

BAY HOUSE INITIATIVE

Category: Crime and Disorder Reduction
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BAY HOUSE

inspector Peter O'Dwyer, PC 2175 Shaun Pepper, PC 3365 David Baker,
South Shore Police Station, Western Division

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Scanning

NATURE OF PROBLEM

Bay House hostel is situated in the busy holiday resort of Blackpool and houses up to fourteen male and female residents. Since the hostel opened in 1994 Police were frequently called to the premises to deal with incidents ranging from thefts, criminal damage, assaults, drugs, anti-social behaviour and rape. Relations with the local residents were also a major issue.

A dilapidated boundary fence adjacent to the premises was resulting in the immediate area becoming a regular thoroughfare for both residents, and other known criminals and volume offenders to gain easy access to Europe's largest car park, and a short cut to evade Police detection

Without action by both the police, and the management it was likely that the **above** problems would lead to a further increase in crime in the surrounding area, and potential confrontations with neighbours, which eventually could have led to the withdrawal of funding, and closure of the project .

Analysis

EVIDENCE USED TO DEFINE THE PROBLEM

- Police records of calls to Bay house
- Individual Officers experience
- Feelings of local Residents
- Bay house records of damaged property at premises
- Bay house records of length of stay of residents

The Hostel itself was situated in an area of high volume crime and juvenile nuisance. The residents of Bay House are young people between the ages of sixteen and twenty five years of age, many of whom who have behavioural problems, and in most cases, previous criminal convictions. The management of the project were unaware of applicant's previous criminal experience, and as a direct result of this a handful of prolific criminals were allowed entry. There is no doubt that they exerted influence upon the others, and actively encouraged, or even bullied them into committing crime.

Response

The first response was to arrange a meeting between the management of Bay House and ourselves, with the intention of establishing a dialogue with the aim of working together towards a formal partnership to implement solutions. Various short, medium and long-term solutions came about as a result of this, some of which were;

- A New fence erected adjacent to premises to restrict access to premises and car park to reduce criminal activity and pacify local residents, which was funded by Home Office and opened by local councillor.
- CCTV at premises expanded and repositioned, storage spaces ceiling voids etc sealed to stop storing of stolen goods and drugs.
- Link Officers established to deal directly with Management and residents at Bay house
- Alcohol ban imposed at premises along with midnight curfew and banning of visitors
- Introduction of Anti bullying policy, Anti drugs policy and Anti social behaviour policy
- Football match arranged Police v Residents of Bay House, Neighbours of Bay house invited for coffee at Bay house to improve overall relations.

Assessment

The initiative has been a remarkable success with improvements to the hostel, the area and the relationship between the local community and the hostel

Response calls by Police to Bay house have reduced by 66%. Damage caused by residents at the premises has been reduced by 97.4% and the cost for rechargeable repairs to the premises have reduced from £1068.75 to 27.99, for the five-month period since the responses were put in place. The policies introduced were so successful that they have been introduced at another Hostel owned by Bay house. The new fence erected has stopped the area being used as a thoroughfare and has had a major impact on the reduction of criminal activity in the area. This has improved relations with Bay House, Police and the local community. This is an excellent example of a team initiative.

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SCANNING.

Bay House hostel is situated in the busy holiday resort of Blackpool and more specifically in Alexandra Ward which experiences high levels of crime and was identified in the Community Safety Strategy as being one of the wards with the greatest level of social distress. The hostel was established in March '95 to provide accommodation for young people who for one reason or another have found themselves socially excluded. Residents are referred to the hostel by the probation service and other agencies. The hostel acts as interim accommodation whilst they rehabilitate into the social mainstream.

Bay House cannot work with regular drug users, support clients with unstable mental health problems, or help people whose minds are not receptive to change. Staff at the hostel consists of a Project Manager, 3 Project Workers and a Project Assistant / Life Skills Worker. Staff cover is provided 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, using a rota basis.

Since the hostel opened, Police have frequently been called to the premises to deal with incidents ranging from thefts, criminal damage, assaults, drugs, anti-social behaviour and rape. The area was identified as being the third highest in the County for juvenile nuisance problems and was renowned for second hand shops dealing in stolen property. Relations with the local residents were also a major issue. The situation was in a reactive spiral, which showed no sign of improvement without proactive intervention.

