

Greater Manchester Police

'Baits his hook and takes your cash.'

Charles Churchill 1763

Problem-solving Street Robbery

Tony Holt

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Foreword

In many ways, the hardest part of compiling this paper was the selection of the title. The quote "Baits his hook and takes your cash" arose by chance, but admirably describes the modus operandi of robbery.

Throughout history, literature has sought to paint the street robber as a self-justifying, lovable, even romantic rogue. Consider the public' perception of characters such as Dick Turpin and The Artful Dodger.

In modern day reality the truth is a far cry from this fictitious notion. It may go against an age-old adage, but on this occasion I would ask the reader to judge this book by its cover.

The title reflects the callous, insensitive nature of robbery. Obviously all crime is callous in varying degrees but robbery, or better still mugging, not only conjures up, but actually exudes lawlessness.

1 The Greenheys BCU within the South Manchester Division of The Greater Manchester Police fully recognises its lamented premiership position in the robbery league. After all, this certainly isn't the first time this policing area has been the focal point for concerns over the existence of violent crime. Inner city rioting and disorder in the early 1980's and more recently, the manifestation of a violent gang style culture has impacted heavily on both the police and community.

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Yet still, as signified by the regeneration of the areas of Hulme and Moss Side within the BCU, and portrayed as "The phoenix rising from the flames," the area has learned to adopt and overcome.

This paper signifies the endeavour and determination of the Greenhey's Police, its partners and its community to combat the plague of robbery. It reiterates the development and innovation of policing attitudes towards problem-solving and a willingness to progress in partnership. It does not offer excuses nor defences, and it does not seek to level blame. In essence, it describes and evaluates, for the benefit of other practitioners, real police activity in response to a real robbery problem.

Clearly the plaudits for this paper could go to the many members of the BCU (Basic Command Unit) who participated in the actions and operations, but this document would never have come to be had it not been for the innovation and ability of one Crime Intelligence Analyst. Well done Tony.

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I am indebted in particular to Sergeant's Vinny Jones and James Liggett for their assistance with staff allocation and data collection.

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Executive Summary

Part one provides an overview of the demography of the Greenheys BCU, putting the area into context locally and nationally.

The high media profile given to the BCU on public interest issues including 'gang related shootings' by local and national press often detracts public attention away from good day to day work practices of officers engaged in crime reduction strategies against volume crime. Examples include the reduction in domestic burglary through the introduction of a dedicated resource.

Concepts and the SARA (*Eck and Spelman 1987) standing for Scanning Analysis Response Assessment. The model is used in a problem-solving approach on the BCU.

The spatial overview of the Manchester area, and the Division within which the BCU lies, seeks to show the concentration of offending within the thematic area addressed in this report.

The BCU robbery problem is addressed from a theoretical framework which advocates looking at the victims, offenders and location.

Operation Pirgos 1 & 2 focus on the impacts of strategies. The Operation was focused on the area of 'land use' most prone to robbery namely the University areas south of Manchester. The first phase covered four weeks from the start of the new academic term, phase two looked at the last two weeks of term before Christmas 2000.

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1 Introduction

Overview

The area of Manchester just south of the City centre is alive with a cosmopolitan mix of culture and business. This is set against a multi million pound investment backdrop from Local, Central and European Governments. The area covered by the Greenheys Sub Division (BCU) is 4.023 sq, kilometres. Its boundaries are formed by the Mancunian Way A57 (M) to the north, Wilbraham Road to the south and Withington Road and Upper Brook Street to the east.

Local Action Partnerships (*LAPS*), which developed through the requirements in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 are: Moss Side and Hulme, Rusholme and Fallowfield, Whalley Range and The Universities (*ALL*)

Within the LAP area boundaries are the following key centres:

- ❖ The Manchester Royal Infirmary,
- ❖ St.Mary's Hospital,
- ❖ The Dental Hospital.
- ❖ University of Manchester,
- ❖ Manchester Metropolitan University,
- 3 University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology.
- ❖ Manchester Business School

- ❖ The Royal Northern College of Music.
- ❖ The Manchester Grammar School,
- ❖ Manchester City Football Club.

