POP
IN
SCHOOLS ..

Category:	Crime and Disorder Reduction
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Alex eventually turned his back on a life of crime and antisocial behaviour. He was left feeling empty yet realising that he wanted to lead a `normal' life. If all juveniles followed the example of the main character in the novel A Clockwork Orange then: targeting the age groups of young offenders would be easy. However this is the case and many who start on this path become embroiled in more serious crime. So how do we decide where to target our resources when dealing with the youth culture?

Social scientists have long argued over the main causes of juvenile nuisance and crime. Often they point out that when juvenile nuisance and related crime are allowed to continue, the local estate deteriorates along with community confidence and satisfaction. This is often most prominent within local authority housing estates.

Policing tactics with juveniles often amounts to little more than moving them along. Yet if we want a greater impact then we must take more time examining the root cause of local problems that affect these youth groups.

This POP initiative takes an innovative approach towards juvenile nuisance. By introducing the POP philosophy to primary school children it was believed that they would embrace a problem-oriented approach and take it with them through their schooling career. It was hoped that this initiative would then witness a diffusion of benefits through the reduction of crime and general nuisance in the targeted areas.

The initial stages of the operation involved scanning and analysis of the problems in the Chorley area. Once this had been completed the response could be targeted to the most appropriate areas. With the theory already in mind and the

analysis undertaken to guide the project, a benchmark was set to examine in more detail the most prolific areas. It was these areas that we felt we could have the greatest impact.

Primary *schools were chosen to* spearhead this project. There *were a* number *of* reasons why this was so;

- Tl *e* children who *attend* primary schools *are* predominantly *from the* surrounding   a, along with their families, friends and neighbours,
- They were more receptive to the police,
  They were less likely to be already engaged in criminal activity,
- They were approaching the age of criminal responsibility, and,
- They were about to enter secondary school and would be in a position to influence a wider audience.

Once the decision regarding which schools to use was made, the project was introduced to the schools in the form of a competition.   Each school was assigned a police officer to help support and provide assistance with whatever project the school would embark upon. The schools then set out scanning the local area for problems before analysing them to formulate a response.

The main POP initiative was in essence an `umbrella' approach.   While the main response *was to* introduce *t4* schools *to POP* theory, *t*     *schools* would — *at this* stage — embark upon their own POP. Effectively the whole project was a series of `POPS within a POP'.

In total there were seven POP projects run by the schools. Each was individual and responded to a variety of issues within their respective community.

The school POP projects *were* then judged on the quality of their SARA.   Various partners, who helped with the final judgement, donated prizes for the schools.

The overall POP was designed with the Lancashire Constabulary mission statement in mind: to make the communities of Lancashire feel safe, involved and reassured   The areas where the schools lay were slowly losing satisfaction with policing methods and a more stringent focus on problems in these areas was required.   I   was believed that introducing the children to the theory and philosophy of. a problem-oriented approach would help focus their attention and energies io k constructive work within their community. If the targeted age **group was right then the initiative would have a more** widespread effect. If this approach helped   duce incidents of crime and disorder in the short and medium term, then success would a significant achievement. Should the project be sustainable long term, then the greatest benefits would be seen in the next generation.

Description of project

What are the objectives of the project?

1.   What was the project trying to achieve?

The greatest vol ie of incidents reported to the police is juvenile nuisance. This is a continual p blem and, drains a large portion of police time.   This drain **impedes the police** response to more serious matters and has an impact on efforts to meet performance targets. In addition the local residents did not feel safe, there was a fear of crime and disorder and a probability of current children evolving into future volume offenders.   Should this trend continue Lancashire Constabulary, as a whole would lose the confidence and satisfaction of those it served. This would counter the mission statement of this Constabulary.

The most innovative aspect of this POP was the introduction of POP theory and mindset to schools and school children in these target areas. By engaging the children of local schools in community based initiatives we would instil a problem oriented philosophy which they would take with them throughout their schooling career.

A problem-oriented approach is a theory that could be understood by children and residents in these areas. This mindset would help them focus attention and energy into recognising their contribution to neighbourhood problems and therefore set out to understand the root cause of these problems and the consequences of their actions. Once this has been achieved they would be able to formulate ideas to help alleviate these problems and bring about a change in current attitudes to the community and those that reside in it.