A dilapidated boundary fence adjacent to the premises was causing the immediate area to become a regular thoroughfare for both residents, other known criminals and volume offenders to gain easy access to Europe's largest car park in order to commit crime, and was used as a short cut to evade Police detection

Without action by both the police, and the management it was likely that the above problems would lead to a further increase in crime in the surrounding area, and potential confrontations with neighbours, which eventually could have led to the withdrawal of funding, and closure of the project.

Objectives of Bay House Initiative

Aims of Bay House

- ❖ To develop a holistic approach to working with chaotic young people
- ❖ To move away from the reactive culture and into being proactive
- ❖ Empowerment of our clients, demonstrating that the Police can work with them as well as against them).
- ❖ To develop a strategic and tactical approach to problem solving using "joined up" working.
- ❖ To capitalise on the expertise of both Police and Bay Housing Association.
- ❖ To ensure a quality service for our clients and the local community, through joint initiatives such as funding of fencing.
- ❖ To build "bridges" between Bay House residents and local police
- ❖ To promote tolerance and non-judgemental attitudes between Bay House staff, residents and Police.

Police Aims

- ❖ Reduce police response calls to Bay House
- ❖ Make everyone safer, and involved.
- ❖ Form partnership.
- ❖ To erect indestructible fencing adjacent to Bay House
- ❖ To affect a Culture change between Bay House, the police and local residents.
- ❖ To reduce crime.
- ❖ Gather Intelligence
- ❖ Implement and enforce policies and working practices

Analysis

Specific Problems Identified

- ❖ Criminal and anti-social behaviour by residents, and their associates
- ❖ Lack of co-operation, and understanding between the police, and the management
- Deteriorating relationship with the neighbouring community
- ❖ Broken fence at the side of the property
- ❖ Door key pad code known by residents, as well as a number of local criminals
- ❖ Lack of CCTV coverage in, and around the premises

Multiple points of entry, and exit to the premises

- Residents having access to all areas of Bay House, including areas suitable for the secretion of drugs, and stolen property, for example the loft space



These pictures illustrate the nature of the damage caused by residents

Contributing factors

The residents of Bay House are young people between the ages of sixteen and twenty five years of age, many of whom have behavioural problems, and in most cases have previous criminal convictions. They fall into two categories, volume offenders with no motivation to change and residents who are criminally naive and vulnerable individuals, who are easily influenced by others.

The management of the project were unaware of an applicant's previous criminal experience, and as a direct result of this a handful of prolific criminals were allowed entry. There is no doubt that they exerted influence upon the others, and actively encouraged, or even bullied them into committing crime.

There were also a number of other contributing factors, which led to criminal activity, including the fact that a number of criminal associates of the residents were allowed access to Bay House.

The physical layout of the building also made it easy for stolen goods, and soft drugs to be stored in the premises without the knowledge of the staff, and the ease of entry, and exit allowed offenders to enter, and leave the premises at any time of day or night undetected.

From officers and management experience it was apparent that as a consequence of the above, crime increased in the immediate surrounding area, and the effect of this was twofold, firstly the police were required to attend more frequently to deal with minor acts of disorder, and were required to detect and prevent crime, and also relations with the surrounding community deteriorated.

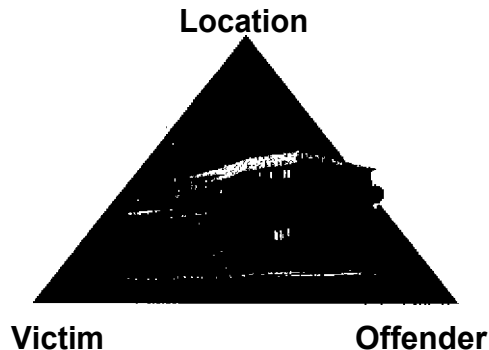
A number of residents were found to have formal associations with target criminals and it was not uncommon for a resident to be wanted on warrant or to be found late at night, or early morning with known active criminals who did not live at the address.