Together these organisations attract 50,000 students during term time and 30,000 football supporters during home football games. This, set against the resident population of 46,374* (*based on mid - 1998 census update), results in large temporal changes demographically during each year. Also important to note are the bi-annual Eid religious festivals held around the first quarter of the year for the local muslim community-This festival is focussed around a busy arterial road link into Manchester City centre where some 80 restaurants serving mainly Eastern food are concentrated. These individual events often attract some 10,000 people each from all over the United Kingdom.

Such a concentration of diverse groups of people in a geographically small area generates a large market place of potential victims for 'criminal business' within and adjacent to the BCU.

Routine policing problems are much the same as in any other large city. There are compounded issues locally based, that have fed into everyday crime. A major consideration is the propensity of firearms criminality in the BCU and neighbouring areas. These crimes have given rise to high profile media publicity in the past particularly the 1980's and 1990's and have been a considerable factor in abstraction of skilled Detectives from the BCU onto protracted murder enquires.

"Gang culture" adds to public perception of crime and increases 'fear of crime'.

Analysis of offenders shows offending trends have moved away from historical crime on the BCU- such as burglary ! drug dealing, to more opportunistic crime like robbery and theft from vehicle. The 'ready money' of robbery being particularly appealing.

Conceptualisations of practitioners proffer that robbery raises significant sums of money quickly, thus making it a more efficient and attractive crime than crimes involving a greater level of preparation and execution.

All of these issues have contributed to an exponential rise of street robbery (mugging) on the BCU.
Put into perspective, the BCU recorded, between

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clearly a long-term, strategic-problem oriented approach is now advocated by all stakeholders.

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The purpose of the research and policing evidenced in this paper was to apply the Problem Solving' * (*as advocated in *Beating Crime* (HMIC 1998) and **Safety in numbers* (Audit Commission 1999) approach to crime reduction within the BCU between the 18th, September 2000 — 15th December 2000 focusing on robbery.

Aims:

- 1, Crime reduction in partnership,
 2. Community reassurance.
 3. Effective use of stop search powers.
 - 4, Develop standard product.
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Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework is based on the following principal's extracted from 'Not rocket science' by Tim Read and Nick Tilley. The points where applied were possible to the problem solving approach.

- *'Using data to establish the existence and extent of a problem, to analyse its nature and source, to plan intervention measures to reduce it and to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the selected response. In addition, identifying if the interventions have worked, produced effects in the expected way and whether there have been significant (positive or negative) side effects.'*
- *Draw on findings of existing research to inform data analysis and choices of intervention measures.*
- *Apply lateral thought to develop innovative solutions including partnerships.*
- *Use feedback to adjust, expand, abandon and maintain initiatives.'*

(*Read/Tilley 2000)

The 'Problem Solving' process is largely based around the **SARA** * Eck and Spelman (1987) model. This relates to Scanning, Analysis, Response, **and** Assessment. as detailed on the following page.

SARA model

Scanning. (problem)

Identify scope and nature of Robbery problem on the BCU, focusing on Fresher period 18.9.00 — 13.10.00 and up to 15.12.00

Analysis. (Cause)

Large Market place, growth crime locally and nationwide.

Response. (Tactic/Treatment)

Identify causation issues to focus service delivery

Assessment. (Output)

Strategic analysis of scope of problem giving options for intervention.

(Result claimed)

Based on Cost **Benefit** Analysis, Brand and Price (2000) model is used throughout this paper and when applied to Op Pirgos 1 & 2 showed:

- 1. Sept-Oct 2000 Not significant.
No change in cost effective analysis of student return leading to reassessment and tactic changes.*
- 2. Dec 2000 Highly Significant $P < 0.01$*

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The last twelve months (January — December 2000) has seen an increase in assaults on victims after property has been handed over. This has been exacerbated by offenders holding victims hostage whilst monies are withdrawn from cash and credit cards. Sadly one foreign student was knifed to death during a robbery in 1997.

