

# Problem Oriented Policing for Hemel Hempstead

## "Visibility with Purpose"

An entry for the Tilley Award 2001 (organisational support category).

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## **PROBLEM:**

In spite of declining officer numbers, Hemel Hempstead is an area with a low crime rate and has seen successive annual reductions in domestic burglary and car crime. However residents were dissatisfied with policing and in particular with levels of visible patrol. The police appeared ineffective when dealing with the anti-social behaviour and activity of youths. This contributed to a feeling of community degeneration and manifested itself in grossly over inflated perceptions of crime and disorder.

## **EVIDENCE:**

- Police Community Partnership feedback.
- Inflated perceptions of crime and disorder at variance with statistical evidence of crime reduction.
- Control room assignment inefficient, resulting in repeated attendance at various locations.
- Congregating youths at shopping precincts intimidated locals by group size and provoked fear through committing minor crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Recruitment crisis, economic migration and replacement of officers seconded from the Met for new police territory.
- Command and Control statistics
- Local Authority information

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<sup>1</sup> 166 Met Officers were seconded to Hertfordshire in 2000 to police the area of the **county** previously covered by the Met. These officers began a **phased** return in April 2001.

## **RESPONSE:**

- Structure of community policing amended to facilitate SARA process in "macro" POP (strategic) and "micro" POP (specific local problems) initiatives.
  - Preliminary *Officer* training conducted, (phase 2 training imminent).
  - Amended call-handling process.
  - Intelligence officers installed in control room.
  - Hot spots identified and addressed through POP.
- + Weekly briefing/debriefing for POP.
- Partnerships enabled provision of CCTV, successful use of harassment legislation.
  - Multi-agency ASBO & ABC (anti-social behaviour contract) seminar arranged.
  - Community Safety Day proposed (September 2001) as initiative for reducing fear of crime.

## **IMPACT:**

- Restructured organisation of policing is capable of meeting established force, divisional and community team objectives.
- Effective proactive response capability replaced a fragmented unfocussed one.
- Increased officer awareness of POP & the array of partners and agencies available to help achieve results, they were encouraged to think laterally and find more.
- Increased satisfaction with policing evidenced by survey results (60% perceived reduction in disorder in "hotspot" area).
- POP initiative has secured commitment for CCTV at a "hotspot" increasing public reassurance.
- The Home Secretary personally praised the efforts of the community team for the work they had done to reduce crime/disorder/anti-social behaviour and for reassuring the public. (APPENDIX 1)

## Introduction:

Inspector Michael Fogarty's drive home from Warwickshire provided time to reflect on what for him had been the highlight of the 1999 Problem Oriented Policing (POP) conference, Superintendent Mike Barton's "POP on the back of a beer mat". He decided during that journey that neighbourhood officers at Hemel Hempstead needed reorganisation and direction. Most importantly they needed to move from the traditional unfocussed local bobby style to a dynamic POP approach.

Having only recently taken charge of the community officers at Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, he was delighted to find that Sergeant Chris Leach had already drafted proposals to restructure those officers into a team adopting POP as its ethos.

The two have since worked together intending to create an effective system of community policing tailored to meet the demands of local residents. Neither officer expected the introduction of a simple concept to be as hard or as encompassing as it transpired to be.

This report focuses on the strategic process of introducing a POP-based Policing model, incorporating the most successful individual initiatives. It includes details of mistakes and successes achieved, as much can be learned from both. The chronological dynamics of change are outlined indicating how quality of policing has improved commensurate with the quality of analysis.

We acknowledge and appreciate the support from senior management, which has been vital for success.



Two handwritten signatures are present. The signature on the left is 'M Fogarty' and the signature on the right is 'C Leach'.

## **SCANNING**

Hertfordshire Constabulary has officer recruitment and retention problems, due to house prices and a London officer salary differential, a problem exacerbated by the phased return to London of 166 Metropolitan officers on secondment.

Hemel Hempstead, a new town, comprises satellite areas with shopping precincts where congregating youths deter local residents from frequenting, affecting trade, and adversely impacting on local quality-of-life.

Surrounding villages have particularly low levels of crime. However, such groups of youths are a concern for residents there also.