Offences were occurring in and around the property tying up Police and staff resources. A study of an eleven month period, prior to the partnership being formalised showed that the Police had attended a total of 38 incidents, which ranged from infighting, assaults, burglary to a heroin **overdose** and a report of a rape, both

During analysis, the Problem Analysis Triangle was used, and it was apparent that in order to deal with the problems we could have an impact by implementing changes to the location, Bay House itself, and by removing certain offenders from the location.

Options

- Close the Hostel
- Evict all residents.
- Partial evictions.
- Zero tolerance.
- ❖ Hi profile Police action.



All the above options were considered but not used. It was felt that if the Hostel was closed and the residents were evicted the problem would go elsewhere and if a hard-line Policing policy was adopted this would cause friction between Bay House Management, Residents and Police which would do very little to solve the problems identified

It was agreed by all parties that the way forward was to adopt the following short, medium and long term responses

RESPONSES

Short Term.

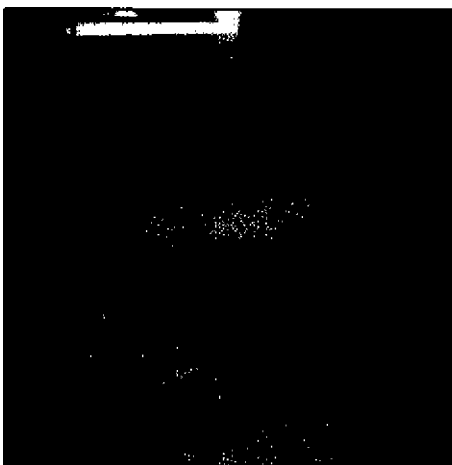
In the first instance a constructive meeting between PC 2175, PC 3365, Inspector O'Dwyer, and the management of Bay House was held in order to establish a dialogue with the aim of working together towards a formal partnership to implement long term solutions.

A ban was placed on pornographic/inappropriate material being displayed at Bay House along with a general clean-up campaign to promote a sense of pride in the project, and improve resident behaviour.

The implementation of a midnight curfew, regular room checks, and the sealing of roof voids, and storage spaces in order to make criminal activity more difficult. Also alcohol ban imposed on residents.

Increased police visits, and presence in, and around Bay House to deter criminal activity, and break down barriers on both sides between patrol officers, and residents.

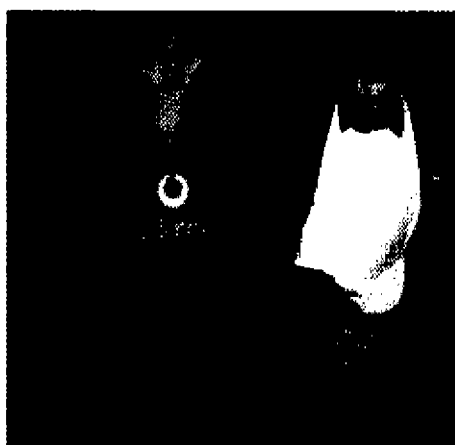
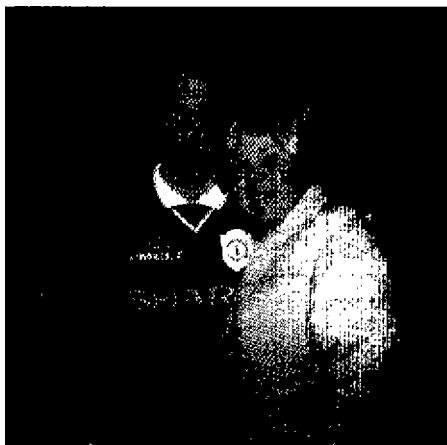
A second meeting between the police, Bay House residents, the management, and the community to 'clear the air', and reach agreement on ways to tackle the areas problem was held. Initially there was a certain amount of suspicion and antagonism by residents and the local community, which had to be overcome. This was done by frank and open discussion which created an understanding between the various parties.



As the illustrations show standards did improve. Introduction of craft workshop a project and standards of cleanliness improved.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Immediate removal of all inappropriate material from the building.
- Setting of cleanliness & hygiene standards.
- Ban on visitors.
- The implementation of a midnight curfew.
- Sealing of roof voids, storage spaces & windows.
- Door code changed.
- Alcohol Ban
- CCTV was extended and repositioned.
- CCTV checked for absentees and residents bringing in stolen property to the premises.
- Residents rep elected.
- Lights to exterior of building replaced.
- Reward and penalty scheme implemented.
- Football match Police v Residents
- Regular Police visits.
- Random visits by Police Drugs dogs.
- Link officers established to work with Bay House Management.
- Meeting and greeting of new residents by link officers.
- Re allocation of rooms.
- Offender lifestyle pro-formas.