To gauge public opinion on the BCU within the area covering the Universities, a survey was designed*, (*Holt 2000 appendix 2) This included questions about 'perception of crime levels'. One in ten people were asked to complete the survey, during the morning and afternoon; 19 questions were included. The total sample included 100 people.

The respondents appeared representative of the BCU population. Uniformed Police officers were used to conduct the survey, this clearly has certain limitations.

The specific issue of public 'Fear of Crime' was addressed by asking the following questions.

'If you were to rate your personal fear of crime' whilst using this area of Manchester compared to other areas, how would you describe it?

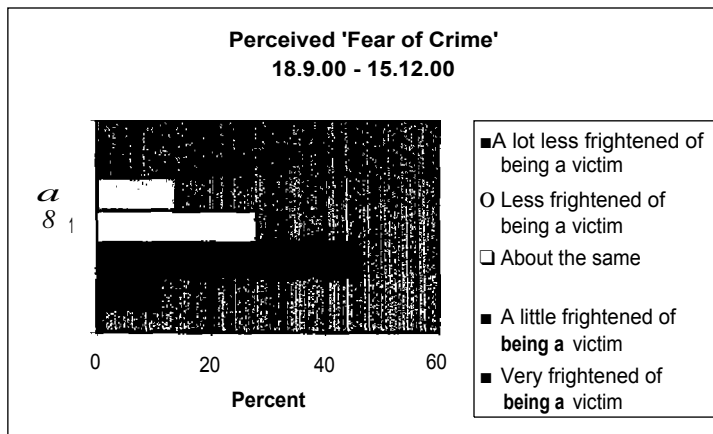


Fig 4.

Interestingly the same people also thought that there was a 53.65% chance in 100 of being the victim of a violent crime and 18.64% in 100 of being a victim of crime involving firearms in this area of Manchester. In actual fact 21% per 100 recorded crimes involved violence in the BCU and firearms used in crime is 5% per 100 between the 18.9.00 — 15.12.00

Looking at public views of the size of crime rates for the country as a whole over the last 2 years, the same people were asked if there was more, less or about the same in their opinion.

Location

BCU demography plays a significant part in the cause of robbery; it is reasonable to consider if the centres for study were not here, the market place would be reduced.

Lateral intervention measures such as partnership working with university security staff and architectural liaison have been put in place to design out crime where possible. Partnership is a key component in the long-term solution to this problem.

Multi-agency work has led to structural changes in key areas such as removal of canopies providing cover. However, the offending has readjusted to peripheral areas (Cold spots), areas previously suffering less crime concentration. Examples of good practice have seen quality CCTV systems put in place and bids submitted to expand the cover of blind spots along the main arterial routes.

On a macro level, greater understanding of the demographics and physical aspects of the problem area have been helped by the BCU and Local Action Partnerships (LAPs). This has informed the research and police approach to the issue addressed in this report.

The fact remains that in the University area, opportunities for crime still exist aplenty.

Sampson (1986) found that property, racial composition, high structural density, high levels of urbanisation and

1 age of victim all had significant effects on rates of theft and violent crime.

There are particular aspects which relate directly to the area discussed in this report, in particular the transient nature of the population and the concentration of so many students into a relatively small area. Indeed, Manchester is a city which houses amongst the highest concentration of students in the United Kingdom.

The BCU presently shows highly significant increases of theft from vehicle and robbery ($p < 0.01$) over the last twelve months.

Micro level locations *Eck and Weisburd (1995) can be as small as an area immediately next to an automatic cash machine or as large as a local shopping centre. Sherman et al. (1989) found that certain crimes were even more concentrated-all robberies occurring at 2.2% of places, vehicle crime at 2.7% based on 323,979 calls for service to the Minneapolis Police Dept.

