

Joint Partnership

Family Management

Project

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TILLEY AWARD 2001 - SUMMARY
PROJECT TITLE: FAMILY MANAGEMENT
SOUTH EAST KENT POLICE AREA

Introduction

In 1997 an audit was carried out by the Local Responsible Authorities. Social and economic deprivation along with high crime rates identified East Folkestone (population 15,500). The statistics unfortunately rivalled some of the worst in the United Kingdom.

The three year Community Safety Plan produced for the Shepway District was implemented in April 1999. A police "Project Officer" for East Folkestone was appointed to work with other agencies toward a target reduction in crime by 15%. Following a developmental stage building relationships with future partners the work began. The ethos was to embody the principles of "working together".

Scanning

Families criminally active and involved in anti-social behaviour were identified by community intelligence and police data. These families traditionally accounted for extensive use of resource by all agencies, but had not previously been identified as affecting quality of life to such an extent.

Analysis

By monitoring police information systems and crime reports a number of families were identified as crime generators, having high truancy levels, domestic violence, alcohol/drug abuse, housing problems and issues of care and neglect of children.

Response

- multi-agency approach on initial home visit
- family confronted with evidence
- outstanding crime enquiries investigated
- enforcement
- written contracts for children and parents - shows recognition and understanding of their problems
- breach of contract, evidence that alternative methods have been tried
- supervision visits to family home
- challenging of behaviour
- giving praise
- family meetings held at neutral venues
- actions created for partner members who are made accountable for future meetings

Assessment

By monitoring the results as before, families involved in the project show a massive reduction in crime and disorder, accept responsibility for their and their children's actions and make the neighbourhood a better place to live.

- East Folkestone reduced anti-social behaviour
- + families more manageable
- fewer disturbance calls to neighbourhood
- better behaviour and attendance in schools
- improved working practices linking all agencies

Conclusion

The project has evolved over the years with written agreements and protocols being sought with other agencies so that Kent Police can develop the project as a standard package throughout the county, adopted by other Police and LRA Areas within Kent and with expressions of interest from other Forces.

The evidence that it works is held at Folkestone Police Station. The Data Protection Act prevents personal details from being released, but with 70 families on the list;

- **only eight have gone past stage one**
- **all of them have stopped completely**
- **or have reduced their crime and ASB significantly.**

Project Owner: PC 6272 Richard Lester

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Introduction

Quality of life issues and anti-social behaviour, (ASB), are considered by the public to be as important as traditional policing issues, such as burglary and vehicle crime. Recent television documentaries highlighting "families from hell" have raised the awareness of the neighbour dispute and the problems of how to deal with them.

The aim of South East Kent police is to open up communications with these families and to reduce offending which ultimately improves the quality of life within the neighbourhood.

The project was founded within the Strategic Crime Reduction Unit, (SCRU), at Folkestone where it was identified that a few families contribute to high levels of disturbance, crime and environmental issues.

This project will show how early identification, interventions and a multi-agency approach to such families make a big difference, not just to the family themselves, but to the neighbourhood as a whole, sometimes without criminalising individuals, particularly the younger family members whilst giving parents / guardians the responsibility they should have.

Scanning

All incidents attended by the police are recorded on the OIS, (Operational Information Systems), and are awarded a beat code which refers to a geographical area. The Project Officer responsible for that beat can view all incidents that have taken place in addition to community and police intelligence reports that identify criminal families and their associates. The SCRU analyst provides weekly crime statistics using the beat code system, highlighting 'hot spot' areas. Details of M.O.'s, times and dates and victims / repeat victims, assist in street profiling and in identifying possible offenders.

Analysis

Numerous police attendance to a particular street or address will be immediately identified and further research is required as to the cause of the problem. Particular calls, such as domestic disputes, nuisance children and damage, in and around these addresses will need to be researched and contact made with the original informants. Experience shows that a minimum amount of information is recorded by operators due to time/workload constraints and a re-visit is usually beneficial revealing further evidence or information not previously recorded.

A picture emerges of a number of crimes and police incidents during a weekly/monthly period where a particular family's involvement falls into two categories, suspected and substantiated, (See Appendix 'D'). .