Residents, the house managements and police officers involved in project, took part in football match to improve relations.

RESPONSE

Medium Term

- ❖ A presentation by the management at Bay House to all staff at South Shore giving details about the project, and how the newly formed partnership could benefit both parties .
- ❖ The drawing up of a joint application for Home office funding for a steel security fence to replace derelict one at the end of Alexandra Road to prevent the area being used as a thoroughfare. This was actively supported By David Ferris the local councillor, and local residents and was opened January 2001.
- ❖ Attendance at Police briefings by Bay House.
- ❖ David Ferris - local councillor involved in project.
- ❖ Link officers support residents at disciplinary hearings.
- Random searches of residents' rooms
- ❖ Further;funding sought for foliage at rear of the Fence [secured]



Local Councillor for the area, David Ferris cutting the ribbon

RESPONSE

Long Term

A series of long-term measures are now in place. These will include the short and medium term responses, which proved successful as well as the following;

Police assistance, and advice in relation to the suitability of applicants wishing to become a resident of the project

A drug policy was drawn up for the project, which the police not only helped to draft, but will also continue to assist with implementing. As part of the policy the drugs dog now makes regular checks on the premises. The residents find this less invasive than police officers searching their rooms and enjoy having the dogs there.

The introduction of Anti -social Behaviour policy and Anti bullying policy. The introduction of these policies reinforces the standards required by persons staying at the hostel.

The problem of the dilapidated fencing at the rear of the property needed to be looked at in order to curtail the increase in traffic through to the car park. If a permanent fence could be erected this would hopefully reduce criminal activity in the car park and also immediately improve relations with the local community. The problem was that the fence would be expensive therefore sponsorship was sought from both the partners and from The Home Office. A Fence Ceremony was held to which local residents and the neighbouring community were invited.

PC 2175 Pepper, and PC 3365 Baker have assumed ownership of the project on a long-term basis under the direct guidance of the POPS Sergeant at South Shore. Due to inevitable staff moves it will at some point be necessary to introduce other officers into the scheme, but it is envisaged that this will be relatively trouble free as a result of management backing of the initiative and the regular contact between officers at South Shore, and the staff at Bay House.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- * Police advice to management on the suitability of potential residents
- * Anti-Bullying policy.
- * Anti-Social Behaviour policy
- * Drugs policy.
- * Random searches.
- * Permanent Fencing
- * Bay House now included in police patrolling plan



ANTI-BULLYING POLICY & GUIDELINES.

AUTHORS: Amanda Jenkins, Project Manager, Bay House.
Sgt Keith Ogle, POPs Co-ordinator, Lanes Constabulary.
Derek Digman, Headteacher, Highfield School.

ADVISORS: Anti-Bullying network for young people.

PURPOSE: To provide the Association with a clear written policy in order to promote the belief that bullying is a form of anti-social behaviour, it is wrong and it will not be tolerated. To provide residents with the assurance that complaints of bullying will be dealt with firmly, fairly and above all promptly.

We need to organise and maintain our community in order to minimise the opportunities for bullying to occur.

WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS OF THE POLICY?

The policy document consists of sections on:

- What to do? - A guide to what staff members and the wider association are expected to do where bullying is suspected.
- Disciplinary Action - A guide to what formal disciplinary action can be taken against offenders. Although the emphasis is on mediation and empowering the victims. Punishment doesn't always solve complex issues such as bullying.
- Empowerment - A comprehensive guide to how best we can empower victims of bullying.

WHAT PRACTICAL

PROBLEMS?