1 Spatial analysis of crime was used as a key tool in understanding trends. However Brantingham and Brantingham (1993) concluded that there is a growing awareness that, because of the high variability in what is called a crime, in the people who commit crimes, and in the sites and situations in which criminal events occur, solutions to crime problems will often have to be focused and specialised.

This sits well with a problem-solving approach on the BCU.

Partnership has developed well in the BCU with bodies such as the students union, for example raising the profile of crime issues within the student community. Schemes like safe storage for property are offered for student's property within the BCU. Regular presentations are given to students by dedicated university liaison officers to heighten awareness of personal safety issues; year on year, attendance levels have increased.

Publicity campaigns have focused on street robbery recently, sponsored by central government money. In Greater Manchester the initiative carries the tag of Operation Hawk. Evaluation of this project is not within the remit of this paper. An example of good practice was the publishing of a series of robbery awareness advertisements in student journals, This project was driven by the student/police partnership, with the graphics being designed by students and the text compiled by the BCU.

The issue of public awareness of the Operation Hawk campaign was however put to the public sample of 100 using the University area during the questionnaire phase of this evaluation. The issue was to assess the impact value of local Policing operations; the results are shown in fig 8.

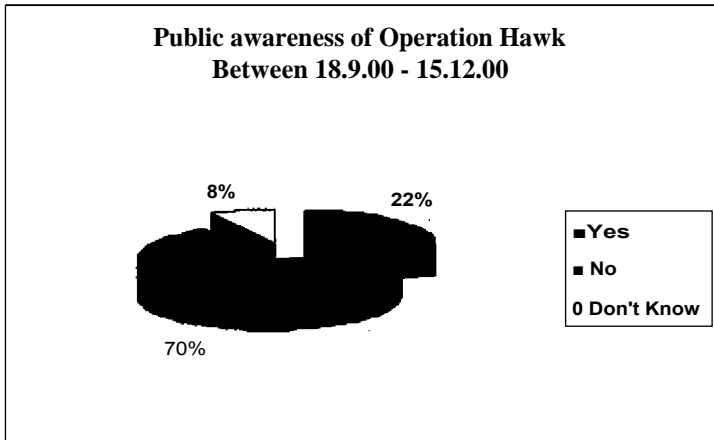


Fig 8.

It should be noted that with the passage of time, and the continued growth of the student/police partnership one would expect an increase in public awareness within the BCU.

The concept of virtual community (partnership) is actively pursued by the Police on the BCU with all partners suffering these problems.

It will take time and many readjustments to see the benefits of this approach.

Further in-depth analysis will have to be undertaken to see the cost benefits,

Offending

Robbery offenders can be categorised *Gabor (1987)

- + Professional Robber
- * Opportunist Robber
- Addict Robber

It is relevant to consider how the offenders interact with victims to bring about crime. This is referred to as routine activity theory. This was well put by Felson and Clarke (1998). They stated that for a crime to take place you must have:-

1. Victim
2. Offender
3. Lack of capable guardian

Points one and two are self-explanatory. Point three could be anything ranging from street lighting and architectural design, to effective use of transport systems and greater public awareness. These issues are addressed through crime reduction strategies being adopted by the Local Action Partnerships (LAPs). If done well it can have significant impact on robbery type crime.

Prior to pro-active Police responses, within the BCU hypotheses about offenders were used to give a 'pen picture' for operational management.

