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## ***The Tilley Award 2001***



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<b>Title</b>	Zone 98 - Young people - Police Issue or Social Concern
<b>Category</b>	Crime Reduction
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## ZONE 98

### Young People - Police issue or Social Concern ?

This multi agency initiative was devised to address youth concerns within the rural areas surrounding the town of Ellon, Aberdeenshire. The project readily identified youths to be the solution to the problem rather than the cause, and through a sound multi-agency approach, was able to implement a programme suitable to all.

Ellon Police Officers frequently received complaints regarding the behaviour of young people, in particular in the satellite villages where regular Police presence couldn't be maintained. Complaints ranged from annoyance to vandalism, to under age drinking.

One local community Police Officer linked into the Community Councils, Community Education Department, Youth Link (Scotland), Health Promotions, Aberdeenshire Council and other appropriate bodies - including most importantly, the local youth.

This resulted in the more substantive youth problems being quickly identified. Through discussions, shortfall in service provision was established as were the desires of the youth. Networking this way allowed a programme to be prioritised based on area needs, breaking down barriers ensuring the appropriate professional help. In addition, involving the youth from the outset made them also accept ownership of the problem.

Drop in type centres were identified and developed, and in one area, the physical structure for this was provided by a local business as nothing existing could be found. This particular solution arrived in August 1998 and was named by the youth as "Zone 98". Local retailers provided soft drinks and eats on a sale or return basis, allowing the youth responsibility, not only for the management of the premises, but also for the associated finances.

Efforts were made to replicate this concept in the other areas - with the youth becoming the driving force. They embarked on fund-raising ventures, including a sponsored abseil down a local 150 ft monument and a 'Blues'n Twos' disco involving most of the local Police staff.

This process continued and Zone 98 was again created in three other villages.

The project was evaluated by a BA (Hons) student whose findings highlighted the provision an asset to the communities, serving the youth well.

Whilst perhaps some way off yet in finding solutions to all youth issues in this Police area, this inter-agency project developed sound relationships ensuring greater lines of communication. The approach strengthened understanding and respect between partners and appears to have successfully reduced incidents of youth disorder throughout the area in general.

Evaluation Research Project  
Into  
A pilot youth project in Tarves  
Aberdeenshire

This was in Conjunction with  
Tarves Millennium Committee and  
Ellon Community Education Department

**This evaluation is part of a larger piece of work which was aimed at research into youth provision in the rural village of Tarves, Aberdeenshire.**

**The first comments from the respondents were about their views of the level of success. This was measured by the effect the youth provision has made on the community and met needs of the youth people.**

**When asked if they felt that the youth provision had made a difference to the community, the respondents replied that their initial concerns had not been met but that it had been successful.**

**"It has been a great success"  
"Users not being any problem as first thought"**

**As a community it was felt that the young people were now doing something for themselves and working in the community.**

**"Youth doing something for themselves"  
"Working in the community".**

**On the other hand there was a comment from one respondent that he did not know that there was a drop-in centre and that he had not noticed any difference to the community with its establishment. The fact that the provision was available for four evenings per week it was felt that this was benefit to the community but especially to its young members.**

**"Younger ones have somewhere to go"**

**It was also highlighted that because of the provision, the young people were becoming more active about the village. In a way they had never been given the opportunity through the provision. This has improved relationships between the adults and the Police, which in turn have broken down barriers between them. It was also brought to light by respondents who were neighbours of the cabin and the expected noise level was no more than normal. They were used to cars picking up from school activities. Cars were not an issue for this age group.**

**When asked about the way in which the provision addressed the concerns of the community the responses from the respondents were as follows;**

**"Reduced call out for Police related to youth crime"  
"Community Council have recognised the group and given them status".**

**The provision has helped the Police to have a handle and a social way to approach the young people of the Community. Through the Community Council, the Community Officer for Grampian Police has been able to support the provision and is happy to do so because of his role of involvement. Because of this involvement they were always happy to welcome the Police into the provision, which had not been possible before.**

**At first the location of the provision was concern for the community. The primary school parents had for a long time been trying to get young people out of the school grounds at night time and here was a building being put into the school grounds to encourage even more young people to congregate there.**

**"Location upset parents "**

**On the other hand, parents of teenagers encouraged the provision because it allowed their young people to be out of the home and off the streets in a safe and supervised environment. They made the following comments;**

**"The kids are off the street"**

**"Young people are safe and being looked after".**

**Even though the provision is supervised at all times, it is a place that the young people want to be. When it opened it was the young people who arranged the interview for a youth worker. Having made the choice for themselves, in turn this has made an impact on its success.**