Once identified, focus intelligence on the family is achieved by placing 'operational information' on the OIS requesting all officers dealing with this family to submit intelligence reports and detailed accounts to the Project Officer for evidence gathering. Details of domestic violence, truancy, child care issues and housing problems are collated and it is at this stage that other relevant agencies are approached to confirm whether there are genuine reasons for concern. The response will depend largely on other agencies existing involvement or interest with that family and often, initially, it is the police who react alone.

The Response

Having established the nature of the problem at all agencies, the police visit the family home and if it is a property owned by the Local Authority or a Registered Social Landlord, accompanied by a housing officer, (Appendix `A' shows examples of letters sent to family, reinforcing the visit). The police lead during the initial stages simply because we are in a better position to gather and collate evidence and are already investigating crimes and incidents involving the family.

After initial introduction the family is challenged over their behaviour and how it affects the neighbourhood, being careful not to reveal identities of particular neighbours or injured parties etc. Any outstanding crime enquiries are investigated and, if necessary, family members are arrested or reported for summons. This is important because enforcement is a key issue, restoring order within the family and neighbourhood sends out a strong message. It also `wipes the slate clean' and provides a platform for future co-operation and partnerships.

The written contract is a very important step, for not only does it provide past evidence that they have a problem and are willing to work with the agencies to find a solution, consequently any breach of contract is a sign of an inability or unwillingness to continue the partnership and shows a court in any future proceedings that alternative methods have been tried and failed, (see Appendix `B' for details of contracts). This is the opportunity to make a fresh start and `rejoin society'.

At least twice a week during the initial stages police supervision visits to the family home are essential. Again, this sends out a strong message that the street and the family will be policed and challenged over reports of bad behaviour or breach of contract. It also reassures the neighbourhood that the police are tackling this family `head on'. Although seemingly labour intensive it is far less so when compared to the amount of time spent attending police incidents and their subsequent investigation along with any crime reports. The SCRUs have a team of four officers who police the project area of East Folkestone, therefore there are no resourcing issues because this work forms just a fraction of their overall role.

If there is a reduction in incidents over a set period then it is equally important to praise the family, but remembering to strike the right balance, they are still a cause for concern and need to show a continuing improvement in their circumstances.

It is sometimes beneficial to arrange meetings away from the home environment, this can be through embarrassment due to the amount of high profile police visits to the family home or, it is considered that meeting the family on their home territory puts agencies at a disadvantage, depending on their response.

There may be actions created for partnership members at such meetings, such as, Social Services welfare visits, health checks or crime investigation. Experience has shown that all meetings must be minuted and such actions recorded. A partner agency must be made to account for any action not carried out especially if it is to the detriment of the family who may lose any confidence in the partnership which could therefore fail.

All meetings are subject to Data Protection issues, (see Appendix `C' for list of forms), and the necessary recording of exchange of information.

Assessment

Ongoing monitoring of the street/family address will show whether the partnership is having an effect. Any breaches of contract are challenged on a weekly basis as soon as they occur but, if offending is reduced from ten incidents to three after a month's intervention, then clearly there has been a massive impact. Any initial rise in complaints due to increased confidence from the neighbours must be taken into consideration.

In East Folkestone since family intervention started in October 1998, there has been a steady decline in ASB in the area. Two families in particular were targeted, not just because of their high crime rates and unacceptable behaviour, but their "family trees" linked with many other high profile criminal families in Folkestone. Effective policing of a branch of that tree had implications throughout the rest of the family network. Consequently, these families became more manageable and approachable, their offending reduced and they became more responsive towards the police and other agencies. The parents sought employment and there became a sense of responsibility within their home and neighbourhood.

The knock on effect was felt in schools where previously absent or disruptive children from these families became less of a problem.

Liaison with the Strategic Crime Reduction Department at Kent Police FHQ has helped develop the project and a joint presentation to the Chief Constable and Area Commanders highlighted some of the successes within the Force, producing standard format letters and contracts etc.

Protocols with Senior Managers of the LRA have been drafted and are being delivered to produce a model partnership package.