2.   What were the success criteria?

The success of this project would be evaluated against the project aims and objectives as set out below:

- developing new and robust partnerships with local schools,
- **increasing t understanding of a problem-oriented approach to community issues,**

    commits' t s schools to the project,

    local children' accepting ownership and responsibility for their own initiatives and then implementing it, and,
- a spin off being a reduction in crime and disorder figures as a result of the projects in the identified areas.

3.   How was the problem identified?

Police data stored in incident logs and crime records clearly identified the most prolific areas in the Chorley cluster (comprising Chorley, Coppull and Wheelton) for crime and disorder.   Once these problems where highlighted the next step was to mine down into these areas to identify the underlying factors involved.
A benchmark was set regarding the Juvenile nuisance problem and 36 incident locations in the Chorley cluster were examined. The bench mark being that if one incident location had more than 200 incidents of juvenile nuisance in a specified period then that area warranted further examination.

- In Chorley 71% of all juvenile nuisance and 51% of all crime was committed in 6 incident locations.
- In Coppull, 60% of juvenile nuisance and 37% of crime (in particular 47% of all Coppull's criminal damage) was committed in two identified locations.

- In Wheelton 47% of all juvenile nuisance and 45% of all crime (in particular 53% of all Wheelton's criminal damage and 67% of all Wheelton's assaults) was committed in only one incident location.

In addition to this analysis, letters written to the police and adverse media attention, clearly showed that local people were aware of the existing problems. The letters **only reinforced the need to act before confidence and satisfaction deteriorated further**

4.   Why was this problem prioritised over others?

The high volume of calls received regarding incidents of juvenile nuisance and related crime was havjnq an adverse affect on divisional performance and operational efficiency indicating that this problem demanded attention. It was placing great demands on police officers time and when they were attending they were often powerless to act and simply had to resort to moving the youths on. Years of experience told us that this method of dealing with nuisance did not work and often alienated the youths from the police. Members of communities did not fully understand that the behaviour was often borne out of boredom and therefore they had little sympathy with the plight of those causing the nuisance. In addition to reducing demand the project was seen as a means of involving the youths and rebuilding community/youth/police relationships.

As the target audience was children about to enter secondary education this project was seen as a means of planning for the future as the children would be vulnerable to new criminal activity (e.g. drugs).

5.   Who was involved in identifying the problem?

The proble " a nuisance and related crime was nothing new to Chorley cluster and various ,initiatives had been tried over the years to combat the problem. It *has been* long hypothesised *that* there *is a* link *between* high instances *of nuisance and crime in specific areas.* The initial *idea came from* asking "could *we* have an et ton nuisance by targeting schools and introducing the concept of POP?"

Much of the analysis came from the intelligence *unit at* Skelmersdale and painted *the* picture *of where* the *majority of* the problems *were* occurring.

Following the introduction of the project to the schools and school children it was left to the individual schools to research the specific problem areas and the underlying causes of those problems.

How did you define the problem?

1.	What information and sources did you use to analyse the problem?

Much of the an	cal data *was* obtained *from* Police *sources* which *was used to* define areas whi	suffered more than others. The views of, officers working in those areas r vas sought and only served to reinforce the picture that was being painted 'by'tl	ta

Once the schools had committed to the project, they set out to identify endemic problems within the community.   These problems were then confirmed and expanded through further analytical work commissioned by the individual schools by referring to more specific information held on police databases.

The children conducted surveys of public perceptions and attitudes on quality of life issues arising out of the behaviour of children in their areas. They conducted surveys of facilities available for use by the children out of school hours, which could occupy their time productively and divert them away from anti social behaviour.

They looked at what made certain areas, certainly not intended for use to hang around in, attractive to children (e.g. a public transport bus depot attracted large groups of youths despite being only yards from a recreation area designed for youths to congregate and play).

They researched routes taken by youths which were vulnerable to damage etc. to find the root causes e.g. dimly lit streets in high density housing areas offered natural protection to those committing offences.

2.   What did the analysis reveal about the causes and underlying conditions that precipitated the problem?

The predominant reason attributed to juvenile nuisance was the perceived lack of   ilities:'an   activities for the children to engage in. Some young people were questioned about why they played football on **a grassed area of a residential** hori ;for the elderly, which *was* only *a* matter *of* yards *from a* football pitch. TFey=;expi ined that it was because the local authority responsible for the maintenance *rarely cut the grass* whereas *the* lawn *of the* home *was* well maintained.

The areas highlighted as suffering greatest problems were also those areas where the greatest density of local authority housing was situated and facilities for the children were often poorly maintained or non-existent.

