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# JUVENILE REFERRAL SCHEME

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## 1.0 SUMMARY

The Juvenile Referral Scheme was developed using the 'SARA' process to address increasing feedback from local surveys and Crime and Disorder Audits that anti-social behaviour, particularly that caused by youths, significantly impacted on people's quality of life and to respond to the fact that juvenile nuisance accounted for 47% of all recorded disorder in the BCU/Division.

It provides a consistent and robust multi-agency response to dealing with juvenile nuisance (in line with Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998) and impacts upon key performance targets for both the police and local Crime & Disorder Partnership Groups.

The scheme brought together the disjointed efforts of several isolated schemes, which were already running in the Division, designed to deter juveniles from creating nuisance in their local communities and which were having positive but limited results. It focuses on making parents more responsible for the anti-social behaviour of their children and using a multi-agency approach to best target limited resources. A comprehensive computerised database has been developed to record incidences of juvenile nuisance and disorder which relies on officers challenging behaviour and completing a simple pro-forma recording details of the occurrence, the young people involved and the action taken.

All pro-formas are analysed and a matrix is utilised in order to determine an appropriate level of response. The scheme is separated into four distinct stages - in the first instance, the details of a young person found to be involved in incidents of disorder/anti-social behaviour are inputted onto a database. The data is assessed, and a letter generated to the parent/guardian. In the second instance, if the young person is brought to police attention again within 6 months then a further letter is sent to the young persons parent/guardian, their school and also Education Welfare. In the third instance, if the young person's behaviour has not improved, a multi-agency meeting is convened, in order to establish the root of the problem and to determine partnership approaches to divert the young person away from this type of behaviour. The final stage involves the collation of evidence to tackle the behaviour more directly, by means of legislation, e.g. use of anti-social behaviour orders and parenting orders.

The impact of the scheme can be measured both in terms of a 11% reduction in juvenile nuisance based on the previous years figures and also excellent qualitative results from the schemes partners, the media, parents and children.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 states that all local authorities must take into account the implications on community safety in all its decisions.

The wording of this section is as follows:

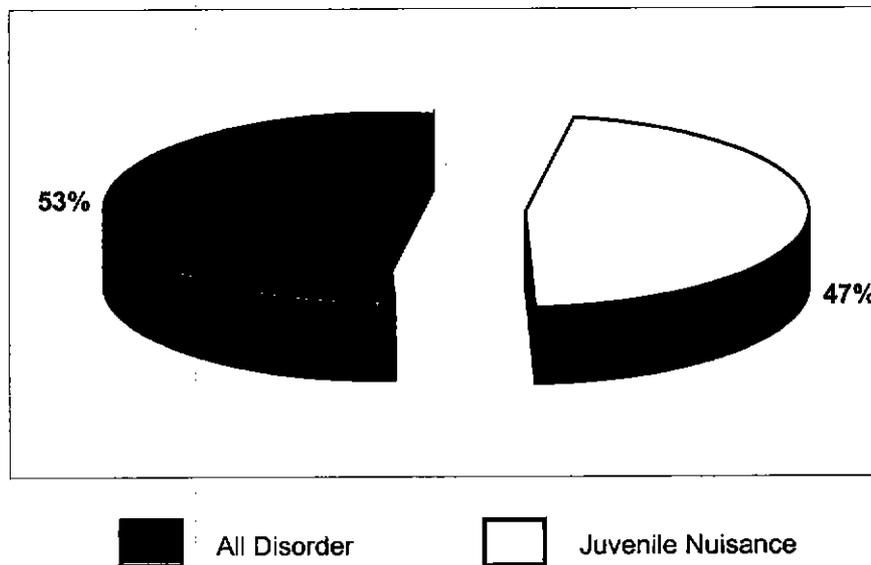
*"17. - (1) Without prejudice to any other obligation imposed on it, it shall be the duty of each authority to which this section applies to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area.*

*(2) This section applies to a local authority, a joint authority, a police authority..':*

**2.0 BACKGROUND**

Towards the end of 1998 it was identified that the Division was receiving a large number of complaints from members of the public about young people causing nuisance or behaving anti-socially. In creating our policing plan for the subsequent year it was noted that juvenile nuisance figures alone represented 47% of all disorder and that reductions in this area could significantly impact upon our key performance targets. Police officers were being called to, or finding during their tour of duty, incidents involving young people where there were no substantial offences committed or where there was insufficient evidence to warrant an arrest or a report for summons. There were many situations involving juveniles that warranted more than a 'ticking off' and this caused frustration for many officers.