One spin off is that co-operation and working practices between agencies has improved with time and experience. Protocols have been established during this period and relationships between the practitioners is generally very good. The evidence that it works is held at Folkestone Police Station. The Data Protection Act prevents personal details from being released, but with 70 families on the list, only eight have gone past stage one and all of them have stopped completely or have reduced their crime and ASB significantly. (There is a list of contacts in Appendix 'E' who can verify the success of the partnerships).

Case Study

This family were a 'family from hell', The effect of their combined behaviour was that the neighbours were so frightened and intimidated by the family members that only a handful of incidents were reported. Support for local residents was essential, by knocking on doors and telephoning their neighbours, we were eventually able to convince them that they needed help and our support. The best way forward was to make statements because once written and signed, they fell under the Witness Protection Scheme, to suffer in silence and still be repeat victims, they realised, made no sense. Another tactic was to encourage local residents to write to the landlord of the family home,(who in this case, is a private landlord from another part of Kent), and give evidence of anti-social behaviour and criminal activity by tenants. This encouraged the landlord to do something positive and although not a registered social landlord, (and therefore not falling within the exchange of information under S. 115A Crime & Disorder Act), these letters became evidence in later court proceedings to evict the family due to continued behavioural problems.

Previously unreported evidence of crime and anti-social behaviour came to light. The mother, in particular despite historically being hostile and anti-establishment, became co-operative and even sought advice from the police and other agencies. She was actually relieved that someone else had come to help her and, despite initial misgivings and the occasional relapse, she kept to her contract.

After a year of suffering the neighbours were relieved to see the family move from their home.

Displacement? We do not believe so, the family appears to be leading a relatively normal life in another part of the country supported by other family members and a briefing package was presented to agencies in that area.

If they had moved to another part of Folkestone, the process would have continued and would still be ongoing to some degree.

That it works was highlighted by a telephone call to the Project Officer from the mother some two weeks after their move. The fact that she called was, by now, not so unusual. The fact that she said, "Thank you for your help", was.

Conclusion

The Family Management Project is a system which can be used with any family providing there is some degree of co-operation. It is accepted that there will be some cases where this is not possible but to use the approach and fail provides good evidence in later enforcement options.

It is a structured multi - agency approach that can be used in it's entirety or adapted to suit the user. It outlines suggestions and options drawn from real experience. It is aimed at crime reduction and improving quality of life for substantial numbers of people including the family itself. The 'best practice' developed is used to good effect in daily front line policing.

Presentation

The following pages explain the project, starting with the Good Practice Manual for the project partners. There then follows the aims and the working structure, detailing issues such as Human Rights and Data Protection. The Case Study concludes the presentation along with appendices.

A Partnership Approach to the Management of Problem Families

Good Practice Manual

Referral arrangements

Any of the partner agencies may refer families to the scheme by contacting their local Police Station Crime Reduction Unit. Referring agencies would need to complete an initial referral form at this stage.

Initial assessment

Each case will undergo initial assessment to establish whether it should be pursued through joint family intervention.

The initial assessment would be carried out by at least the referring agency and the police, with the involvement of any of the other partner agencies who's views are considered essential to the initial assessment process.

Assessment criteria

Assessing whether the circumstances of a referred case would warrant joint intervention should take account of the following criteria:

1. What is the history of the case as presented?
2. Is this a chronic problem or an isolated event?
3. What is the impact of the problem on the local community?
4. Are any complaints reasonably representative of the local community?
5. Is the problem likely to yield to action by a single agency?
6. Is the risk to community safety too extreme to permit a joint approach?
7. Are there any special issues - health, culture, ethnicity etc. to be addressed first?

Planning

In most cases there will be little value in detailed case planning or multi-agency assessment until an initial visit by the police and the referring agency and until any outcomes from first stage action become clear.

Where problems exist beyond the initial action and continue to satisfy assessment criteria, there would be a need to refer the case to a multi agency panel for intervention planning. Such intervention planning would be based on concurrent planning principles and linked back to guidelines drawn up by the LRA.