Hemel Hempstead is the main town in Dacorum Division operating intelligence led policing. It introduced the first Community Safety Unit (CSU) in the Constabulary dealing with domestic violence, racial, homophobic issues, crime prevention, nuisance and disorder. The unit has information sharing protocols with outside agencies and a partnership ethos. It monitors complaints regarding nuisance made to the local authority not recorded on police computers.

In early 1999, response officers were supported by 18 neighbourhood officers each policing a "beat" on 5 rest-day groups, working hours selected to suit their area.

Annual HQ customer surveys indicated a high level of public satisfaction with crime investigation. However quality-of-life issues did not get the same response with officers repeatedly attending recurring problems.

The control room **at Hemel Hempstead received** calls and despatched resources via Command and Control. This provided management information on the volume of nuisance, integrated with a crime recording system.

The overriding aim of an operator was the removal of incidents from the computer screen by assigning a response wherever possible and finalising a result. Whilst it was possible to deal with calls on the telephone, such action was taken only when time allowed on an ad hoc basis. Officers were often assigned to low priority incidents that were hours old,

On arrival at nuisance incidents the culprits **had** often dispersed, the activity had ceased and the complainant had given up waiting thus ignorant of police attendance. **Repeatedly** attending assignments with no purpose and with no regard for visibility, officers failed to reassure their public.

Whilst crime was falling, public opinion was at variance with statistical **evidence**.

Police Community Partnership (PCP) meetings produced overwhelming criticism of police failure to tackle nuisance youths. Despite low crime statistics, the attendees were vocal in their **annoyance** with anti-social behaviour that was seen as a sign of community degeneration. The police were perceived as having insufficient numbers or time to deal, a contributing factor in the public's inflated view of crime. Those present at PCPs were invited to estimate crime

figures for their area. At the Warners End<sup>2</sup> PCP one audience member thought total crime for the preceding month to be 4,000 when in fact it was 89!

One recurring theme of PCP feedback was failure to do anything about a call, when command and control information suggested that this was not the case. Many people seemed oblivious to police action. PCP audiences provided details for minutes to be sent out.

We were the only officers on Division with any knowledge of POP.

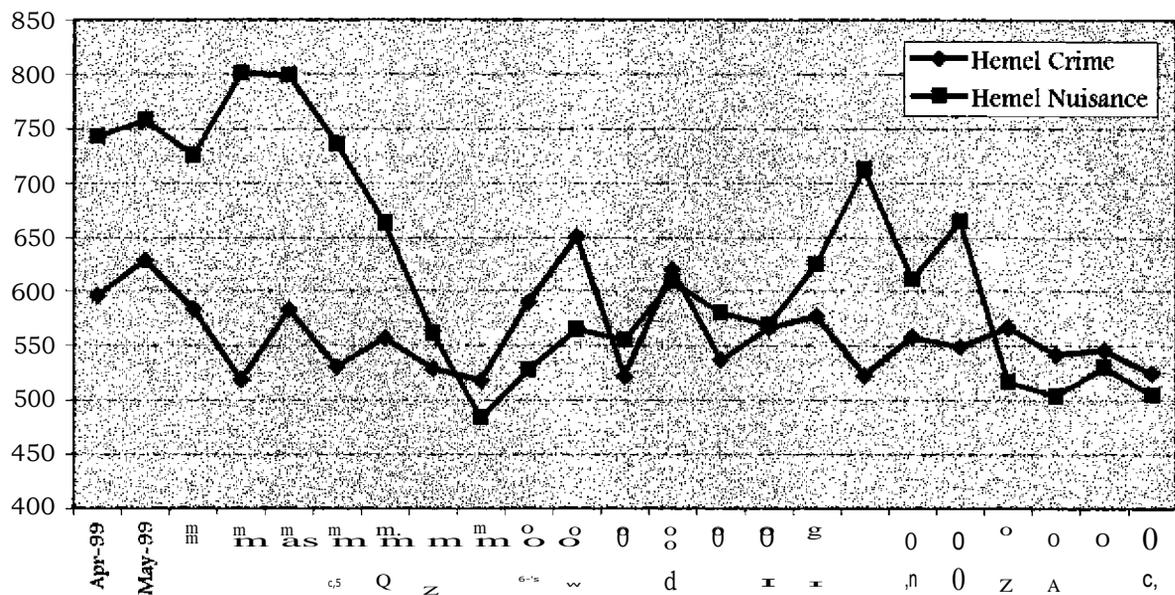
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<sup>2</sup> The Warners End PCP was attended by residents of 4 of the 18 beat areas comprising Hemel Hempstead