**JUVENILE NUISANCE COMPARED WITH ALL INCIDENTS FOR EASTERN DIVISION APRIL 98 – MARCH 99**

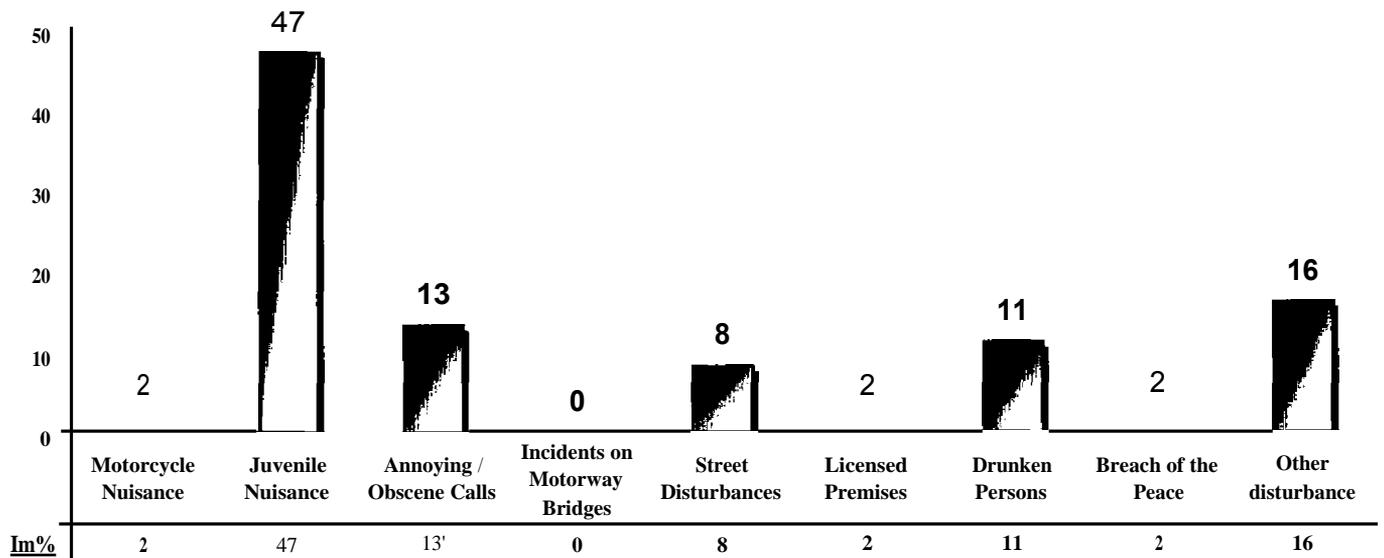


**Figure 1**

**Definition of Disorder**

Incident Class	Description of Incident	Incident Class	Description of Incident
19	Motorcycle Nuisance	41	Disturbances in Licensed Premises
32	Any Juvenile Nuisance	45	Drunken Persons
33	Annoying/Obscene Calls	46	Breach of the Peace (Not Domestic)
38	Incidents on Bridges over Motorways	47	Other undetected disturbance
40	Street Disturbance	79	Motorway Juvenile Nuisance

**PERCENTAGE OF INCIDENTS PER CATEGORY  
APRIL 98 — MARCH 99**



**Figure 2**

As in many other policing areas Eastern Division had no consistent **approach** to dealing with juveniles unless they committed offences. It was recognised that the use of alcohol and other substances often rendered young people susceptible to involvement in crime or increased their vulnerability in other ways. Truancy was also another activity known to increase the chances of a juvenile becoming involved in anti-social behaviour and neither of these problems appeared to be consistently addressed by preventative methods.