The case planning would be carried out by multi-agency assessment and planning panel which would be open to all referring agencies - the attendance at each assessment panel depending on the features of individual cases.

Linkages

The link between the Joint Family Management process, including the multi-agency assessment/planning panel and the LRA should be via the Police Crime Reduction Unit or the manager of the initial participating agency.

Tactics

The intervention tactics deployed by agencies should follow the case action plan; should adhere particularly to concurrent planning principles and bear in mind the provisions of Human Rights legislation.

The tactical framework should match the four stage process outlined on pages 13 to 16.

The Problem

The analytical process carried out by the Project Officer, identified a high number of incidents and low level crime in a Anytown Street, East Folkestone. The street is a residential area comprising of owner-occupier and privately rented accommodation. Much of the information indicated the trouble was emanating from a particular address. A number of officers from different shifts had been attending the address, and dealing with incidents in isolation, unaware of their colleagues' previous dealings with the family .The family was raised at the tasking meeting and an enforcement officer tasked with the problem.

Analysis of the problem revealed that in the months of May-December 1999, the immediate area surrounding this address had reported some 52 incidents of crime and disorder. Of these incidents there was evidence that 22 of them were directly attributable to the family living at the address concerned. Although suspected, there was no direct evidence to link the other incidents to the family. The family consisted of a 28 year old mother, with 5 children, aged 6months, 2 years, 5 years 7 years and 11 years. Both the school and the Police identified that the 7-year-old in particular and the 11 year to be the main problem. The 7-year-old was violent, aggressive and very non-compliant. The behaviour by the 7 year old included

- Urinating of neighbour's car
- Climbing on neighbour's roof
- Interference with parked cars
- Constant swearing at neighbours in the street.
- Unruly and violent behaviour at school

The mother's current partner was in prison. Both the mother and the current partner have a history of drug abuse.

The Intervention

The Enforcement officer engaged the family. She identified her role to the mother and established the following;

- Police were monitoring calls to the address regarding complaints of anti-social behaviour;
- That with the. mother ' co-operation police, would help in policing the problem ;
- Outlined some possible outcomes if there was no improvement—i.e.
- Children being taken into care
- Eviction
- Family 1 children going to court
- Police would prepare a "contract" agreeing the mothers co-operation;
- Police would prepare a "list of rules" for children of the family;
- That neighbours that have complained would be approached and asked about current behaviour;
- Obtained agreement from Mother for the involvement of other agencies, and gave written consent for the exchange of information;
- Police would notify the mother of any allegations regarding the children, and investigate fully;
- That the police and other agencies (e.g. school) were monitoring, and evidencing anti-social behaviour with a view not only to gather evidence for prosecution but also for help and necessary intervention;
- Mother would provide a suitable home environment free from drug paraphernalia and weapons;
- The mother was agreeable to intensive supervision by the police, and regular visits (i.e. every other day). She also gave permission for the police to return her children if found out after 18.30 hours
- The mother consented for the Health , Police, Education and Social Services to exchange information

The evidence gathering process involved:

- Gathering historical data of complaints;
- Collation of Landlord complaints;
- Positive, intensive policing of children in street at every opportunity, and challenging unacceptable behaviour at the earliest opportunity;
- Collating/investigation current evidence;
- Collation of School information;
- Regular contact with neighbours to maintain evidence gathering through logs and letters of complaint to landlord;

A multi-agency working group involving a social worker, his team leader, the School Headmaster, and the Enforcement Team Officers was formed. The membership of the group involved *those who* be involved in the delivery of the plan. The group

- Shared relevant information which identified the problems and current interventions
- + Identified new interventions. These included;
- + Allocation of Social Worker
- Educational Statementing of the 7year old
- . Provision of parenting skills support for mother.
- Engage the father (who was soon to be released) through a Prison Visit by Enforcement Team officers.
- The delaying of eviction proceedings
- The Meetings were all minuted, with actions allocated to named individuals within the working group.
- Meetings were held on a three weekly basis, and after the first meeting, the mother now attends (with a friend) and takes full part in the discussions. She has full access to the minutes.

The results.