Key areas were:-

1. *Distance decay* - essentially this is the idea that offenders will commit fewer offences as the distance from their home decreases. (Canter 1990)
2. *Familiarity* - refers to offender's likelihood to offend in areas they are familiar with.
3. *Criminal Range - variants* in distances which offenders will travel to offend, dependant on factors such as, transport, pre planning of offence etc.
4. *Safety zone* - offender's tendency not to commit offences in very close proximity to their homes. (Phillip 1960)
5. *Mental buffers* - offender's psychological representation of areas differs from geographical reality. (Baker 1986)
6. *Temporal changes* - Offending frequently changes over time ie fresher weeks
7. *Types of crime* - certain crimes like assault show less planning than Burglary. (Brantingham 1981)
8. *Circle hypothesis* Offending will occur within a relatively fixed distance from the offender's home. (Canter 1990)

Further hypotheses included,

robbery offenders on the BCU tend to be poor, uneducated and have drugs connections.

- ❖ A significant section has moved from dealing drugs for dealers and gang members into robbery crime.

- + It is easier to rob two or three people than it is to spend hours on the streets in all weathers selling drugs for somebody else.
- There tends to be feelings of increased power and control over their environment as secondary motives.
- + Profits tend to be spent immediately to fulfill short-term gratifications
- + Distance decay and circle hypothesis are evident with marauding offenders based on the BCU.
- + Criminal range and safety zone apply equally to commuting offenders.

The effects which commuting offenders have upon BCU robbery crime is illustrated in a profile of five offenders. Four live outside the BCU. Together they committed 20 robberies during the time frame of this evaluation (18.9.00 — 15.12.00)

M IC3 16YRS	M ICI 17YRS	M ICI 17YRS	M ICI 16YRS	M IC3 15YRS
Marauder	commuter	commuter	commuter	Commuter
Charged	Charged id parade	Charged	Charged	
	Charged id parade		Charged id parade	
Charged	Charged id parade			
Charged id parade		Charged	Charged id parade.	
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Charged id parade Charged id parade			Charged id parade Charged id parade	
	Charged			Charged
Table 1.				

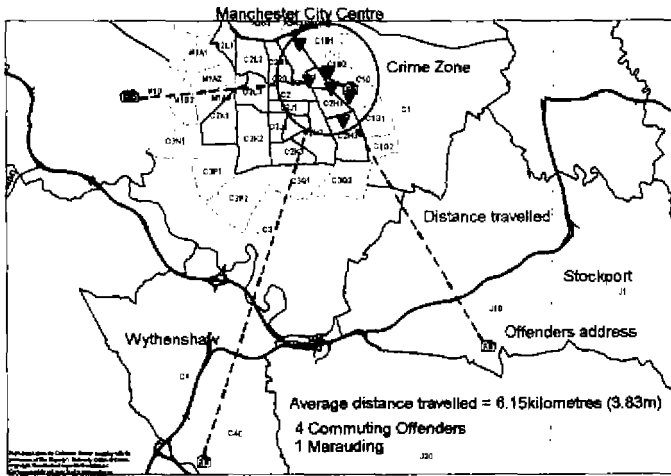


Fig 9.

Spatial profiles show the extent of this offending on a community Fig 9. This graphs the impact of the criminality in table 1. A mixture of commuting and marauding offending.

Whilst we can hypothesis offending theories it is essential to involve partners in the problem solving approach. Lateral offender profiling should be activity pursued during such operations against offenders.

A key issue is the age of the offenders. This emphasizes the punitive limitations with regard to secure custodial accommodation and remands both on bail and in custody. Clearly the sentencing of the offenders is influenced by the amount and type of crime but there becomes a point when because of age, sentencing is limited and remand applications understandably sees a 'make hay while the sun shines' culture amongst young street robbers.

Fresher week 18.9.00 -13.10.00 (Op Pirgos 1) Sec 60

Criminal Justice Public Order Act 1998 was not in force.

Table 2.

Ethnicity	Count	Percent
Other	19	8.67%
White	114	52.05%
Afro Caribbean	66	30.13%
Asian	20	9.13%

	Count	Percent
Male	216	98.63%
Female	3	1.37%
Conviction	142	64.84%
Robbery Conviction	34	15.53%
No Conviction	77	35.16%

Table 3.