**Another area of concern that was highlighted was the increased number of young people passing the homes of local residents whose houses look onto the provision. When these respondents were asked the question and allowed to give their views, it seemed that at first they feared that it would cause some inconvenience on a day to day basis. But this does not seem to be the case as illustrated by the following comments;**

**"They pass my door without any hassle"**

**"It's quieter now on the, main street"**

**The local residents have agreed that the provision has been an asset to the community and their initial concerns now are minimal.**

**When the respondents were asked if the provision provides a safe environment and a safer community, it was noted that the community members had a peace of mind. There was still an element of `drop-in centre for drop-outs" but this was through lack of knowledge about what happened within the building.**

**The Community Council had noted that the Police were to being called out so often to the village and this gave confidence to the local community, but there would always be some residents who would like to see the Police there all the time, which in these days of service restriction would not be possible. Therefore the Police having to spend less time in this village helps them to resource their manpower elsewhere. When the subject is personal safety then that would take on a research project of its own.**

**In conclusion, the findings were that the provision was an asset to the community and that it served the young people well. There was also an element that did not understand the concept of the provision. This is an area that could be developed with the community as a whole to break down the stigma of the `drop in' concept. With this in mind, the young people should be encouraged to take part in more community involvement both political and**

**social to raise the respect of the community.**

**With this view as to not let the provision grow stale, there should be more development work between the young people and youth workers. There is a danger that because the project is open four nights a week that it just repeats itself and does not develop forward taking the young people with it.**

**Further research would be needed to gauge the views of the users and take up the challenge of developing the provision from the initial pilot project to a purpose built centre for the young people of Tarves.**

# ***Report***

## **Problem Orientated Policing Young People Police Issue or Social Concern**

**Presented by**

**Police Constable G-eorge A Sall**

**February 2001**

## **PROBLEM ORIENTATED POLICING**

### **YOUNG PEOPLE - POLICE ISSUE OR SOCIAL CONCERN?**

This presentation relates to youth issues in the more rural areas of Ellon and is connected to the Grampian Police Strategic Intentions which state,

***" We recognise it is the right of every individual to live in safety, free from crime and social disorder."***

I was officially introduced to the principles of Problem Orientated Policing in May 1999. This I found was not a new concept but a return to common-sense policing.

My first true introduction to the concept of Problem Orientated Policing was actually when I discovered the philosophy of Community Orientated Policing whilst " surfing the net" back in 1998,

to para phrase Paul Walters the Chief of Police for the Santa Ana Police Department, ***"the problem solving approach to policing permits credible relationships to develop based on mutual trust and co-operation between community members and the Police."***

The heart of the POP approach is the concept that police must become more responsive to the causes rather than merely dealing with the results of crime.

***"It is easier to maintain a healthy Community than to treat one which has become ill"***

This has been a very ambitious undertaking but one I'm sure you will agree is of vital importance.

Ellon Officers receive numerous complaints regarding the behaviour of young people. These complaints range from annoyance to vandalism, to under age drinking.

As the Community Liaison Officer, I adopted the multi-agency approach to dealing with the perceived problems relating to youth issues. I have linked in with the relevant Community Councils, Community Education Department, Youth Link (Scotland) Health Promotions, Aberdeenshire Council and other relevant bodies.

The purpose of such collaboration was to develop the more substantive common understanding of the youth problems in the Ellon Section and to analyse which, if any, intervention/diversion would be successful with which grouping of young people and their community.

Networking in this way allowed me to prioritise areas based on need and broke down barriers in order to gain inter-professional respect. To help to understand the concerns of the youth in the wider Ellon Area and so as to be able to fully understand the problems caused by youths and those problems experienced by young people, I took it upon myself to research all the issues concerning young people and their community.



The Police based in Ellon are responsible for the burgh and thirteen settlements. At first glance Ellon appears to be a wealthy area. It has benefited a great deal from the oil industry and related services. Whilst the area does not have the high levels of social and economic disadvantage experienced in some areas of Aberdeen, there are indications that issues such as the gradual decline of full time job opportunities, the growth of part time and short term contracts and the social isolation felt by young people, especially in outlying areas, brought on by poor public transport to and from communities and the lack of suitable local facilities where they could meet with their peers and develop creative activities in their leisure time.

Ellon Academy has 1584 students of which only 674 reside within the town, a surprising 910 live in the rural areas.

#### THE PROBLEMS WITH YOUTH:

Many people in the local communities view groups of youths as being frightening and blame them for graffiti and nuisance behaviour. To some people three or four youths sitting on a park bench or at a bus stop appear intimidating. This can affect everyone's quality of life and causes conflict between the generations.