Many of the areas of nuisance were near to off-licence facilities and the availability of alcohol bought for the youths was a contributory factor. It was established that the youths sought dark secluded areas to congregate to consume the alcohol they had acquired and the effect was often evident when they were making their way home afterwards.

3.   What did the analysis reveal about the nature and extent of the problem?

The problem was not merely the result of the actions of a hard core minority but centred on the whole of the youth culture in Chorley and whilst not exclusively so was most problematic in council areas.

4.   Who was involved in analysing the problem?

Police officers 1 m Chorley kick started the project having recognised the problem and;   evlsed the POP in Schools idea. A meeting was convened on the 7th February   00 where they introduced their idea to all interested parties: Schools in ' entitled areas, local authority, area police officers, neighbourhood watch cry; ordiors and sponsors all came along and quickly bought into the initaative. (The project was sponsored and prizes would be donated to the school, which came upith the most innovative ideas).

How did you deal with the problem?

Following the initial meeting 7 schools were identified and each bought into the project. In effect there were 7 POP initiatives in the making. A police officer working in the identified areas was assigned to the schools and it was the responsibility of that officer to go into the schools and introduce the theory of POP to a class of year 6 pupils. Once this had been achieved the children and the teacher were left to come up with an initiative based in their local community concentrating on short and long-term strategies to reduce and prevent nuisance and crime. They could seek information from any source and the police officer would provide any police data they required.

How successful was your approach?

The concept of POP in Schools was embraced by all participating schools and the commitment, enthusiasm and creativity was, in most cases, first class. The POP within a POP theory really paid dividends and the following are the best examples of the ideas the children came up with:

- All Saints - Operation Coniston - this was a project to reduce crime and nuisance at a local authority elderly persons residence by landscaping the area to prevBrit access.

  St. James – Operation Turpin — a bus station had a recurring problem with juveniles congr gating in and outside the bus station. This operation was an initiative to improve the security of the property.

- St, Joseph 's';, Operation Play school — an initiative aimed at targeting nuisance in a high density, local housing estate, by providing a football pitch and play ground facilities under the attractive theme: "Free, safe, play theme".

The success for this project was set out as a series of objectives based over the three main periods; short, medium and long term. Each period contained a specific set of objectives to be met. Although these objectives were broken down into relevant time frames, the overall criteria for success was based on the sustainability of the `POP in schools' philosophy. Should this overriding facet fade then this initiative would have been deemed unsuccessful.
The success of each time frame was:

- Short-term success would be evaluated over the seven-week period in which the initial pilot scheme ran within the schools. This included the interaction of targeted schools in the chosen areas and the response of the school children. In terms of this criteria all schools fully embraced the POP philosophy and embraced the project with unequivocal commitment and enthusiasm.
As a result the project WAS a short-term success. In this short term each participant was enthusiastic about being able to promote a quantifiable success in reduction of crime and/or nuisance.

In the seven week period while this initiative ran 4 out of 7 areas showed a reduction in juvenile nuisance, 3 saw a reduction in crime and overall there s a du n in both. These figures are encouraging, however, they do **not represent** an absolute. **If** we are to further this project into following **years then** we should take into account other activities being conducted at **the** same time.

Medium ll uccess was based on whether the project would enter into its next step, suchstep being the continuation of the project into a second year. This would show a willingness to further develop the initial project within the schools and community in which it served. A commitment to maintaining such work was required if long-term goals were ever to be realised.

Each participating school has signed up to a second year and more community-based projects are planned for later this year. The children involved in year one will act as advisors to their successors despite having moved on into secondary education.

Such was the success of the first year there has been a great deal of interest from other schools wanting to become involved. A further measure of the success is evident in the schools wanting to introduce the POP philosophy into the curriculum under the " citizenship " umbrella.

As the schools understanding of this philosophy becomes more comprehensive there will be less need for police supervision and/or guidance in future years projects.

- Long-term success cannot be assessed at this time and the fruits of our labours may not be seen for some time - possibly a full secondary school generation of children. At which time we will hope to have seen a change in behaviour and attitudes of youth towards the communities they live in.

Difficulties

Not all the s   ls involved in this project had the same level of commitment. As a consequence it 'required more input from the police point of view than was anticipated at the-outset. In one particular school had the officer not driven the project as hand as he did it is likely that it would not have been completed. The reason for i s 'snot clear as the remaining schools were very enthusiastic and have lent their support to the process once again this year.