognised nationally as an example of best practice.
- The Drugs Aware guide is currently being adapted for retail staff, again via funding from Tradesafe and the private sector.
- "Don't Get Smashed" poster (Appendix 8). This again was distributed to all licensed premises in the force area with public house and hotel licenses, to sell a safety message. It was adapted specifically for Stranraer and Dumfries to advertise the local bye-laws, enacted in October 2000, which prohibited consumption of alcohol in public places within the town boundaries. This was also part funded by MOBS.
- Drugs Awareness Seminars: these have been staged at Police Headquarters for both retail staff and for licensees and have been well attended and positively received. It is intended to continue this programme to incorporate all members of staff in licensed premises in Dumfries, and to repeat the exercise as and when required.
- Shop Theft Exercises: in 2000, two exercises were conducted, whereby procedures were tested by police officers acting as shop thieves. These were run "real-time" and were de-briefed on completion. One of the exercises was staged during a visit to Lorebum Street police station by the Scottish Executive's Deputy First Minister and Minister for Justice, Jim Wallace.

The emphasis on training by the partnership is illustrated by the vast amount of work carried out by Tradesafe partners in the planning and execution of training events and the production of literature. That the majority of appendices in this document pertain to training material is

testimony to the high priority that the partnership gives to staff training and awareness. The police input has been predominantly' been by community officers_ and the force substance misuse coordinator.

Police officers and other partners regularly travel to other parts of the force and also.outwith the force area to spread best practice in the field of radiolink and retail and licensing partnership working. Furthermore, other force representatives have visited Dumfries and have since implemented schemes along the Dumfries guidelines.

The Impact

The impact of the Dumfries Tradesafe partnership on crime in Dumfries is best illustrated by the trends in the categories of crimes which most affect the life quality of people living and working in a compact, discrete, town centre. These include shop theft, petty assault, vandalism, breach of the peace and other alcohol related crimes such as urinating in public and being drunk and incapable. The trends for these are shown in Appendix 1, which is a chart of Dumfries in total.

The Tradesafe exclusion order scheme has impacted severely on the most prolific of the shop thieves and presently there are 24 such persons under exclusion from all radiolink premises. The exclusion order backed by court bail conditions has also proved its worth. Since its inception some 20 individuals have been banned by the courts, with a total of 6 re-offending by entering radiolink premises in contravention of their respective bans. There are presently no offenders banned by the courts.

An old and little utilised piece of legislation (in Scotland) is the Licensed Premises (Exclusion of Certain Persons) Act 1980. This was successfully implemented and a criminal exclusion from all MOBS premises was granted by Dumfries Sheriff Court in March 2001.

A well known local offender, who for some time had terrorised the town centre, threatening the vulnerable members of the community and in the process obtained varying sums of cash from them was identified and highlighted by the community. They had been afraid to take any action previously for fear of retribution. This was achieved principally through the partnership approach' by the town centre officer, who identified the victims and persuaded them to come forward and make complaints.

The positive effect of the blue light scheme has been considerable. The premises covered by the lights are no longer targeted by the drug abusers, who clearly have moved elsewhere. The very installation of the lighting has caused much positive comment by members of the general public using such facilities who have commended the store management and licensees for their stand in the fight against the drug misuse problem. The scheme is here to stay and is expanding.

Radiolink has now become such a victim of its own success (62 users) that in the very near future it will have to expand to 2 frequencies from the 1 it utilises at present. This expansion will mean that the scheme will have the ability to grow extensively in the short to medium term to

accommodate the ever growing list of premises wishing to "come onboard" and who have been restricted with the present single frequency.

The Dumfries Christmas Crime Initiative run over the festive period 2000/2001 was overwhelmingly successful. The figures are outlined at Appendix 9. The headline result was a 43% decrease in reported shop theft, with a slight (5%) decrease in detections.

For this initiative, and in line with partnership working, police and shop staff were joined by Marks and Spencer security personnel who provided staff to assist Police plain clothes patrols in the town centre. This unique combination was successful with M & S staff spotting offenders and passing them onto Police patrols for suitable action.

A very pro-active method of policing over a limited period coupled with the retail sector fully aware of and involved in the initiative with all parties using radiolink it produced an excellent, prosperous, and almost crime free trading period for retailers/customers.

An initiative to assist with the usual litter problem in Dumfries town centre, and working towards the Britain in Bloom Competition 2000, was undertaken by the town centre officer with the aid of community officers and personnel from other agencies. A huge amount of hard work went into this initiative and an almost spotless town centre rightfully achieved its just award from the judges. The town centre officer and members of the other agencies involved in the anti-litter patrol were introduced to and talked at some length with the judges.

Summary

Overall, in the course of three years, Dumfries town centre has undergone a transformation which is attributable to the hard work and willingness to engage in genuine partnership working of the respective members of Dumfries Tradesafe.

The essence of the work is its sustainability, illustrated by the constantly changing and evolving membership, both in the type and number of members coming on-stream.

From a community which once consisted of under performing components, there is now a real sense of ownership of the system, a "buzz" which comes from the knowledge that an entire community is working together to help itself in the constant fight to prevent crime and uphold the economy of Dumfries, particularly the town centre, but also the retailers and licensees on the peripheries. It is fair to say that Dumfries has undergone a "makeover".

Recorded Crime in Dumfries