**ANALYSIS 1 ("or lack of it?")**

- The term `neighbourhood officer' implies traditional unfocused policing, not well respected by response officers and inconsistent with reducing nuisance.
- 1999 figures showed the total nuisance incidents in Hemel Hempstead exceeded crimes by 16%.<sup>3</sup>

**Hemel Hempstead - Reported Crimes & Nuisance Incidents  
 April 1999 - March 2001**



- Police response to quality-of-life issues did not compare to that effective response to crime.
- + Collation of calls to police and the local authority was needed for a realistic picture of problem areas.
- No proactive capability existed to address nuisance.
- POP was needed to reduce repetitive related and recurring incidents.
- There was a POP training requirement.

<sup>3</sup>1999 Hemel Hempstead crime 6,809, nuisance 7,919

## **RESPONSE 1 ("a valiant attempt?")**

- Neighbourhood officers renamed the Community Team (CT).
- Problem Solving Team (PST), set up July 1999.
- Officers retained existing rest-days.
- One PST officer drawn from each of the 5 rest-day groups to use POP for 10 weeks, tackling quality-of-life issues, then replaced by 5 others (rolling programme) to be assessed following initial 20 weeks.
- Response and control room staff appraised of changes/anticipated benefits cascaded through an information document circulated to supervisors.
- CT instructed to work closely with CSU who liaised with other agencies.
- Basic knowledge of POP provided through one hour's input on training days.