We have endeavoured to encourage our young people to take responsibility not just for themselves but for each other, in line with the ethos of an extended family. We have introduced the following practical measures:

- A Bully Box = A small box situated in a communal place, so that residents can leave anonymous notes about their concerns.
- A Buddy Scheme - A befriending scheme, allowing vulnerable young people to be supported by their peers.
- Mediation - The Project Manager and Link Police Officers will offer mediation, if that is felt to be the best way forward.
- Leaflets specifically on the subject of bullying are available in communal areas.
- Currently we are looking at commissioning some training for our young people in order that they can run their own "peer mediation" sessions between victims and aggressors.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY 8z._STAFF GUIDELINES,

AUTHORS: Miss Amanda Jenkins, Project Manager, Bay House.
PC 239 S Evans, Alexandra Ward Beat Officer, Lancs Constabulary.

PURPOSE: To look at effective **methods of managing anti-social behaviour** in terms of **both our residents, their** guests and **the local community**. To **look** at how anti-social behaviour impacts on our project, and our neighbours. To make full use of the Crime & Disorder Act 1998, in particular the Anti-social behaviour orders. To formalise the process of dealing with problematic behaviour in order to meet the **needs** of our residents and neighbours. To aid us in fulfilling our obligations as landlords and members of the local community.

WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS OF THIS POLICY

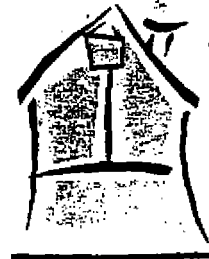
The policy has seven key elements they are:

- Fulfilling our objectives - How can we do this?
- Anti-Social Behaviour - A **definition**,
- About the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 - **Clarification on the Act**.
- **House Rules and Disciplinary Procedure.**
Neighbourhood Watch
- **What are we to do?**
- **About Anti-Social Behaviour Orders?** - A **guide** to what **they** mean in "day to day" terms.

CONCLUSION:

The anti-social behaviour order has the potential to be a valuable aid to controlling the behaviour of both residents and visitors to Bay House. It should however, only be considered in the most extreme cases and is not a substitute to managing problematic behaviour on a day to day basis. Staff are encouraged to discuss their concerns with the Project Manager who will then discuss them with one of the Fink Police Officers.

We have used the policy on two occasions and on each of them, a stern warning, by the Link Police Officer, to the culprits has been enough to curb the behaviour. Neither person was resident at Bay House.



DRUG POLICY POLICY & STAFF GUIDELINES.

AUTHORS: Miss Amanda Jenkins, Project Manager, Bay House.
PC 239 S Evan, Alexandra Ward Beat Officer, Lancs Constabulary.

ADVISOR: Inspector P O'Dwyer, Geographical Inspector, South Shore.

RESEARCH: In order to prepare the policy we consulted the following documents.
Misuse of Drugs Act 1971
The Medicines Act 1968
The Runciman report of the Independent Inquiry into the MDA 1997

PURPOSE: The Drug Policy was commissioned by the Management Committee of Bay Housing Association, as a response to the Winter Comfort Case in Cambridge. It was deemed that the existing policy was insufficient and the authors were asked to formulate a revised policy.

WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS OF THE POLICY?

The policy makes it clear the Association does not condone the use of illegal drugs, emphasising that we *have a* comprehensive programme of education, information and support for young people. It details our joint working with other agencies, in the drug field. It then goes on to explore the boundaries of the AIDA and also to consider the points raised in the Runciman Report.

WHAT DO WE ACTUALLY DO?

The Section 5 of MDA clearly states that it is lawful for a person (Project Worker) to confiscate a substance to prevent an offence from being committed. The policy makes provision for staff to confiscate drugs and/or paraphernalia from residents. They then complete a Drug Incident Report Form and seal the confiscated items in a Police Sealed Evidence Bag. Next time the Project Manager is on duty, she will contact the Link Police Officers who will arrange for removal of the items. The resident(s) will be interviewed by the LPO and/or the Project Manager and a decision made on disciplinary action taken at that time.

This works particularly well, as Bay House staff operate a single cover system at night. Experience has shown us that our residents will hand over substances for confiscation without any problem. - By deferring the decision to take disciplinary action this

prevents the staff members from being expected to put themselves, deliberately in potentially volatile situations.

In line with the Drug Policy, the Link Police Officers arrange for regular "visits" by a Police Drug Dog. This is a superior method of searching the premises, as it is less intrusive than a manual search. Additionally, the dogs tend to be friendly and excitable and this endears them to the resident group. .