Criminal offences now attract intervention from the newly formed Youth Offending Teams who have significantly impacted upon re-offending rates but it was acknowledged that early intervention was key to preventing children from arriving in this position. It was also evident that a uniform system, division wide, to deal with children who caused or took part in anti-social behaviour would go a long way to making our communities safer places in which to live and make the public feel more reassured. All our surveys and feedback from within local Crime and Disorder Audits indicated that anti-social behaviour significantly impacted on many people's quality of life.

Prior to putting a scheme in place, research was undertaken to see how other divisions and police forces dealt with nuisance and anti-social behaviour amongst juveniles. It was found that Cheshire and Norfolk Constabularies dealt with this problem well by the use of a letter scheme informing parents of their child's anti-social behaviour. To some extent many divisions within Lancashire had adopted this method but as stated the approaches were not consistent.

The answer for Eastern Division was to adopt a similar scheme to Cheshire and Norfolk but to include multi-agency involvement. All our head teachers and education welfare staff signed up to the scheme fully before its launch. Ownership was given to two existing members of staff (on a part time basis) from within our Partnerships and Community Safety Department. They now share one FTE post funded by the Home Office Crime Fighting Fund.

### **3.0 THE SCHEME**

When an officer has cause to speak to a juvenile as a result from a call from a member of the public, or if an officer discovers a young person in circumstances of general anti-social behaviour, then that officer will obtain and verify details of that juvenile, including details of parents/guardians and the school that the child attends.

If there is information/evidence sufficient to justify an arrest or to report for offences, then this will always be the course of action. The juvenile referral scheme is intended only for behaviour outside these courses of action.

The scheme captures any child up until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. The scheme also captures children that are under 10 years of age.

The overall purpose of the scheme is to:

- Deter anti-social behaviour, which causes concern to communities thereby reducing Eastern Division's disorder figures,
- Reduce the ability for young people to become involved in crime, alcohol and drugs.
- Involve parents of juveniles found involved in anti-social behaviour by advising them of circumstances, which they may be unaware of.
- Liaise with the child's school and inform them of continued anti-social behaviour of the child whilst out of school. The overall intention of this being to educate the child through the school with regards to their behaviour being unacceptable.
- Bring to the attention of Education Welfare the child's anti-social behavioural problems with a view to setting up multi-agency meetings involving the child, their parents / guardians, the school, social services and ourselves.

The scheme is not intended to infringe upon civil liberties by attempting to prevent young people from meeting in certain areas who are quite clearly just socialising and not undertaking in anti-social behaviour.

### **3.1 Juvenile Referral Forms**

In cases where there is no information/evidence outlined above, then details of the child are recorded on a Juvenile Referral Form (see Appendix C). The form is designed to be small and functional, allowing for officers to record multiple juvenile details on

a minimal number of forms. The form allows for officers to add comments regarding the juvenile incident and whether they feel that it warrants further action.

The completed forms are forwarded via internal mail to the Divisional Partnerships and Community Safety Department. The two nominated officers are responsible for inputting the information from the form onto a database running within a Lotus Notes system which was designed internally by our IT Manager at that time to meet our specific needs.

### 3.2 Letters

The key to the scheme is making other agencies aware and responsible for the anti-social behaviour of children in their care. The scheme operates a three-tier letter system. Stage one is a letter sent to the parent / guardian of the child in question. Stage two consists of a second letter sent to parents and also a letter to the child's school and the education welfare department. The third stage is a final letter to the parent, the child's school and also the education welfare department. For each stage to be reached a juvenile referral form must be received regarding a child within a 6-month period.

For data protection purposes the scheme also operates a 6-month weeding period. If we receive a form regarding a child and they do not come to the attention of the police again for a further 6 months then they drop from the system. Any subsequent forms after this time will be treated as new.

Not all juveniles who are the subject of a juvenile referral form will receive a letter home to their parents / guardian. This situation is monitored by the two nominated juvenile referral officers. These officers have been chosen because of their skills and involvement with children as School and Youth Liaison officers.