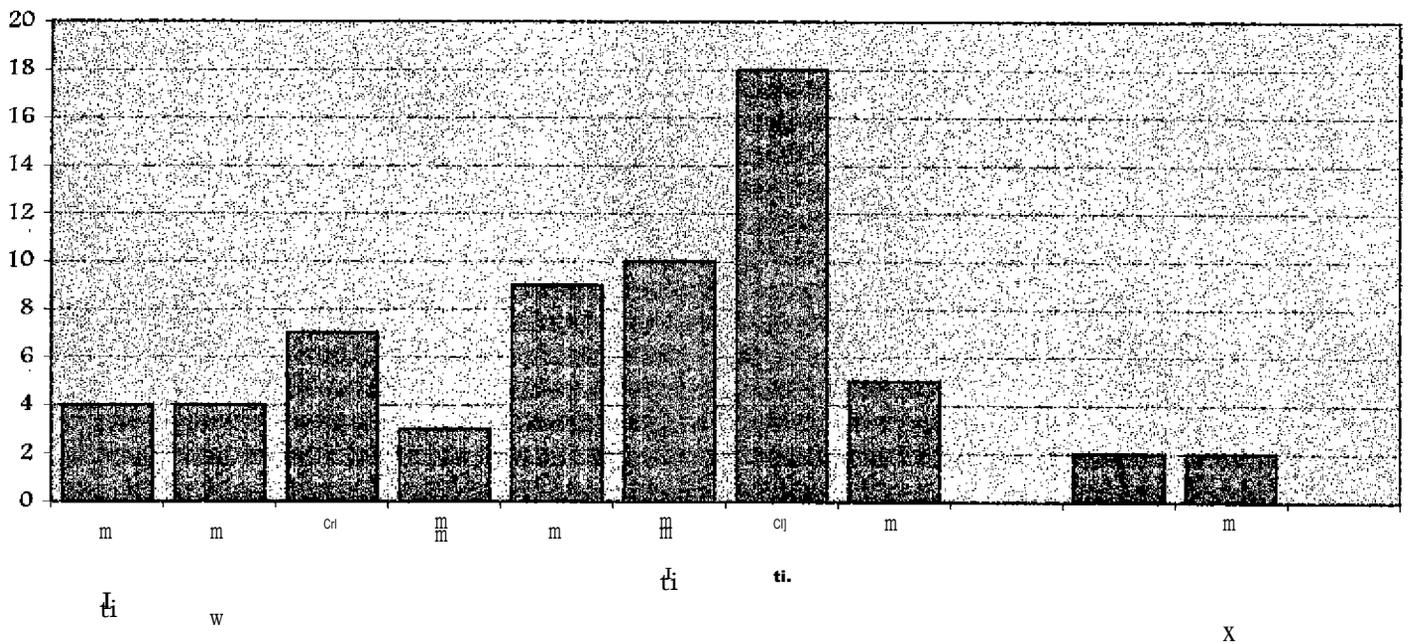
## **ASSESSMENT 1("adisappointment")**

The CT had changed in name only, still being referred to as "Neighbourhoods". An overheard conversation indicated that some officers thought it "would all go back to normal before long". The CT was not functioning as, and therefore was not referred to as, a team.

The first PST had reasonable success in local POP initiatives.

The pick of their SARA forms concerned 225 St Agnells Lane the residence of a domicile traveller. Between May and August 1999, 42 incidents were reported in connection with that address. The PST liaised with the local authority and a residents' group. Warnings were issued via Tenant Services. The result was a reduction to only 4 incidents for the next four months. The long-term result was the removal of the offending tenant and vocal **and** written praise for the police.

Incidents at 225 St Agnells Lane, Hemel Hempstead



That PST was a highly motivated team, which fully embraced the ethos of POP. Their final report ended, "**POP works..... we shall be taking something of value back to our beats**".

Abstractions meant the second PST consisted regularly of just one or two officers. Attempts to deal with problems were made without POP successes. There was a basic lack of POP knowledge because of the time lapse since their limited training.

Work conducted by the first team proved that POP worked at a micro level, but we had not recognised the strategic macro problem and the need to create a framework in which POP could flourish.

Despite reading POP-related articles, documents and presentations emphasising the importance of analysis, we had attached too little importance to it and had not established an objective.

We had failed to adequately analyse the:

- resistance to change of name and function of local officers
- personnel shortages
- areas of anti-social behaviour or public desire for visible patrol
- need to work with CSU and other agencies
- requirement for CT to be at the right place at the right time as opposed to haphazard individual patrol and vehicle allocation to achieve it

- value of integrated IT systems
- control room inefficiency, a root cause of inability to deal with increased demand and prevent unnecessary resource assignment
- public desire for awareness of police activity
- measure of the level of satisfaction and community perceptions in relation to crime and disorder
- lack of understanding of POP

## **ANALYSIS 2 ("we're getting there")**

We returned to a POP analysis at a macro level, to define the problem and respond appropriately to achieve a long-term solution.

At Stoneycroft shopping precinct there was a dramatic rise in reported incidents.

Neighbourhood officers would never be the CT unless they worked as a team and advertised the fact. The CT suffered more abstractions than any department. The shift pattern did nothing to alleviate this; they still worked as individual beat officers.

Close liaison with CSU utilising multi-agency exchange of information protocols and nuisance register resulted in identification of nuisance "hotspots" and problem individuals.

A group of officers in the right place at the right time could be more effective than one local officer.

An additional vehicle was a priority to ensure mobility between problem areas.

The lack of computer equipment hampered thorough interrogation of the integrated IT systems available.

The method of dealing with increasing demand on police resources remained unchanged, despite the lack of additional officers available to respond. A proactive style of policing designed to reduce the overall demand was needed.

An officer on restricted duties conducted an analysis of incidents to differentiate between those requiring Police intervention and those that could be dealt with by other means. His findings showed that conducting telephone call resolution could reduce police attendance for up to 15 incidents per shift. The best times to achieve effectiveness were at 3am and 6pm requiring a maximum of 2 hours officer time.

The process by which control room staff dealt with incoming calls, made it a feature of offender in PAT. Its inefficiency contributed to public dissatisfaction.

The repetitive nature of complaints and matters raised at PCP meetings provided anecdotal evidence. As the number of meetings we attended grew, so did the realisation that dissatisfaction with visible police patrol and nuisance youths was paramount. Low crime figures did not impress.

Effective management of the problem, which was now far clearer, would be impossible without measurement. Anecdotal evidence needed quantifying.