The project has been a major success, demonstrating that sustained improvements can be achieved;

- The intervention started in October 1999, with the first interagency meeting being held in November. Since November there have been 0 incidents or crime reported in the area within which the family live. Contact with the neighbours confirms the problem has dramatically reduced.
- The 7-year-old has admitted 7 previously reported crimes (primary detections).
- The headmaster is reporting improved behaviour and achievement at school by the 7 and 10 year old.
- The father has indicated he will be compliant to the project upon release, and his partner has indicated that should he not be, he "can do the other thing."
- The Mother has provided a family tree that identifies the family network, and provides intelligence into the relationships and influences.
- Significant evidence of anti-social behaviour and mediation now exists should an anti-social behaviour order be considered.
- + Although offending by the children increased after the father was released from prison, evidence of such was recorded and statements were obtained.
- Social Services joined the partnership and offered support, and when confronted with care and neglect issues, instigated care proceedings

Best Value Implications; The scenario surrounding the family generated 52 crimes in 8 months or the equivalent of 78 in a full year. This is represents a work content valued at $78 \times £118 = £9,204$ or 45% of a post per annum.

Police Station, Bouverie House, Bouverie Road West, Kent. CT20 2SG
Phone :01303 269153 Fax :01303 269049

Our Reference: 5426

Ms. [redacted]
12, [redacted]
Folkestone, Kent CT19 [redacted]

December 23, 1999

Dear

Visit of 9th. December 1999

I write regarding the visit made by P.C. Hughes and Bob Taylor the representative of North British Housing Association. I am pleased to say that since our visit the situation in your area has improved. It would appear that the conversation with yourself and Daniel has had the required effect.

As promised P.C. Hughes has spoken to Mrs Joyce from 'Breaking the Cycle' and asked her to contact Daniel. Unfortunately to date she has not been able to speak to him. I would urge you to ask Daniel to speak to Mrs. Joyce as a matter of urgency.

Both North British Housing and I are pleased with the improved situation, but in case Daniel or any member of the family sees fit to revert to anti social behaviour, I would remind you of the consequences discussed.

- 1, Police officers dealing with any incident involving your family will serve a Harassment Warning under the Harassment Act. If a further incident occurs the offender will be dealt with and put before the Magistrates Court.
- 2, Further offending will lead to the service of an Anti Social Behaviour Order under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. A breach of that order will result in proceedings which could have your family excluded from the district, and it would be an offence to return for up to two years. This would result in the loss of your home, and the need to remove your children from their present school.
- 3, North British Housing Association may see fit at any time to evict you from your home.
- 4, Both para. 3 & 4 above would mean that neither the District Council or any Housing Association has an obligation to house you, as by your actions you will have made yourselves intentionally homeless.
- 5, The above measures would be in addition to any criminal proceedings.

I believe that you and Daniel have made some effort to improve the situation. if you have any problems relating to this, please do not hesitate to contact me on the above number. I will forward a copy of this letter to North British Housing Association for their attention.

Yours faithfully

c.c Bob Taylor

insp. S. Kehily
Crime Reduction Coordinator

Example Housing Association Letter

Phone :xs0000a Fax :xr0000a

Householder Name & Address

April 27, 2001

Dear xxa00000cx,

I am writing with reference to some complaints I have received from some of your neighbours at the above address.

Unfortunately it would appear that you are in dispute with your neighbours and it is causing some concern. They have written to us on several occasions, and also called the Police and District Council.

I appreciate that it is not always easy to get on with your neighbours, but in this case I would please ask that you try to resolve your dispute with them, as the District Council have expressed their concern to the Association.

Could you please ensure that the wheelie bin is removed from outside your neighbour's house, and not kept at the front of the house, otherwise we will receive further complaints from the Environmental Health Section. You will also need to ensure that your family do not go onto anyone else's property, and ensure your garden is kept clear of dog faeces.

Recently we had a situation where the Police and District Council approached the Association due to the anti social behaviour of a tenant, and it resulted in eviction. We do not wish this to happen to you. If you are having problems please call either Mr. Clark or myself on the above number.

Yours faithfully,

Julie Dixon
Housing Officer