### 3.3 Parent/Guardians

The initial letter to the child's parents / guardians (see Appendix C) identifies the juvenile by name and will also include the date and the location of the incident in order to make them aware of the general nuisance behaviour of their child. The letter will point out that if their child comes to the attention of the police on any further occasions, then a letter will be forwarded to the child's school as well as education welfare for their information. The letter will also identify a relevant officer to whom parents/guardians can contact and discuss any concerns that may arise upon receipt of the letter. There is also the possibility at this stage to include a health leaflet covering the dangers of alcohol or drugs if that was deemed to be one of the causes of the disorder.

### 3.4 Schools

As previously stated the key to the referral scheme is to make additional agencies more responsible for the anti-social behaviour. It is the intention of the scheme to prompt schools into educating children about their anti-social behaviour both inside and outside school. To assist with this process, schools are informed via letter of pupils who are persistently coming to police attention.

The letter to the school is addressed to the head teacher and it informs them of the fact that one of their pupils has come to the attention of the police on two occasions and it goes on to give a brief outline of the incidents. It will inform them that a similar letter has been sent to the child's parent / guardian and also to Education Welfare. At this point the school often takes the opportunity to speak with the child concerned and also to liaise with their nominated police school liaison officer and their respective Education Welfare Officer. The School and Youth Liaison officers will offer any assistance possible to the school, which can take the form of running specific lessons or speaking to individual children.

If the child is of concern to the school or education welfare, or the child reaches their third letter then a multi-agency meeting of all persons concerned is set-up to discuss problems that are influencing / causing a child's anti-social behaviour and possible solutions.

Where problems are localised lesson plans can be tailored within schools to address certain themes or issues without necessarily singling out individual children.

### **3.5 Education Welfare**

Education Welfare staff already work with children who have problems and therefore are ideally placed and have relevant skills to assist with the referral scheme. Education Welfare receive letters regarding anti-social behaviour in much the same way as the schools. They are invited to all the multi-agency meetings and they are encouraged to help schools to deal with problem individual.

### **3.6 Youth Offending Team**

The scheme is not designed to deal with juveniles who are in the reprimand / final warning system and any children that come to the schemes attention are referred to the Youth Offending Team. Police Officers from the Youth Offending Team have the ability to access a list of juveniles who are currently the subject of the Juvenile Referral Scheme through the Division's Intranet page.

### **3.7 Multi-Agency Meeting**

If the child is of concern to a school or the education welfare department, or the child reaches their third letter then a multi-agency meeting is convened. The meeting is primarily organised and run by the police and it is a chance for all parties to meet and to discuss problems that are influencing / causing a child's anti-social behaviour and possible solutions.

### **3.8 Database**

One of the main aims of the referral scheme was that it used a computer database to store and view data produced from the forms. It was also necessary for the database to generate pre-formatted letters, a task that proved difficult for existing systems. The system that best suited the scheme at the time was Lotus Notes. Lotus Notes for Eastern Division was available in every police station and provided an easy to use interface.

The juvenile referral database is available to all officers having access to a PC running Lotus Notes. It is pass-worded in order to allow differing levels of access i.e. viewing of data, inputting data or the production of letters and also complies with our IS/IT Security Policy. Once a letter is produced the database records the date that it was printed and monitor the number sent. The database also has the potential to be used to monitor hotspots, trends and as a performance monitoring tool by supervision. Another **advantage** to the use of Lotus Notes was that it produced a web page very easily resulting in a viewable database accessed over the whole intranet.

The monitoring and weeding of the system takes place regularly by Partnerships and Community Safety.

Screen shots from the database have been included with this report and are contained within Appendix F.

### 3.9 Data Protection

The data protection officer was involved with the scheme from the outset. All the letters and information that is currently sent to parents and other agencies was validated, as was the case for the referral database running in Lotus Notes. Prior to the scheme **going** live all the information, which was to be forwarded to parents, schools and education welfare was also assessed by the Corporate Communications Manager/Force Solicitor for corporate approval.