Our training input was not sufficient.

## **RESPONSE 2 ("positive change?")**

- CT reorganised into Hemel East/ Hemel West, (2 groups of 5, working rest-day pattern opposite: each other), rural and town centre teams.
- Officers retained beat responsibility and covered absences of colleagues.
- Teamwork principle.
- Area boundaries also used by Borough Council Tenant Services.
- Changes to the nominal roll, office sign and telephone procedure to emphasise the word Community Team.
- At micro level, POP used at Stoneycroft. Three CT and three response officers formed team addressing the dramatic rise in reported incidents. Working group set up by police. POP-based agenda meant no police resource requirement except attendance at meetings. (APPENDIX 2). Council agreed to install CCTV.
- Police arranged seminar where Mike Rowan (North-Somerset Council Barrister) gave a presentation on ASBOs and ABCs (Anti Social Behaviour Contracts). Several agencies benefited from his experience.
- Agreement for weekly meetings between CSU and CT to exchange information/intelligence.
- CSU undertook to provide 5 "hotspot" areas using stand-alone database collating information from Police and other agencies.
- "Hotspots" to be prominently displayed in control room and main corridor. Marker placed

on Command and Control (staff to treat any calls to them as high priority guaranteeing attendance).

- Nuisance patrol for targeted evenings and weekends.
- Every effort was made to obtain additional vehicle. Fleet mileage was scrutinised and a vehicle located at HQ, which had covered 8 miles in the previous month. A request was made for supply of this.
- Local bus company allowed free travel for officers in uniform.
- New computers and a £4,000 office refit were obtained for CT indicating Senior Management commitment.
- Triage situation allowed effective interrogation of caller, determining whether intervention or referral to CT was required.
- Calls resolved with no need for further action were tagged.
- Call resolution conducted by response officer. This was resisted by response supervisors, but enforced by the Chief Inspector.
- Type of incidents CT would deal with was determined (quality-of-life/repeat victim/crime pattern).
- Formalised procedure for incident response and simple flow-chart produced for control room. (APPENDIX 3)
- IT staff amended software to allow incidents requiring follow-up enquiries to be placed on a list available to CT.
- HQ Corporate Development, was requested to assess customer satisfaction specific to Hemel Hempstead, to evaluate true public perception of policing. The Division offered to pay overtime to conduct telephone survey.
- Superintendent Mike Barton invited to Hemel Hempstead and conducted POP presentation to reinforce previous training.

**ASSESSMENT 2 ("resistance & frustration")**

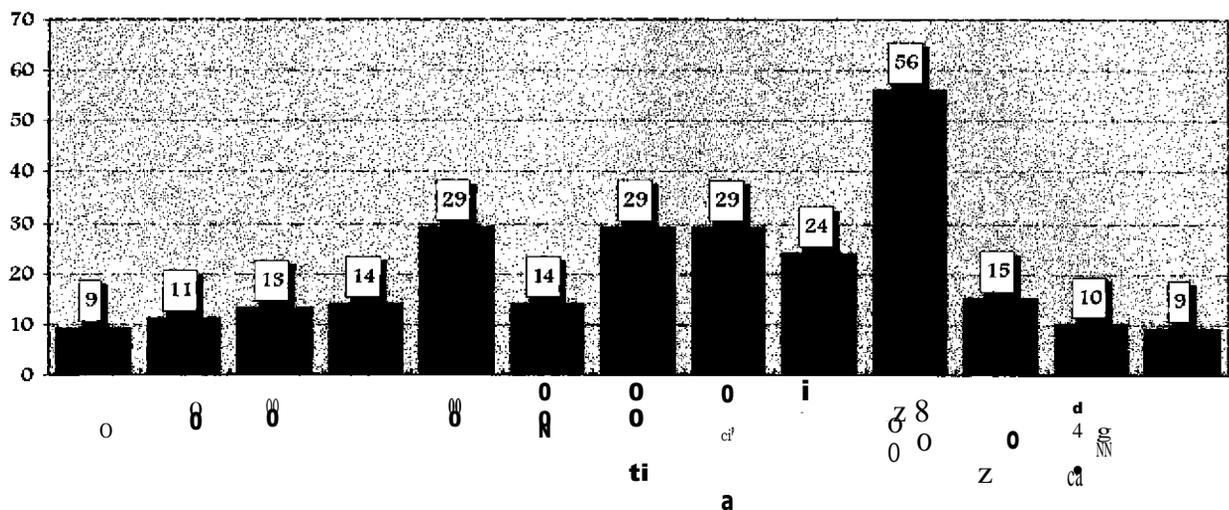
Half the rural CT officers were able to deal with 40 % of the incidents on their area. The other half dealt with only 11%. This had clear implications for response officers. Demography and workload had not been analysed sufficiently. The shift pattern worked by these officers ensured optimum coverage.