THE RESULTS

Total people stopped were **219** of these 6.5 out of 10 had convictions recorded on the Police National Computer (PNC) and 1.5 out of 10 had a Robbery conviction.

The ethnicity breakdown shows correlation with the census breakdown of 66.78% white and 33.22% ethnic populations.

The second pro-active intervention (Op Pirgos 2) had a different focus entirely after reviewing and revising tactics.

Section 60 CJPO authority was in force for a two week period between 1.12.00 – 15.12.00. Officers returned double the records in half the time.

A total of 423 people were stopped.

Ethnicity	Count	Percent
Other	27	6.38%
White	210	49.65%
Afro Caribbean	130	30.73%
Asian	52	12.30%

Table 4.

	Count	Percent
Male	416	98.34%
Female	7	1.66%
Conviction	194	45.86%
<i>Robbery Conviction</i>	45	10.64%
No Conviction	229	54.14%

Table 5.

Again the ethnicity reflects the BCU closely. The convictions and robbery convictions are similar to the first intervention.

It is the opinion of the BCU that the use of Sec 60 stop I search powers under these circumstances had a positive impact on reducing the frequency of, and opportunities for robbery.

Evidenced policing activity in this fashion gives reassurance to the community.

Op Pirgos 2 stop / search played a significant part in the crime reduction achieved.

Op Pirgos 1

18.9.00-13.10.00

Pro-active intervention commenced on the 18.9.00 and lasted four weeks. Its was aimed at first year students attending the University and provided a high profile police presence on and along the arterial route (Oxford Road) into Manchester.

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Presentations were given to student groups of some 750 at a time by police university liaison officers and took into account a wide spectrum of languages. A series of poster campaigns and promotion of crime reduction was undertaken in partnership.

Policing levels were highly visible using high visibility jackets. Stop / search powers gave a return of 219 (Section 60 powers were not authorised and officers effecting searches required "reasonable cause")

Staff briefings were clear. No defined geographical areas were allocated to individual officers.

This type of high profile police operation had been conducted yearly in similar fashion.

COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS

Evaluation was stringent based on Cost Benefit Analysis* Brand / Price (2000) and crime reduction significance testing.

Performance was measured in terms of cost to the Police and Society based on any performance improvement or otherwise on the same time frames the previous year.

In previous years crudely operated performance management was evident.

Subjective views of success claimed by staff previously had not been sufficiently tested.

The reality of this new methodical approach was that Pirgos 1 was, in terms of cost benefit analysis, a failure and therefore not significant.

Same rates of loss from the previous year was considered

Input Cost Policing Operation £	69,641.44
Outputs	
Cost of Crime Sep 1999	£ 1,263,490.00
Cost of Crime Sep 2000	£ 1,592,510.00
Net Economic Benefit	- 329,020.00
Significance	Not Significant

Review and revision of process issues were undertaken.

Pirgos 2
1.12.00 — 15.12.00

Aim

Provide Community reassurance through high profile targeted policing reducing crime in partnership.

Specific areas for improvement were

- **New Focus on Critical Intensity Zones.** New small areas of land use were identified spatially and temporally to allow deployment of resources at key times and to highly specific locations.
- **Ownership.** Each officer was briefed by a nominated supervisor for their tour of duty and given responsibility for a specific area of land identified above.
- **Improved supervision.** Only one sergeant had overall control as the 'nominated officer'. This gave clear command and control of resources.
- **Innovation in analysis.** New techniques were adopted to give the operation the desired 'focus' to produce critical intensity zones.
- **Stringent testing,** Cost benefit analysis and significance testing allowed the results to stand rigorous audit.

The area of the BCU covering the University / Nightlife area was sub divided into specific sectors referred to as P1 — P14 beats.

Processes outlined to bring this intervention to successful outcome have been, specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time bound (S.M.A.R.T)

It must be stressed that long term problem solving must continue to evolve to see BCU robbery trends slowed and reversed.