Aberdeenshire Council traditionally provide play equipment for younger children. They often spend vast sums repairing damage following abuse from older youths. Complaints about youths congregating near to shops and other community buildings or playing ball games among houses or cars, are frequently reported to us at Ellon.

These are situations which are time consuming and difficult to resolve. 'No Ball Games' signs are put up but can they be enforced? The problems become exaggerated and the public expect enforcement of the rule but the cause of the problem has been ignored.

We are called to deal with these problems but often are ineffective in providing long term solutions. The short term solution of moving the youths on is not effective as they merely move back as soon as the Police have left. This process does no more than frustrate everyone involved. These conflicts can escalate and result in more serious offences against people and property.

Young people resent being seen as a problem and often consider themselves as the victims. They complain about lack of facilities and often wish to be involved in finding solutions to the problems.

Hanging around is now recognised as being part of the growing up process. If we do not cater for this need to hang out by offering, in consultation with young people, suitable locations and structures then young people will continue to frequent places not intended for this purpose. Young people need to socialise and become integrated into the communities. If we do not facilitate this process we may be storing up problems for the future.

To enable me to understand fully the concerns of young people I studied several books published by the National Youth Agency. As a result of my studies, I discovered that youth crime prevention can actually be divided into sub-categories;

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Situational Crime Prevention: This actually denotes work where changes are made to the young persons physical environment to reduce opportunities to commit crime. This includes improving street lighting etc.

Social or Community Crime Prevention: This denotes work which aims to change the attitudes, behaviour and motivation of young people, adults and professional workers like the Police and people in the wider community, thus reducing the likelihood of criminal activity through personal and social development of young people. By this I mean steering young people into more socially productive form of behaviour and hopefully giving them the incentive to reject criminal activities for themselves.

Social or Community Crime Prevention can range from preventative work through diversionary or interventionist work to activities which focus on skills enhancement and community involvement.

My understanding of the principles of Problem Orientated Policing have meant that I have concentrated my time on preventative work. I also learned that nationally youth crime cost an estimated **one billion pounds** to public services per year. This figure came from the Audit Commission Youth Report.

Having built and developed a background knowledge of youth issues and concerns, I would be able to fully harness the skills and expertise offered by Youth Workers and other bodies involved in youth issues.

Local knowledge indicated that the main areas of concern in relation to youth issues within the Ellon section; were Tarves, Pitmedderi, Balmedie as well as Ellon and I have been utilising the POPS ethos in those areas.

## ***TAR VES***

My inaugural move towards the POPs ethos was in Tarves. This came about due to the high number of times the Police were required to provide passing attention as a result of youth annoyances. There was also a number of vandalism calls to that area.

Through my involvement with the Tarves Community Council I built up a local network of contacts and through this realised that within Tarves there were only two uniformed youth organisations whose numbers had fallen dramatically, yet the village had 144 young people of Academy age. Over a period of time I came into contact with numerous young people within the village. Meetings were held with the young people who were full of negative remarks about the village.

The problem at this stage was how to turn the negative feelings of the young people around and make them feel more positive about their lives and about the environment in which they live.

Young people themselves identified there was a problem and with the help of a Youth Worker and Tarves Millennium Group, it was agreed that the young people were in need of a youth meeting place.

The problem was where to locate it.

This recognition of the problem and ownership of the solution are important and young people should be involved at every stage of this process.

The local halls and primary school were approached but none could offer continuity for the youths as a meeting place.

The community agreed to a free standing independent structure being introduced, but were negative about the eventual siting of the structure, "Not in my back yard " was a regular response. However, several locations were discussed and eventually it was agreed to site the structure within the grounds of the primary school.

Once the site was agreed the race was on to raise money to obtain a suitable portacabin. The young people arranged various fund raising events which included abseiling down a nearby 150ft monument.

Due to the amount of effort and enthusiasm the young people were putting into the initiative the local Heritage Group stepped in and offered match funding.

For my part, I organised a "Blues `n Twos" disco in the village hall. The main purpose of this was to break down any remaining barriers there may have been with the young people. More importantly to show the Community that Grampian Police were committed to supporting the project.

I arranged for an Ellon supermarket to supply soft drinks etc on a sale or return basis. The Multi Agency approach on this occasion actually meant that the local Aberdeenshire Councillor and the Chairman of the Community Council were persuaded to act as door stewards and floor sweepers for the evening, also proving to the young people the approachability of officials.

R B Farquhar were approached and the sale of a second hand unit was agreed, due to the particular use the unit was to be put to the price was lowered. Aberdeenshire Council granted planning permission and eventually the foundations were laid and the young people provided the labour force.