Town centre CT officers, working a shift pattern entirely appropriate for a major retail area, were enthusiastic about POP.

Whilst the rest-day pattern of Hemel East and West CT officers ensured seven-day coverage, they retained the ability to determine their own working hours, therefore rarely working as a team. They remained parochial about individual areas, but used the CSU well and forged links with other agencies. Some CT officers with personal agendas resisted change.

Stoneycroft was a micro **POP** success that had an influence at macro level. The decision to introduce CCTV increased public reassurance. Successful use of harassment legislation effectively banned troublesome youths from the precinct. It showed that a group of focussed officers could produce dramatic results.

**Total Incidents - Stoneycroft Shops  
 January 2000 - January 2001**



The CT in its format at that time could not produce such a result.

"Hotspot" software worked on a traffic-light principle, but was defective in that any area with 5 incidents became red with no time constraint. Consequently "hotspot" areas would remain so ad infinitum. Without relevant information to give, meetings between CSU and CT management never happened. The "hotspot" boards remained empty, until one was inserted "Malaga 87 degrees". Without CSU lead the CT did not become its "Operational Arm".

Nuisance patrols producing names for the nuisance register were conducted, with Special constables encouraged to integrate with the CT.

HQ stated that the identified vehicle, which had covered only 8 miles the previous month, was required there!

Team effectiveness was hampered by a lack of transport. Few officers travelled by bus.

The refitted office and additional computers allowed officers to scan and analyse.

We were unaware that logs were tagged for numerous reasons and were unable to differentiate between calls resolved on the telephone and other types of tagged incident. However the work conducted by the officer on light duties, whilst time consuming, did show that call-resolution reduced response officer deployment.

There was still resistance from response supervisors to losing an officer for this task.

The process: flow-chart and new software produced more appropriate routing of calls to the CT.

HQ Corporate Development was refused permission to conduct a survey despite the offer to pay overtime. We failed to find the time to conduct one ourselves.

The audience for Mike Barton's presentation contained only Dacorum officers. Senior officers were invited from other divisions. The response to the invitation from one HQ Chief Inspector was "Everyone who needs to know about POP already knows".

### **ANALYSIS 3 ("a true analysis?")**

Our return to analysis in January 2001 found that by use of the Problem Analysis Triangle (PAT), policing within Hemel Hempstead was part of 'features of offender'.

Rural officers with access to a vehicle provided a quality service to their 4,900 residents attending 40 % of incidents. *Those* without transport, policing over 10,000, placed a burden on the response teams by attending only 11%.

The CT was not organised to provide the visibility demanded by the community, allow it to use POP or . deal with the new process of allocating calls. Officer shortfall had been ignored and could not be catered for in the existing structure. The CT would have to function with a further loss of 3 officers and yet be able to work as a team to produce Stoneycroft-like results. The total strength of the CT was to be reduced to 15 officers.

Without general officer knowledge of "hotspots", they could not be addressed. This had to be

conveyed using noticeboards and meetings between CT and CSU.

The overriding concern with reduction in crime meant that the importance of quality-of-life issues to the victim, in this case the public, had been missed. Every crime was analysed daily at meetings where management, the Crime-Pattern Analyst, and others considered responses. No such meeting existed in relation to quality-of-life issues.

The number of names taken for the nuisance register had declined partly because the "Hotspot" identification software failed and the benefits of submitting them were not evident. Nuisance patrols reduced in number. CT officers rarely worked together and as such it was difficult for the Special constables to feel part of the team, they therefore lost interest\_

Access to additional vehicles remained a top priority; particularly as identified problem areas were spread across the area policed.