### 4.0 PILOT

Eastern Division was split into eight geographic areas (albeit these have been revised to six, at January 2001 - we shall still refer to them here as the original eight); Blackburn makes up three of those areas. The juvenile referral scheme was introduced onto one of the areas within Blackburn on the <sup>24</sup> July 1999. To promote the scheme, presentations were given to team leaders which were accompanied by documentation for their respective officers and personal issue juvenile referral forms. The pickup was slow initially because of a juvenile system already in place on the area together with the fact that we were asking officers to spend a little longer in dealing with juvenile incidents and fill in a form. Towards the end of September 1999 it was clear that the scheme was being utilised by officers by the number of forms being completed but the spread of data was not sufficient to accurately assess the scheme and we needed to incorporate one education area at a time.

At the beginning of October 1999 the scheme was rolled out onto the remaining areas of Blackburn and also into Darwen. This resulted in the whole of Blackburn with Darwen Unitary Authority being covered by the scheme and allowed the pilot to be more accurately measured as to its effects on reducing disorder and anti-social behaviour.

After experiencing some positive quantitative and qualitative results the scheme was expanded across the whole of the Division to include Hyndburn and Ribble Valley local authorities from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2000. This resulted in the second office being put in place at Clitheroe to deal with the forms and letters generated by the scheme from Hyndburn and Ribble Valley.

**4.1 5000 Officer Initiative - Divisional Bid**

In 1999 a divisional proposal was produced to bid for officers from the 5000-officer initiative set up by the Government. Various bids were made, as was a bid for an officer to work, in partnership, alongside schools, educational welfare and other key agencies to mainstream the juvenile referral scheme across the division. The bid was successful and in April 2000 the Division received the funding to support a FTE post in the Partnerships and Community Safety Department to assist the juvenile referral scheme.

**5.0 ASSESSMENT DATA**

**5.1 Quantitative Results**

Disorder and anti-social behaviour within Eastern Division is reducing and to date (March 2001) we have seen a reduction of 5.1% against our Divisional Target of 2 % (see table below). Juvenile Nuisance itself has reduced by 11% and accounts for all of the disorder reduction. It now represents only 43% of our total disorder.

Division								
A								
B								
C								
D*								
E	10434	9280	-1154	-11.1%	21655	20557	-1098	-5.1%
F								
Total								
April to March Figures								
Most Divisions are now operating some form of scheme								

The chart shown in Appendix A highlights the reduction of juvenile nuisance since April 1999.

It is very difficult to attribute decreases in disorder and juvenile nuisance to the juvenile referral scheme. A lot of work has been undertaken by area teams to meet the divisional disorder objective including juvenile patrols, pub watch, disorder hot spot analysis and the increased use of CCTV are just a few examples. Equally in some cases local operations (see press cuttings Appendix G) have substantially increased the reporting and recording of incidents.

The introduction of the new communications room was expected to increase the incidents of disorder as it was anticipated that the room would be able to handle more calls and collate them centrally. It would be fair to say that the room is still having difficulties at peak demand times to answer all the calls received by the public therefore a reduction in all incidents particularly disorder would be expected.

## 5.2 Juvenile Referral Database

As has been previously highlighted the juvenile referral database is a Lotus Notes database running from our divisional server. The database works by combining two sets of data together, data based on the juvenile and data based on the incident. Lotus Notes brings together this information so that it can search for a juvenile and inform the user which incidents that one juvenile has been involved in. This is also true for incident searches and the database can be used to show where problem locations may be with regards to juvenile nuisance and who the problem individuals might be.

One of the fundamental principles laid down by the data protection officer when setting up the scheme was that juveniles who were placed onto the system should expire after six months if they were not subject to another form within this time scale. This aspect of the scheme was sold to parents and schools who were concerned that the scheme would result in juveniles having a criminal record or a record at the police station. From a performance viewpoint this causes problems, as it is very difficult to monitor how many juveniles have been subject to the referral scheme since it began in July 1999. Interrogation of the database will only provide data of juveniles who are currently on the system.