On Saturday 1 August 1998 the cabin arrived and was placed on its final resting place.

***The Aims*** of the project were to initiate a local youth development in Tarves whereby teenagers and young adults were not only the driving force behind the project, but were encouraged to be responsible for its joint management in partnership with local adults.

One area where this was achieved was the recruiting of the youth worker attached to the centre. A panel of young people were provided with guidance on how to carry out an interview, what questions to ask and the type of response to look for. They then interviewed the prospective candidates for the post and made the eventual selection without adult intervention. This exercise provided the young people involved with a valuable insight into employment interview techniques and what prospective employers require from the interviewee. Being allowed to be involved with the selection procedure has also made an impact on the success of the project.

*The Objectives* were to provide a~ youth drop-in / information facility for Tarves. To develop the project in a way that would promote the positive role of young people within the community, especially in terms of actively encouraging members to manage the project and decide about programmes and activities which reflect their interests and concerns. To develop the management committee to maintain the running and upkeep of the project within the health and safety guidelines.

A. lack of understanding by some members of the community meant there was an element of, "Drop-in for drop-outs". So to break down the stigma attached to the "drop-in" concept the young people renamed the project and "ZONE `98" was born!

The centre is open four nights per week and has an average attendance of thirty young people ranging in age from 11 to 17. and is such a success the Community Council has recognised its importance and this has given it status within the community.

The provision has helped Grampian Police to have a handle and a social way to approach the young people of Tarves. We have been able to, through Zone `98, build a relationship which stretches far beyond the confines of the building.

The provision is a dynamic asset to the Community which provides a safe environment for young people to build confidence, self esteem and an environment which lets young people say what they think. This in turn helps to create a safer community for all.

The Police are no longer required to attend to as many calls in Tarves now as a result of the improved relationship between the local adults and young people. During the period 6 February 2000 until 6 February 2001 there were only 8 youth annoyance incidents raised for Tarves and these related mainly to a personality clash between a group and an individual youth. This drop in incidents has enabled the Police to concentrate resources elsewhere. Thus giving a new feeling of confidence to all.

A BA (Hon) Student recently carried out an evaluation research project on Zone `98

The findings were that the provision was an asset to the community and that it served the young people well although there was an element within the village that didn't understand the concept of the provision.

Zone `98 is one concept which has worked for a particular community in resolving some common problems. It must be stressed that it is more effective to use several approaches at the same time than to rely upon one.

## **PITMEDDEN**

With this in mind I was aware that the community in Pitmedden were experiencing wide ranging problems and in particular issues concerning a small but resourceful group of young people. Police were regularly required to provide passing attention and take complaints of vandalism, the Community Council had also highlighted issues relating to young people.

The easy answer would have been to have located a cabin in the village and replicate Zone `98, but would this have worked? probably not.

The first stage of initiating a way of finding a possible solution was to organise a series of work shops in order to let the community of Pitmedden discuss issues relating to the teenagers living within the village of which there are approximately 73 currently attending Ellon Academy.

The workshops were jointly organised by the Udney Community Council, Community Education Department and myself.

Leaflets were distributed to every house hold highlighting the dated of the workshops, posters were put up and intimation placed in the local press.

Issues highlighted at the workshops included complaints regarding the current public transport system. Either it was too expensive for young people to travel to Aberdeen, journey time was too long also the lack of public transport between Inverurie and Ellon where many of the young people participated in various activities. Parents were heavily relied **upon** for transportation of the young people.

The Workshops gelled the community and motivated them towards self help. It was recognised by those in attendance that it was time to act and to provide opportunities in Pitmedden for teenagers, and that the young people also had an important role to play in the development of Pitmedden.

As a result of the workshops suitable provision has been established by parents in partnership with City Church Aberdeen who had the financial resources to develop a provision supported by the young people.

A disused public toilet block was identified as a possible location for any future youth projects within the village. I obtained the keys from the local authority and arranged for an Architect to draw up plans. Possible funding sources were located but it was agreed that the costs of conversion would have proved too expensive and so the project *has* been put on hold.

## BALMEDIE

Throughout my time working on long term problems of the Ellon Section I was aware of the regular occurrences of youth disorder and vandalism within Balmedie, particularly at or near the Road bus shelter which is the focal point for the youth of the area and for visiting youths from Bridge of Don. During the period 6 February 2000 until 6 February 2001 there were 50 incidents raised relating to youth annoyance calls for Balmedie.

Local residents had to endure noise from the group, footballs being kicked against their property and subsequent damage.