Conclusion

- Focused intervention working in partnership can and has played a part in achieving the aims of robbery policing operation's on the ECU,
- ❖ Opportunity exists for those who are open to the view that failure can be good if it is acknowledged.
- ❖ It is an essential aim to involve everyone in the community, pooling ideas to strive for shared goals.
- ❖ Identification of key areas involves difficult and painstaking analysis of detail.
- ❖ Innovation and imagination are needed by all stakeholders to effectively problem solve the diverse issues of street robbery.
- ❖ Intervention measures must be evaluated honestly and open to due audit.
- ❖ The lateral issues affecting ECU's will differ, thus innovative solutions will have to be sought and some bold steps taken.
- ❖ The criminal business of street robbery requires both tactical and strategic assessment.
- ❖ Offender targeting / market profiling I network analysis I demographic analysis will give a true criminal business profile to management.
- ❖ In turn this will give aim and *purpose* to intervention measures.

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Q3

- White
- European
- Afro Caribbean
- Asian
- Oriental
- Specify

Q4

Do you use this area for the purpose of:

- Work
- Study
- Recreation
- Specify

Q5

On average how often over the period of a week do you come to this area?

- Under 8 hrs
- Bet 8-16hrs
- 16-24hrs
- Greater than 24hrs

Q6 What days of the week do you usually find yourself in this area?

MONDAY/TUESDAY/WEDNESDAY/THURSDAY/
FRIDAY/SAT/SUN

Q⁷

What times of the day do you usually find yourself in this area?

- 7am - 3pm
- 3pm - 11 pm
- 11 pm - 7am

Q8 I would like to ask whether you think that the *recorded crime rate* for the **Country as a whole** has changed over the past two years, Would you say there is more crime, less crime or about the same amount (of 2yrs ago)?

- A lot more crime.
- A little more crime.
- About the same.
- A little less crime,
- A lot less crime.

Q9

Similarly do you think that the recorded crime rate for the **City of Manchester as a whole** has changed over the past two years.

- A lot more crime
- A little more crime
- About the same
- A little less crime
- A lot less crime

Q10

If you could focus on the immediate area we are in. Do you think that ***recorded crime for this area*** has changed over the past two years?

- A lot more crime
- A little more crime
- About the same
- A little less crime
- A lot less crime

The next questions will ask you to give your answer out of 100. If you are not sure please give your best guess

Q11

Of every 100 crimes recorded by the Police for this area of Manchester, roughly what number do you think involve violence or the threat of Violence?

A:.....

Q12

Of every 100 crimes recorded by the Police for this area of Manchester, roughly what number do you think involve the use of Firearms?

A:.....

Q13

If you were to rate your *personal fear of crime* whilst using this part of Manchester compared to other areas, how would you describe it?

- Very frightened of being a victim
- A little frightened of being a victim.
- About the same.
- Less frightened of being a victim.
- A lot less frightened of being a victim.

Q14

Are you aware of any Police Operations since September this year to target crime in this area?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know.

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Q15

Are you aware of a campaign called Operation Hawk?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know.

Q16

If you answered 'YES' to either question 14 or 15 Do you consider the Operations have had an impact on crime reduction in this area?

- Very impactive
- Impactive
- No Change
- Little change
- Very little change.

Q17

Do you feel that the Police Service Delivery for this geographical area is:

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- poor
- Very poor

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Q18

As part of the Crime and Disorder Act the Police together with other agencies (Manchester Council 1 Probation / Health / Housing J Education Authorities)are responsible for the fight against crime. Do you consider that agencies other than the Police are playing their respective parts?

- **Yes, always.**
- More often
- About right
- No change
- Less change

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Q19

I would like you to consider the part the justice system has to play in the sentencing of offenders brought before it for crimes committed in this area. Do you think that the sentences handed down by the Crown Court and Magistrates Courts are:

- Much too tough
- A little too tough
- About right
- A Little too lenient
- Much too lenient.

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I would like to thank you for your time in assisting the Police with this survey.