At the time this report was produced the following statistics were taken from the system:

**(Figures as of 31/03101)**

Number of juveniles currently on the system = 1,239

Number of juveniles currently at stage 1 = 1,150

Number of juveniles currently at stage 2 = 127

Number of juveniles currently at stage 3 = 40

### **Stage 1**

This refers to 1<sup>st</sup> letter stage i.e. letter forwarded to parents/guardians

### **Stage 2**

This refers to 2<sup>nd</sup> letter stage where letters are sent to parents, the child's schools and also education welfare

### **Stage 3**

This refers to 3<sup>rd</sup> letter stage where parents, schools and education welfare are informed that a meeting needs to be convened to discuss the child's anti-social behaviour

#### Stage 4

The final *stage in the* process where the child *has been* the subject of a multi-agency meeting

**The important figure associated within the data produced by the database is that only 11% of the children who are subject to a letter sent home to their parents come back to police attention within a 6-month period.**

### 5.3 Evaluation Data - Qualitative Results

*Since the beginning of the scheme there have been many results that cannot necessarily be represented statistically but are equally important in promoting the successes of the scheme. Much in the way of hard work has gone into this scheme by the schools liaison officers who run the scheme. Their ownership, skills, contacts and commitment have been integral to the project. Again this work is difficult to quantify but there has been a lot of positive results, which do suggest that the scheme is more than just issuing letters to various agencies.*

- *Research so far has identified common problems with deaths in families, new partners and lack of parental support as key contributory factors to anti-social behaviour amongst children.*
- *Officers are now more likely to challenge inappropriate behaviour in the knowledge that there is a consistent system to respond to problems of juvenile nuisance.*
- *Juveniles are becoming increasingly aware that a letter can be expected.*
- *There is substantial anecdotal evidence that parents of children coming to notice through the scheme are most supportive of the positive police action taken. Many calls to the school liaison officers have confirmed this.*
- 0 *Informing parents has allowed parental action to be taken, in many cases eradicating the need for police action at a later date.*
- *in partnership with other agencies, interventions have been developed which have helped young people understand the personal implications and consequences of committing offences (e.g. employment prospects, social consequences)*
- *improved system has enabled identification of those most at risk of offending and re-offending - where necessary this has enabled high-risk offenders to be referred to other agencies, including Youth Offending Teams.*
- *There have been a number of positive letters received by the officers servicing the scheme from parents who have wanted to express their appreciation of the work being done to reduce nuisance and anti-social behaviour in their areas. Letters have also been received from children who have been subject of the scheme apologising for the nuisance that they caused.*
- *The scheme has been covered by a number of local newspapers within the Division, which has prompted positive feedback from the readers via letters.*

- *Information sharing has spread into neighbouring Divisions and Forces regarding certain, juveniles who have been subject to the scheme.*
- *The scheme has led to an increase in the confidence of the schemes partners to exchange information with the police.*

#### 5.4 Partnerships

In line with Crime and Disorder Act the scheme has facilitated closer partnership working. The scheme has brought together many agencies including local schools, Education Welfare, Social Services, Careers Service and the Health Authority. The following are some examples of how the scheme is working with other agencies:

- *Social Services offered a mother parenting skill lessons as a result of a multi-agency meeting.*
- *The Rapid Response Team became involved with two families to address issues relating to their child's continued anti-social behaviour.*
- *New Start, who are linked with the Careers Service and the Gateway project offered a 16 year old education on how to gain employment.*
- *T.D.S. and Pathfinder who are again linked to the Gateway project and offer young people work experience and training with the view to placing each youth in permanent employment. T.D.S. are based in Rawtenstall and are offering assistance to young people from Blackburn, Darwen, Hyndburn, Burnley, Haslingden, Bacup and Rawtenstall.*
- *The Careers Service will offer children leaving school or those who are not in employment or further education a personal advisor, who will work with each young person up to three months. They will then transfer them onto employment training or further education.*
- *Elaine Clare is the newly appointed Primary Mental Health Worker for Blackburn and Darwen. She will assess a child for mental health problems on the request of the police and at the request of the child's parents.*
- *The Education Action Zone have been approached by officers running the Juvenile Referral Scheme for two thousand pounds to be made available for funding teachers expenditure, to assist with the attendance at meetings and education of problematic children.*
- *Blackburn with Darwen Pyramid Scheme has identified a number of seven to nine year old children who are of high concern. Teachers who have daily contact with them have carried out the screening of these children. As from May of this year PC Smithson and PC Chadwick, along with members from other agencies will be working with some of these children who are already displaying some behaviour problems in order to develop their understanding of good citizenship. This scheme has been identified as a preventative strategy and has full support from the Education Action Zone Committee.*