Officers were using the extra IT to scan their areas but some individuals were still working as **neighbourhood** officers, failing to analyse or respond.

Call-resolution was a success with a reduction in demand. However response supervisors needed convincing.

Anecdotal evidence required quantifying.

Formal structured training in POP for control room staff, response officers, special constables and the CT needed to be conducted.

### **RESPONSE 3 ("a structure in place")**

- Presentation to management of evidence regarding rural officers' performance resulted in a reallocation of divisional vehicles. All rural officers now had mobility, relieving pressure on response officers.
- Three town centre officers continued to use POP effectively.
- Seven remaining officers became beat managers for areas, which were amalgamated **demographically**, all on the same *shift* pattern with specified duty times. All worked together on either days or lates, with the minimum staffing level of four enforced.
- CT rest-days, covered by special constables, provided high visibility targeted patrol via tasking documents.
- Pressure. was placed on C SU to produce accurate "hotspots" and information/intelligence gained via their inter-agency information exchange protocols.

- A system was put in place to regularly update "hotspot" notice boards.
- Weekly briefings/debriefings for CT were set up to discuss quality-of-life matters, provide time to assess POP initiatives; focus officers' attention on High Visibility issues and assess previous week's action. Advertising successes and activity internally and externally became a significant agenda item. (APPENDIX 4)
- Intelligence officers are now in the control room from 3am to midnight to allow continuous live interrogation of IT systems.
- Nuisance Register form was simplified with benefits of submitting details advertised using successful results.
- Training of specials conducted to highlight importance of their role in amended CT structure.
- Hire vehicle supplied to surveillance unit releasing unmarked vehicle for CT.
- Internal/external advertising was conducted about POP encouraging response officers to spend time with CT.
- Two local surveys were instigated to establish level of public satisfaction.
- The Force training officer formulated a detailed POP lesson plan including objectives and assessment factors.
- The Community Safety Partnership is arranging a Community Safety Day in September 2001, where Police have been invited to conduct a **POP** workshop.

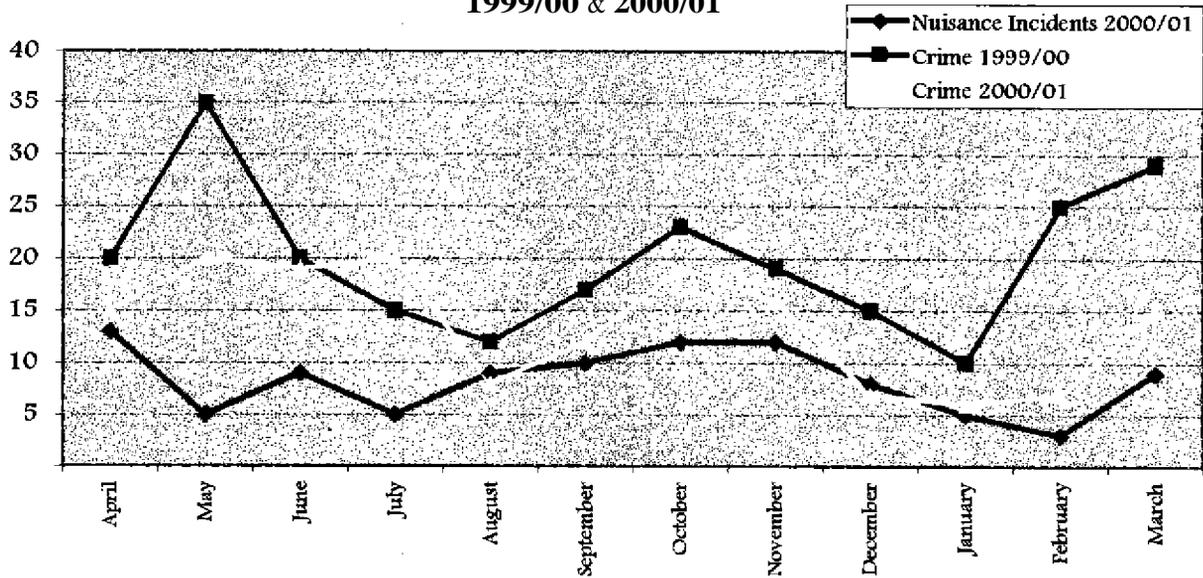
### **ASSESSMENT 3 ("achievement without complacency")**

The additional vehicles for the CT allow them to address the identified strategic POP and CT objective.