I have spent many hours on foot patrol within the village and through talking with the community and researching the other areas and on doing so I realised that a large proportion of the problems in Balmedie were in fact due to the size of the settlement, the lack of amenities and the fact that educationally Balmedie is split zoned, with the majority of the young people attending Bridge Of Don Academy.

Although village does have a leisure centre, which is operated by a local management committee, due the lack of funding it is only open at certain times and then only for recognised lets.

Over many years the opportunity for Aberdeenshire Council to utilise the planning gain made from the many housing developments was diverted away from youth projects into other areas. What I've discovered in many areas is planning gain put to primary school education with little or no thought given to provision for youth projects.

I first discussed the problems with the Community Council who originally felt it was someone else's problem. Eventually with persistence they accepted that the escalating problems were the responsibility of the community as a whole and not just of the Police.

Various proposals were made including the re-siting or removal of the Eigie Road bus shelter. After consultation with the Public Transport Unit of Aberdeenshire Council and Belhelvie Community Council it was soon realised that neither of these proposals were feasible.

It was however accepted that the only way forward was to provide the young people with accommodation in which to meet.

I introduced the concept of a youth shelter, which is a structure designed to provide for the social needs of youth, a sheltered place to meet, sit and talk. The roof provides shelter from the elements, but having open sides enabling all round visibility, natural policing and safety for users.

### ***The benefits ;***

- It provides a place to go and meet that is non- confrontational
- Facilitates young people's development stage of learning about independence and socialising.
- Provides ownership and pride in their neighbourhood to the young people.
- Provides a constructive rather than a destructive experience.
- Removes a possible first step towards criminality.

For the Community as a whole the benefits are:

- A reduction in damage to property.
- A reduction in crime and the fear of crime.
- provides for enhanced community harmony
- + Children play equipment remain usable.

A member of the Community Education Department is at the moment carrying out a survey of the youth of the area to ascertain how they feel about the provision of a suitable shelter.

The concept has now been adopted by the Community Council who have sourced funding for a shelter in the near future should the young people identify a need for one.

## **ELLON**

Recently there has been a marked increase in disorder among young people in Ellon particularly at or near the Community Centre, large groups of youths often vacate the centre to meet out side, this causes annoyance to the residents of Schoolhill Road due to the increased noise levels, damage to their property and incidents of underage drinking.

I initially arranged a meeting with the young people at the centre and discovered that the main problems were boredom and lack of variety at the centre. From my studies of the subject I came to the conclusion that no matter what facilities are provided young people will always become bored with their environment, and that there are a variety of activities on offer to the young people of Ellon.

The contributing factor to the escalation of youth annoyance is the Aberdeenshire Council " No Smoking" policy which has recently been implemented at the Community Centre. Young smokers have to vacate the premises in order to smoke, they in turn take their friends out where they then remain.

In order to answer the "Nothing to do" allegation I contacted a Peterhead businessman who has agreed to host a monthly youth disco in his hotel and free membership of the Peterhead Snooker club to the young people of Ellon, he has also intimated that he will finance other activities if required.

I discussed this with young people who were very enthusiastic about the proposal. I felt that in order for the discos to succeed there had to be an element of youth participation. It was therefore agreed that the young people should take full responsibility for the discos, from the printing of tickets, advertising through to stewarding the actual events under adult supervision and clearing up afterwards. Giving the young people full responsibility and ownership of the project will improve their self esteem, highlight their positive attributes rather than the negative and will improve their understanding of their role in society.

## CONCLUSIONS

We are a long way from finding solutions to all the youth issues in the Ellon Section, but as a result of the successful inter agency relationship which has been built up, all the various agencies are communicating with each other and we now understand that the role of finding suitable answers to any complex youth issue necessitates each partner contributing a different, but complementary dimension.

Multi agency has strengthened understanding and respect between each member.

The agencies and groups involved with the Zone `98 project in Tarves and the young people who have contributed so much to its success should be congratulated.

This is a positive community asset which has a proven record of reducing incidents of youth annoyance in the area.

We have entered exciting times in the Ellon Section as a result of the Problem Oriented Policing Philosophy in relation to youth issues.

I have adopted a different approach to each area and the development of suitable provision in consultation with the young people being careful not to fall in to the trap of ***"It worked there so it will work here"***:

Each area and each issue should be looked at as being unique.

Young People must be consulted at each level as their involvement is vital to any projects success.

The ethos of Problem Oriented Policing does work and this can be seen in Ellon where it has been a great success . The whole community can see when something is working!

We must build on this achievement and strive to utilising the POP's ethos at every opportunity.