- The Youth *Offending* Team is *constantly* accessing *the* scheme to assist in its *work*, in particular looking at *trends*.

## 5.5 Longer Term Assessment

Further assessment and development of the scheme needs to be undertaken. Feedback is to be obtained from parents and children involved in the scheme, schools and Education Welfare. Interim evaluations have been conducted but now that the scheme has been in place for a full policing year a more detailed assessment can be carried out particularly incorporating this external feedback.

## 6.0 LESSONS LEARNED

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ The scheme is very simple
- ✓ It is not time consuming or costly
- ✓ The major financial costs are in setting up an effective database
- ✓ The one FTE post services a population base of over 270,000 with one of the largest youth populations in the country.
- ✓ The system provides a recognisable and consistent approach
- ✓ It puts the onus on children and their parents
- ✓ It embraces the entire crime and disorder philosophy of partnership and shared information
- ✓ It provides vital information on our resource deployment, patterns and trends in incidents
- ✓ It shows that early intervention is cost effective
- ✓ It builds communication, contact and trust with youths who get to have their say and see everyone treated equally
- ✓ Police Officers like it

The scheme is heavily reliant upon the support of parents. If that support is not available, and parents become wise to the fact that we cannot force either themselves or their child to a meeting then the scheme loses its effect. Largely where this has happened there has fortunately been no recurrent problem. Steps need to be put in place to make parents more accountable.

The scheme is also reliant upon the assistance of the schools. At the outset we were not certain that this would be forthcoming with all the additional burdens being placed upon schools. But all the schools have been very supportive to the scheme and they saw it as an excellent link with the police. Quite often schools have already experienced problems and or were having separate meetings. The link with the school works well except during the school holidays, particularly over the summer months. This issue was anticipated and head teachers stated that they would be on hand to deal with letters received from the police. This has not always been the case and letters to schools over the holiday periods have gone unanswered.

The multi-agency meeting stage of the scheme brings together many agencies including on many occasions, Social Services. It has become apparent that problems

highlighted to Social Services are not necessarily being addressed. Part of the problem appears to be the social workers that attend the meetings do not have the relevant authorities or resources to look at problems highlighted. For example, trying to arrange for a child to have psychological testing. More pressure will need to be placed onto these agencies to help with deal with anti-social behaviour amongst juveniles.

Many representatives from other divisions and Forces have visited Eastern Division to gain information on the juvenile referral scheme in order that they can set something similar in their divisions. Presentations have been given including the Force POP Conference, to Professor Nick Tilley PRCU Home Office and at Bramshill. The knock on effect from this is that Northern and Pennine Divisions have very similar schemes running to Eastern Division with slightly different forms and similar databases. Southern Division are about to embark on their version of the juvenile referral scheme having spent time tailoring Eastern Division's scheme to suit their needs. Western Division has ownership of the Youth Policy in relation to the Community and Race Relations Policy. One of their recommendations is a Youth intervention system based on the juvenile referral scheme to deal with anti-social behaviour problems.

Some police officers and areas are keener users of the system and it is noticeable that there is a surge in forms when police 'crackdowns' are in operation. Officers are positively encouraged to put in forms with as much information on as possible. Those who are uncertain can then be guided by the experience of our Youth Intervention Officers.

There is anecdotal evidence that letters to non-english speaking families may go unanswered because of the language barrier.