Town centre officers have forged partnerships with town centre management and retailers regularly using POP, ("Shop Safe"/"Child Safe"/"Business Watch"/ introduction of improved inter shop/Police radio system and programme of training). Funding from the town centre retailers/management has allowed for the purchase of plastic police officers to convey crime prevention information. The use of these 6-foot cut-outs will be restricted to high profile days, when the area is flooded with real officers.

A POP initiative with "Business Watch" and target hardening on the Adeyfield industrial estate is believed to have contributed to a reduction in crime and unauthorised traveller encampments, with an associated reduction on police resources for evictions.

Adeyfield Industrial Estate - Reported Crime & Nuisance Incidents  
 1999/00 & 2000/01



CT officers retain local contact as beat managers each with 10-12,000 population.

A team capable of providing a high visibility presence in appropriate numbers to take any necessary action and reassure the community was now in place. This fact has been advertised initially via local press coverage. (APPENDIX 1) The current "Watchlink" (Neighbourhood Watch newsletter) also includes a prominent article on the Community Policing Team. (APPENDIX 7)

On CT rest-weekends, special constables have been able to provide a significant level of visibility.

Weekly briefing/debriefings are structured and of a high quality with an input from the CSU and Intelligence Unit. The CT is now more enthusiastic and motivated. Lateral thinking and POP are becoming second nature.

Specials have excelled in dealing with tasked work, however their numbers (similar recruitment & retention problems to regulars) and therefore hours worked are in decline. This will impact on the future provision of visible patrol.

Verbal **feedback** from response officers has been positive, an internal survey is needed to evaluate this.

Surveys conducted, hand-delivered where possible by specials in high visibility uniform, indicated that 60% of those who attended the Warners End PCP thought that there had been a reduction in nuisance **and** disorder at Stoneycroft. They were also 26% more satisfied with levels of visible police patrol than respondees to a survey of residents from all around Hemel Hempstead. (APPENDIX 5)

POP training for all staff commences in late April.

## **Conclusion**

If a sufficiently detailed analysis had been conducted at the outset and the real problem identified at an earlier stage, the current structure could have been in place sooner.

No policing system can claim to be a panacea and indeed the influence of variables, beyond the control of individuals or organisations, demands that the assessment factor of the SARA process be constantly used to monitor effectiveness. Assessment blends into scanning which allows for a cyclical, ongoing process with amendments geared to the variables.

We will continue to use **POP** and thereby make optimum use of officers. Whilst the traditional role of a police officer is reactive and incident driven, POP is about interrupting the reactive spiral by identifying root causes negating the need for officers returning to recurring incidents and ultimately reducing repeat calls. Organisational change has allowed for POP to flourish.

Recent examples of **POP** initiatives **have** been simple. These range from the placing of police cars in strategic positions (instead of parked unseen in the station yard), to the use of anti-vandal paint at a location identified by good analysis, (children climbing onto the roof of a shopping precinct via one point of access, which will now be treated by local council).

We have to maximise public awareness of our activity and how that has improved quality-of-life. We will provide **visibility with purpose**. The visible police presence that the community call for must be provided in a manner which actually has an impact, not by foot patrol in a random and unfocussed manner, but via an intelligence led POP approach.

Officers should target areas and locations with numbers, not only to deal with the problem, but also to ensure **that** those subject to nuisance are aware of the police response. The public will, in all likelihood, be as unaware of the reduction in the number of youths congregating as they are of true rates of crime if no "advertising" has been conducted. Therefore advertising has been added to the Hemel Hempstead model which becomes SARAA. One way we are trying to achieve this is through the use of calling cards. (APPENDIX 6)

The Community Team now has an achievable objective, **"to provide a locally accountable high visibility presence in appropriate number to take necessary action and provide reassurance to the community"**.

Crime and disorder will never be eradicated, but can be reduced through successful POP. The community will gain reassurance from knowledge of the police efforts in assisting in that reduction.